

# *The Messenger*

*and Mayflower Hall News*

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## *Billericay United Reformed Church*

*Joint Pastorate with Brentwood and Ingatestone URCs*

*MEMBER OF CHURCHES TOGETHER IN BILLERICAY*



*A Tapestry  
from  
Myanmar/  
Burma.  
The Peacock,  
the Nation's Emblem  
symbolises Courage*

*June 2008*

***Our Minister: Who's really in charge?***

***Learning about the Faith of Islam***

***An approach to Bible Reading***

***World Council of Churches Meditation on Palestine***

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***Pastorate Celebration–Mayflower Pilgrims Cantata-***

***Billericay Festival-Myanmar/Burma Appeal***

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***Farewell to our Moderator***

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## Pictures of the Month



Ken and the Imam in animated debate at the meeting with our Islamic friends.

Job done! Roy surveys the bulging Christian Aid bags returned by his collecting team to Sunday service.



Birds eye view of a poverty lunch. It raised £328 including gift aid.

## Notes from the Church Secretary

Your church secretary's life involves many meetings! But within the detail are many exciting things that are planned.

**The Area Partnership meeting** on 19<sup>th</sup> April at Grays comprised Ministers and up to 5 Elders from each of our 7 local churches.

The 7 are the URC churches at Basildon, Billericay, Brentwood, Grays and Ingatestone, together with the URC/Baptist Church at Hutton & Shenfield, and the URC/Methodist church at Wickford.

We will be known as the South-West Essex Area Partnership.

The gathering had a different feel from the old District meetings, reflecting the closer ties that you would expect from churches geographically closer. There are only two specified tasks for Area Partnerships – deciding how ministers should be allocated to churches within the target set for us by Synod, and consulting with each other on the Ministry & Mission Fund (M&M) contributions requested from our churches by Synod.

Any other items on the agenda are down to us. We started to take the challenge as we brainstormed how we could support each other and share in joint training events, etc. We will progress this at future meetings.

We were introduced to Carolyn Rudkin as the Pastoral Advocate, and Ian Miller as the Advocate for M&M contributions. I had accepted the task of arranging the meeting.

We said farewell to Elizabeth Caswell, our departing Synod Moderator. Our new Moderator will be at the next meeting of the Area Partnership in October.

Our new Synod Moderator is Revd Paul Whittle, who will be Inducted at Christchurch, Chelmsford on 6th September.

**The Billericay Elders** met on 7<sup>th</sup> May.

We had an exciting explanation from Simon (Houlton) of what was planned for 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> October. The programme for the Mayflower Hall on the Saturday will be art-related; already 8 exhibitors are lined up. The

items in the church will be music-orientated, with competitions and an evening concert. On Sunday will be a celebratory service to which Saturday participants will be invited. The plan is to advertise the event in Billericay schools before the end of this term, and also to local choirs, etc.

Also at Elders', we heard that there had been a good response to the request for cleaning help during Bob's absence, that Kenton has agreed to take over two tasks from Andrew Forde – maintaining our website and producing the brochures for new worshippers. Dianne Lough will be taking over from Wendy Kelleher at *First Steps* and Pat Stockdale has agreed to join the team in September with Rachel Stenhouse. Dianne and Alan volunteered to organise food for the Harvest Social (we shall be calling for a volunteer at the June Church Meeting for the evening programme). We are grateful to all those who volunteer, and especially for Andrew and Wendy as they retire from their respective duties.

We expressed thanks to Margaret Dunn, whose planning of the Charity Table Sale enabled it to be a success even in her (unplanned) absence. We also noted that the service at Mountnessing Court had been a success – and thanks to all who supported it with their presence.

We learnt that Christian Aid will support us with a speaker for the topic meeting on India on 15<sup>th</sup> October. People outside the church family will be welcome to attend then.

We agreed to recommend that the June Church Meeting accept the Synod proposal for a 1.7% increase in our 2009 M&M contribution, and to ask Ian Miller to explain the M&M workings to the Elders.

