



Kitbag!

Volume 8, Issue 3

March 2008

Confirming Discipleship

The Passion



A retelling of The Passion Story is being scheduled in peak time on BBC1 this Easter, beginning on Palm Sunday, 16th March. It is hoped it will attract audiences in excess of 10 million. The last episode, to be broadcast on Easter Sunday 23 March, dramatises Jesus' post-resurrection appearances.

Andrew Graystone, Director of the Churches' Media Council, was profoundly moved by early versions of the series. "This is an extremely vivid piece of drama. You feel you are right there, in amongst the Passover crowds, alongside the disciples as Jesus comes out with these simple but earth-shattering messages. And then of course, he's taken away and makes the ultimate sacrifice, and like the disciples, you're left to decide what you are going to do about it."

A multi-denominational group, convened by the Churches' Media Council, is encouraging the Christian community to seize this "golden opportunity to contribute to a contemporary public discussion about Jesus." A panel of speakers has been formed to contribute to national press, radio and TV discussions, and a website has been set up to help local churches prepare for the series. So why not visit the website at www.churchesmediacouncil.org.uk/passion and think about how your church is going to engage with those around you.

There is sometimes a misunderstanding that confirmation and church membership is all about learning a load of facts about what the church believes and then saying that you believe them, too. In fact, it is much more about simply responding to Jesus' invitation to "Come, follow me!", for what you are being invited to share in is a life-long journey with Jesus. It is not a matter of believing eight impossible things before breakfast, or suddenly having all the answers to life, the universe and everything. Instead, it is an acknowledgement that this God stuff is something worth exploring, and declaring publicly that you want to spend your life doing just that: learning more about God's love and what that means, and seeking to share that love in daily life. And as people make that commitment, so we pray that God's spirit will strengthen ("confirm") them in that task.

It is a delight, therefore, that 13 people, of all ages, recently made that public commitment in a number of services across the circuit.

At Rose Hill, a confirmation service on 16th November confirmed Morgan Dawe, Elisha Sidhu, Susan Gill, Sumen Gill, Eileen Brooker and Mary Whittaker. As they made their promises they were joined by Laura Green, Vera Taylor, Raymond James and Hazel James, who were transferring their membership from other denominations. It was a very happy occasion for the whole church. Ray and Hazel have been welcomed fairly recently to the Rose Hill congregation but the others have been worshipping at Rose Hill for many years, including the two youngest, Elisha and Mor-



gan. Their decision to make a public commitment to Jesus as Lord, and to Rose Hill Church as the place to build on that, has partly arisen from participation in, or prayers for, our monthly WHAT? services.

Meanwhile, following on from a young people's weekend at Woodstock last September in which we explored through conversation, film, images, clay and music what it means to

be a disciple of Jesus, seven young people decided they wanted to make that public declaration of discipleship. Anne and Catherine Turberfield, Will and Anna Clements, and Jack and Billy Godfrey were all confirmed at the beginning of February at Wesley Memorial, and Becca Todd was confirmed a fortnight later at Woodstock. Both occasions were joyous celebrations, with support from congregation, family and friends.

We rejoice with them all and pray that they may continue, with all of us, to grow in faith.

Jean King
Jonathan Todd

Lord, confirm these your servants by your Holy Spirit that they may continue yours for ever.

A slogan seen in the Salvation Army hall:

GOD IS NOWHERE ... it depends on how you read it!

You cannot prevent the birds of sadness flying over your head, but you can prevent them from building nests in your hair.

Chinese proverb

Walking with the Maasai Tribesmen

We landed at 6.30am—25 newly met friends, all raising money for, and interested in the work of, Action Aid, a charity that works amongst some of the world's poorest communities. Immediately we were besieged by a small army of young men wanting to carry our bags and be paid £20 for doing so! Our first port of call was a school near Narok, about 85km from Nairobi. We had expected a journey of a couple of hours. Five hours later we arrived. The poor road surfaces make for slow progress, as well as leaving a lasting impression on some parts of your anatomy.

A lasting impression of a different sort came as we were greeted by 500 pupils. They sang a welcome to us in Swahili and allowed us to view their very bare classrooms, with benches, a blackboard and a few very worn books. They were genuinely pleased to see us, taking



us by the hand as they marched and sang in English "We are marching in the sight of God".

Returning to our hotel gave us the first insight into life in rural Kenya—

no hot water or electricity until 6pm at the earliest. We were lucky to have water at all. This was the most affluent place in Narok.