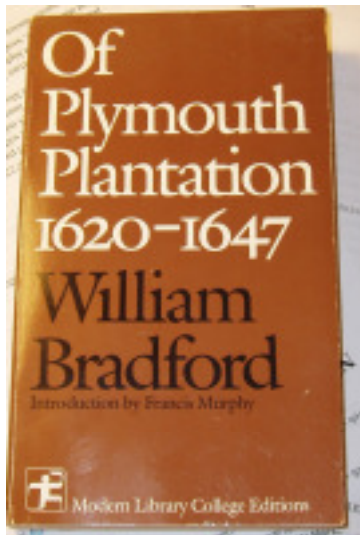
**The Church Weekend Committee** met on 8<sup>th</sup> May. We were delighted to hear that our hope of a professional youth worker to lead the children's activities for the Weekend may be coming to fruition.

<p>Make a date to welcome back <b>May and Ibrahim Jaber</b> to give us the latest news of their church and community in Beit Sahour, on <b>Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> July at 7.30pm in the Church.</b></p>
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**BILLERICAY CHORAL SOCIETY**  
**are performing a Cantata on**  
**the Mayflower Pilgrims**  
**in our Church**  
**on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> June at 7.45pm.**

This Concert is of special interest to our congregation, as in the second half a work will be performed called “*Mayflower Pilgrims*” by Clive Jenkins.

The Cantata begins and ends with non-conformist hymns – “Forth in Thy name O Lord I go” by Charles Wesley and ends with Bunyan’s words “Who would true valour see”.



In between is the story of the Mayflower Crossing to the New World. Words used are from William Bradford’s “History of Plymouth Plantation”, completed about 1651 and Henry Ainsworth’s “The Book of Psalms”, published 1612.

This performance will be the premiere of the “*Mayflower Pilgrims*” in Essex, and the Composer may attend. Do come along and enjoy this Concert.  
*Ann Mynott.*

Come to the Joint Pastorate Celebration  
on Saturday 7 June, from 5.00-6.30pm  
at Brentwood URC.

## **Tea, Quiz and Worship**

Tea on the Green at 5.00pm,  
then test your brain cells in competing quiz teams.  
Concluding with a short act of shared worship at 6.00pm

*Please sign list on the vestibule table  
if you can offer a lift, or need one*

## **Chernobyl Children's Lifeline Guests arrive this month**

A party of youngsters from the Belarus will again be visiting Billericay, arriving on 22 June, and will be hosted by local families. They will be quite young and from a rural background, so are likely to find big differences in life here.

So we'll be playing our part in making them feel welcome and giving them an enjoyable time. There'll be a barbecue at Stock Nursery on 27 June, and our church will be hosting afternoon tea at Stock Nursery on Monday 30 June from 4.30pm, courtesy of Peter Brierley, of course. If you can help with the teas on that day, please speak to him.

## **Planning for our Christmas Bazaar**

There will be a meeting after Church at coffee in the Livingstone Room on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> June to discuss the next Christmas Bazaar. Please come along with your ideas. Previous stallholders are invited as well as potential new stallholders. If you are unable to attend please let Margaret Dunn know if you would like to have a table at the bazaar.

**The date of the Bazaar is Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2008  
please note this in your diaries.**

**BILLERICAY FESTIVAL IN ST MARY MAGDALEN, HIGH STREET**  
**'Past, Present & Future' in flowers, art and music.**  
**Friday 13th - Sunday 15th June**

Churches Together in Billericay are holding a Festival in St Mary's Magdalen. The theme for the weekend is Billericay, Past, Present & Future and this will be illustrated with flowers and artefacts by the churches and schools, and displays in the gallery by local art and music clubs and societies.

We are aiming to make this a major event in the Town, by involving as many people as possible, so do book the date and invite your friends along.



The Festival will be opened by our MP John Baron on the Friday morning, with Rev Annabel Copeland from Emmanuel conducting the Dedication Service.

The proceeds from the Festival will be divided between St Luke's Hospice and the further refurbishment of St Mary's.

*We will be setting up on Wednesday afternoon and evening and taking it down on the Sunday evening, so if you can help with the preparation or dismantling then either contact me (01277 622297), or your CTB representative.*

# **An Afternoon of Learning about the Faith of Islam**

## ***What our faiths have in common, and how they are different***

In Billericay over the last few years we have had opportunities to make contact with members of the Islamic community who live close to us. Some of us have visited the South East Essex Cultural Centre, an Islamic school, which meets each Sunday in Billericay School and brings together children and young people from Islamic families to learn about their faith. Last November some of us celebrated Eid with them, at the close of Ramadan, and much enjoyed their hospitality. Parties from the school have even paid short visits to services in Christian churches in the town, including our own, and learned a little about the Christian faith. Through the school we got to know Sidra, a special needs teacher, who had prepared an introductory talk on Islam which she gives to non-Islamic groups, and so we invited her to speak to interested Christians



from our own and other local churches in the Kathleen Martin Room. The result was a very informative afternoon about the origins and basic beliefs of the Islamic faith. We were especially privileged that the Imam with responsibility for the small mosque in Brentwood was able to come with Sidra, and answered questions.

As well as giving talks, Sidra is involved in several ways in Inter-faith work: she is a member of the Mid-Essex Interfaith forum, and a member of the Essex Standing Advisory Committee for Religious Education, which has a statutory duty to oversee religious education in Essex schools. With her children at the Anglo-European School she successfully pursued the idea that a redundant potting shed at the school should be converted into a quiet prayer facility for the pupils.

One of the themes of Sidra's talk was the affinity of Islam with Christianity, both of them 'faiths of the Book'. The genealogical tree tracing the ancestry of Mohammad, the prophet of Allah, go back to Abraham, the common patriarch. Indeed Islam shares characteristics

with other world faiths – the god worshipped by Buddhists is also described as 'the merciful one'.



Islam was born of the Prophet's detestation of the decadence of life in his birthplace, Mecca, in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. The Quran was dictated to him to give a complete guide to ethical living, imparting knowledge and peace, and God's unchanging truth. Ideally it should be read in Arabic, since many concepts cannot be accurately translated, and it must be read with respect. The remarkable thing is that many scientific principles which were not discovered until much later were foreshadowed in the Quran – the orbital patterns of the planets, the fact that the moon is lit by the sun, and even the big bang theory.

The life of obedience to the Islamic faith is governed by five principles, the five pillars of Islam, beginning with the Profession of Faith *Shahadah*, the sincere reciting of the belief that Allah is the one true god, and the lifelong pledge of obedience to Islam. Secondly there is the obligation to prayer, *Salat*, five times a day: prayer give the washing away of sins committed since the last period of prayer. Prayer can take place anywhere, but should be directed towards Mecca; note the compass incorporated in the prayer mat which Sidra is holding. Thirdly is the obligation to charity, *Sakat*, the giving of 2.5% of income to the poor. Fourthly is Fasting, *Sawm*, during daylight hours during the month or Ramadan, which promotes self-discipline, the appreciation of God's gifts, and becoming spiritually stronger. Finally there is the obligation to *Hajj*, a pilgrimage to Mecca once in a lifetime.



Islam's respect for knowledge made it the medium for the passing on of the cultural and scholastic heritage of ancient cultures, such as Egypt, Greece, India and Rome to the modern world. Moslems set up libraries, schools, and hospitals, and pioneered astronomy, mathematics, algebra and calculus. Toothpaste? That was an Islamic idea.

Islam respects Jesus as a prophet, and believes in his immaculate birth. The Quran has a chapter called Mary, but Jesus was not crucified according to Islam, as God saved him. Islam is a peaceful religion (Islam means 'peace'). It respects minorities. It is misunderstood because of the inhuman actions of a handful. It stands against terrorism, and injustice, and accepted war only as a last resort, believing in mercy and respect for the other side. But injustice would triumph if good people do not fight for a just cause. Jihad means 'struggle', not holy war: it is a personal struggle. Suicide is not acceptable to Islam.