The next day we visited another school some four hours away and saw an engineering project which used gravity to bring water from a source 40km away, thus saving the women of the village a ten mile daily round trip to fetch water. Again, we were welcomed enthusiastically.

The following day we crossed over into Tanzania and spent our first night under canvas. Our tents were pitched very closely together in one row, two people to a tent. This made it easier to guard against wild animals. One night saw a herd of zebras only ten feet from us and we were very grateful for the Maasai warriors guarding us. Facilities at camps were limited with tented toilets over freshly dug deep holes, two shower tents with suspended buckets, and a large dining tent with electric light supplied by generator for two or three hours a night. Everything was erected each night by the support team of 25 who conveyed all the equipment in a ten ton truck from site to site. Food was excellent—porridge, toast, cereals, and sometimes sausage or egg omelette for breakfast; sandwiches and a piece of cold chicken for lunch; and a three course hot meal at night with soup, stew (often goat meat) and jelly for dessert.

The first day we walked 22km in temperatures of 26 to 32 degrees, the last five kilometres being uphill. We saw zebra,

giraffe and quite a variety of birds on the way but really had to work hard at our walking as the track was very dusty fine volcanic ash, rather like walking in sand dunes.

Every day we were made to stop every 45 minutes or so to take a good drink and to wash some dust from our faces. Throughout the trek we were

accompanied by a man with a rifle in case we encountered any aggressive wildlife. At the end of each day we were met by the camp crew with wet cold flannels and each evening you had half a bowl of warm water to wash with. I soon developed a technique to make it last for the whole body. Meanwhile, the ladies commandeered the showers!

Each day we were roused at 5.30am to start walking at 7am. The worst part each day was trying to get everything back into your main rucksack. Where did it all come from? Sleeping bag, sleeping mat, clothes for 14 days. I ended up giving some of it away in order to make room for presents.

We visited a Tanzanian school and conditions here were even poorer than in Kenya. Many of the younger children just wanted to touch me to see if I felt the same as them. But again the overwhelming memory is of their happiness at meeting us and the gratitude they showed for the work of Action Aid. Surrounded by about sixty of them I conducted an informal singing session which concluded with "Row, row, row your boats" sung in English. It was hard to leave them.

The scenery was mostly spindly scrubby bushes with a few larger trees. There were spectacular mountains by the side of the Rift Valley, one of which was volcanically active, with a lot of white ash on its slopes and steam rising from the top. Our trek concluded not far from the Ngorongoro crater with the last three miles uphill across dried rough scrubland full of tiny lizards. Birds of prey circled overhead. I just hoped they wanted the lizards and not me! It was amazing how suddenly out of this barren landscape Maasai men appeared with goats, sometimes followed by women and children wanting to sell us some of their carved jewellery. It was 35 degrees but I managed to run the last 50 yards with the support team cheering me "home" and chanting "booba, booba, booba", which I think (and hope!) means "Grandad". I

was the oldest member of the team and still have the medal to show that I completed the trek.

May I thank you all for your support which was magnificent. I raised over £5,000 and the group together about £96,000. If you would like to know anything more about Action Aid and its work, please get in touch.



Brian Stepney

The Methodist Church at its worst?

"The Methodist Church is at its worst", said the BBC Southern Africa correspondent in a broadcast around Christmas, "in the middle of the night, when corridors and rooms are crowded with hundreds of sleeping Zimbabweans." Perhaps two million Zimbabweans have fled their home to seek work and an income in South Africa, some legally and some illegally. The Central Methodist Church in Johannesburg has become a haven for them. Some 1200 homeless and Zimbabwean refugees sleep inside the church building, and some 500 more on the grounds outside. Bishop Paul Verryn sees it as an integral part of the church's mission. It's not easy. At midnight on 31st January, the South African police raided the church, and arrested,

and later released, some 500 people. The (Catholic) Jesuit Refugee Service issued a statement commending the Central Methodist Church for "fulfilling the biblical injunction to provide an acceptable fast by sheltering the homeless (Isaiah 58: 6-8)." This is in fact the Methodist Church at its best.