Sidra concluded with a theme which she obviously felt personally, namely the place of women in Islam. Women are not oppressed by Islam, in fact quite the reverse. It was Islam who corrected the treatment of women, who had previously been regarded as property, exploited, mistreated and oppressed. Islam gave them rights: the right to education, to earn and keep the proceeds, to vote, to seek a husband and to divorce. Sidra asked us to recognise that culture is not religion.



The Imam, Sheikh Rahman is based at the East London Mosque, on the Whitechapel Road. Like Sidra he is British born – and his first major love was cricket! He is proficient in English, Arabic, Urdu and Bengali, and this enables him to preach to the thousands in his Friday congregation, switching from one language to another in his sermons. Among the many answers he gave to our questions, he spoke of the persecution of Muslims in China, and of the work of his mosque in maintaining the loyalty of young people to its

message.

We were much enlightened by our friends from the Islamic community, and while noting differences in the details of our faiths, we were struck by the common humane values which our two faiths share.

## ***It's our Gift Day on Sunday 15 June,***

when we ask for your special contributions to the upkeep of the church. You will be receiving a letter giving more details . But don't worry, nothing like this will be happening!!



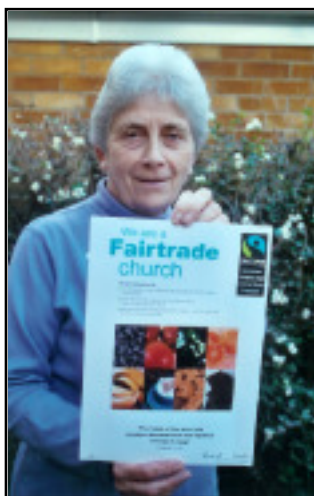
## ***Congratulations to Ann Mynott***

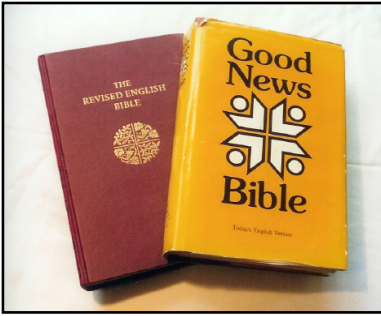
who was featured in a full page article in the Gazette in April to celebrate her work over many years as a Traidcraft representative.

She was quoted as saying: *'When I started this back in 1990 I never thought I would still be doing it now, it's really just to try and make a difference.'*

Jane Riley Fairtrader business development manager commended Ann's work:

*'Ann's contribution has been phenomenal. The people who were our supporters in the early days were real pioneers and should be recognised for their amazing achievements in promoting the benefits of Fairtrade and Traidcraft in their communities.'*





## *Inspiration? Vision?*

### **An approach to our Bible-Reading**

Through Vision4Life we are going back to our bibles for guidance in Christian living. Yet we find that when we read our bibles, and when we listen to bible readings in church, with our modern critical approach we can respond to

some texts more readily than to others. Some passages of the New Testament are puzzling, and as for the Old Testament with its patchwork of violence and unscientific myth mingling with well loved and purple passages, in what sense could we ever say equally of everything 'This is the Word of the Lord' ?

Our church meeting on the bible in connection with Vision4Life tested out this problem on selected bible passages. As we seek renewal by 'returning to the bible', how far do they provide guidance and inspiration for Christian living?

Firstly, an easy passage to respond to: the parable of the **Good Samaritan**. Of course it's a graphic demonstration of the meaning of Christian neighbourliness. The willingness of the Samaritan to help a victim, lays a clear duty on us all: but added to that the clear rejection of ethnic stereotyping, and the pillorying of religious hypocrisy – there's a radicalism here which if we stop to think about it should still shock us today. (Though actually we sometimes water down the message of the story by dubbing anybody doing a kindly deed a 'Good Samaritan'). Ten out of ten, perhaps for the clarity of this parable?

But take a story which evokes the opposite reaction, **the slaughter of the innocents** (Matthew chapter 2). How could this be said to be an edifying narrative, coming as it does after ironically it records the wise men saying that out of Bethlehem will come a leader 'to be the shepherd of my people Israel'. The angel guides the holy family to safety, but leaves all the other babies to become senseless victims of a ruler's paranoia. Where is the meaning in this? Perhaps we must conclude that the gospel story would be less genuine if it left out the villains and their

cruelty. As of the present time, is it not a commentary on the behaviour of Myanmar/Burma's current leaders? Or President Mugabe?

It's when we come to the Old Testament that the problems really mount up. The ways of thinking, and the occasional brutality, can seem off-putting. The early stories arose in an oral tradition, long before they were ever written down. They were history and sometimes myth long before they ever became sacred texts. There were rival narratives which came from two kingdoms, north and south, and sometimes they told two versions of the same story. Once they were committed to scrolls they were often adapted and reworked to serve the theological and political purposes of the scribes, for example those of the southern kingdom were biased towards demonstrating the superior kingship of David. (Jeremiah wrote 'How can you say "we are wise, we have the law of the Lord", when scribes with their lying pens have falsified it?')

**The idea of God ('Yahweh') developed.** Judah, the southern kingdom, saw God as a personal being – he walked in the garden of Eden, he got angry and he changed his mind, while the god of the northern tradition was more remote and used angels as his messengers. We can follow the Israelites only gradually forming the idea that they had a loyalty to only one god – for a long time Yahweh was one of several. Although they trusted Yahweh as a warrior god, he was not so good on agriculture and fertility, which is where Baal commanded loyalty.

A crucial point in the oral history of the Israelites was **Moses' vision of Yahweh on Mount Sinai**, during the wilderness years. However the original tradition makes no mention of the tablets bearing the commandments, which were a much later addition to the story by priests trying to impose a legal code, who claimed to have found the scrolls of the law in the temple. This of course does not make the Commandments less precious to us.

**Where did God dwell?** At an early stage the temple in Jerusalem was an essential focus of worship, but the Israelites' experience of exile led them to develop the idea that Yahweh was not confined to the temple but was with them wherever they went. This lesson is relevant to us today if the care of our buildings and our preoccupation with tradition assume undue importance in our Christianity. In fact exile and wandering is a very strong theme of the Old Testament – the expulsion from Eden, the

human race scattered from the tower of Babel, or even Abraham being called to leave his home in Ur, the origin of the nation of Israel.

**Violence and aggression alternate with justice and reconciliation.** The historians of the southern kingdom wrote blood curdling accounts of the way the occupation of Canaan was carried out (Joshua 8), imposing on the narrative the violent ethos of the region, which had experienced two hundred years of Assyrian brutality. In any case archaeologists have never found any evidence to confirm that the Exodus from Egypt ended with the Israelites returning to occupy the 'Promised Land' and subdue the indigenous people. Some speculate that it was the Egyptians who occupied the land of Canaan before being driven out, thus liberating the inhabitants in their own country.

A favourite story is that of **David and Goliath**. We can appreciate it as a wholesome lesson about how the big guy with everything on his side loses to the little fellow. We all love it: it encourages us to persevere against the odds. Or we can see it in its historical context, remembering that the writer was hero-worshipping the House of David, and at the same time demonising the Philistines, who were in fact not the uncouth people as depicted in the Old Testament, but a civilised race advanced in their technology, who were cast as the villainous opponents of the Jews.

On the other hand **Deuteronomy, which records the laws** supposedly found in the temple, insists that the Jews must be reconciled with former enemies. They had a duty of care for the stranger within their gates. They owned their land only as long as they obeyed Yahweh's commandments. And the prophet Amos rails against feasts and hypocritical singing: instead 'let justice flow on like a river'. In one book, **Isaiah**, there are two voices: the triumphalist who celebrates victory over Israel's enemies (actually he was celebrating Cyrus, the Persian king who made it possible for the Israelites to return home), versus the more pacifist author of the Servant Songs: 'I shall appoint you a light to the nations'. If these seem contradictory, they reflect the debate about the ethics of warfare and nationalism which continues today.