Bishop Paul Verryn

Paul Spray



At the end of March we are joining forces with The Winrush School of Ballet to perform a concert of music and dance in The Corn Exchange in Witney called *That's Entertainment*. Performances will take place on Saturday 29th March at 6pm and Sunday 30th March at 2pm and 6pm. This is a great opportunity for our members to perform on a large stage in front of a big audience – the Corn Exchange seats over 200 people. It also gives us a chance to perform songs from shows that it would not be practical to stage in Bladon such as *The Lion King* and *Guys and Dolls*. We have organised



Fun at the Christmas Party

concerts in Witney on two previous occasions and they have both proved to be great fun, although working with a combined cast of around 150 children can be challenging! Tickets cost £8 for

adults and £6 for concessions. If you would like to book tickets then you can do so online using a credit or debit card at juniorchurch.co.uk/tickets. However we are expecting all three performances to sell out fast so if you are thinking of coming please get your order in quickly! Meanwhile photographs from previous concerts are available on our website at juniorchurch.co.uk/shows.



Friends of Bladon Methodist Church

To help meet the running costs of the church we have launched *The Friends of Bladon Methodist Church*. We hope that those whose children have benefitted from attending Junior Church in the past and anyone else who supports the work of the church in our village will consider joining the Friends scheme. So far the support from parents and villagers has been very encouraging. For more information on The Friends, please see our website www.juniorchurch.co.uk/friends.

Philip Rumsby

Circuit Noticeboard

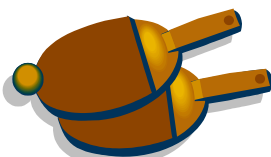
News from Quarry

In August 2004, Quarry Methodist Church closed. A church fellowship had been held there on Thursday afternoons. Since then, they have continued to meet as a housegroup which now has become very much an ecumenical one as its members worship at a number of different churches.

Derek Sherwood

Table Tennis Table

Lime Walk has a spare table tennis table. If you are able to give it a good home, please contact Angela Matchett on 01865 764472.



News from Egypt

On 8th February Evan Williams reported, on Channel 4, on the plight of Egypt's Christian minority. Corralled into a ghetto where bags of the city's waste pile up on every surface, the so-called "rubbish people" make a poor living from sorting and recycling, while being targeted by the secret police and given no protection from criminal violence. I remain shocked and haunted by what I saw. Please pray for our Christian brothers and sisters.

Katherine Raju

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Please send contributions to the editor, Jonathan Todd, either via the circuit office or by email.

Deadline for next issue
18th May 2008

Dates for your Diary

March 5th—8th

Robin Hood (and his merrie men) at Lime Walk Methodist Hall, New High St
Evenings at 7.30pm; Saturday matinee at 2.30pm.
Tickets £7 (£5 concessions). Advance booking—Oxford 762711

Weekend of March 7th/8th

Tackley bicentenary exhibition of the church's life through the years

March 8th

Tackley bicentenary re-union event

March 8th—10am until 4pm

Secondhand Book Sale at Kidlington Methodist Church
Very crowded in the morning but books topped up at 1pm

March 20th

7pm Tenebrae Service with Supper and Communion at Lime Walk
7.30pm Maundy Thursday Communion at Tackley

March 29th—10.30am until 5pm at Oxford Town Hall

Caring for Creation. All Faiths for Peace, Justice and Sustainability
An inter-faith conference with workshops, discussions and fun!
See www.ccnd.gn.apc.org/events.html for more information. All welcome!

April 20th—6.30pm

Circuit Service at Wesley Memorial
Admission of Heidi Cottrell as a Local Preacher

May 18th—Tackley Bicentenary

10.30am Revd Dr Martyn Atkins (President of Conference)
4.00pm Revd Dr Tim Macquiban (Open Air Service on Village Green)

When we are laid low

When we are laid low and feel well below par
For family and friends how lucky we are.
When they all rally round to take care of us now
The telephone call, or a knock at the door
Cheers us up, when we feel so down in the dumps.
A posy of flowers, picked from the garden today,
A jelly, new laid eggs, and a curry appear.
On pancake day, we don't miss out:
A neighbour pops in with one on a plate.
Lots of offers to go to the shops for us,
And those lovely cards that come in the post.
The prayers and the wishes to "Get Well Soon"
Are such a comfort in our sick room!
When comes that wonderful feeling at last,
We really feel better and up to the task
Of "get up and go" once more, we hope.
Out in the garden, oh lovely fresh air!
Legs feel like jelly, but we don't care.
We are back on track and it won't be long now.
We forget all our troubles and being laid low.

Mary Hanna
Written after a recent illness

SoS—Spirituality on Screen



2nd March	<i>Babel</i>
30th March*	<i>The Queen</i>
27th April*	<i>The Simpsons Movie</i>
1st June	<i>Shooting Dogs</i>

10 Bletchingdon Road, Islip

5:30pm

*Note change of date