**The Genesis story** is a striking myth of the origin of the world, written during the Babylonian exile: the writer depicts the god of the Israelites in full control of the process of creation, unlike Babylonian gods who

struggle to recreate the world year after year. So there are politics here too!

If we are to have any proper understanding of the Old Testament it is good to see it in perspective. It reflects the failures as well as the high points of the religious quest. It is a very human narrative. We have not even looked at the **Psalms**, a record of personal experience, which plunge from exaltation, to consciousness of sin, to protest at God's apparent refusal to listen, then back to affirmation and hope.

To get a perspective of the bible, a useful book is the recent publication *The Bible – the Biography* by Karen Armstrong, from which some of the ideas in this article are drawn. It traces the historical development of the biblical texts, and the way they reflect the events and the growth in religious understanding of the people depicted there. A background knowledge of the people, their perspectives and the events they lived through helps our bible study.

*Robin Derbyshire*

***In the none too distant future the Bible we read  
could be produced in China!***

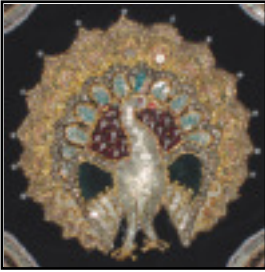
China will become one of the biggest Bible producing countries in the world when a new printing press opened in May. Nanjing, once the country's capital is home to a 48,000-sq metre factory which will employ 600 non-Christian locals to produce 23 bibles a minute. Most will be distributed in China in 10 languages and braille. The plant is expected to supply a quarter of the world's Bibles by 2009.

The Amity Printing Company, a joint venture with the British Bible Society, printed its 50 millionth Bible last December and the new press which opened on May 19 will double annual production to 12m.

'Chinese people are becoming increasingly interested in Christianity', said a spokesman for the Bible Society. 'There are differing views on how many Christians there are, but everyone agrees there is a lot of growth in the church.' At least 7% of the population are estimated to be believers. Although the Chinese authorities lifted the ban on Christianity 30 years ago, restrictions remain. Smuggling unauthorised Bibles can still lead to a jail sentence.

## Myanmar (Burma) Cyclone Appeal and URC links

The United Reformed Church has long established links with the Presbyterian Church in Myanmar (PCM). Following the recent devastation from the cyclone, the URC sent a message of prayerful support and sympathy to their friends in Tahan in the northwest of the country, and to their staff in Yangon (Rangoon).



Our own church responded on 11<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> May by making donations to the Myanmar Flood Relief Appeal, which will be sent to the Presbyterian Church in Myanmar for this work. Charles and Muriel Lodemore brought to church several artefacts from Myanmar. The illustration on our front cover is of a handworked tapestry and

features a peacock which is the emblem of the country and symbolises Courage. Other items were lacquerware plaques and boxes made from bamboo, coated with a number of layers of the lacquer obtained from the sap of a tree. The pieces are then intricately engraved and coloured, entirely by hand. Myanmar is rich in natural resources which sadly are not managed for the benefit of the population.

### **Meet Jeremy and Kate Ellis, home from Pakistan**

You are invited to meet Jeremy and Kate, with their children, Faith, Joel and Serene on home leave from their Christian work in Pakistan, at the 'At Home' arranged for them by Maureen and Brian Ellis at 51 Perry Street on **Saturday 12 July**. Refreshments served between 10-4.30.

### **Another miracle**

A priest was speeding down a motorway when he was stopped by the police. The officer smelled alcohol on his breath, and then saw the empty wine bottle on the floor of the car.

"Sir," he demanded, "Have you been drinking?"

"Just water," says the priest.

"Then why," said the officer, "do I smell wine?"

The priest thought rapidly. "Good Lord!" he cried. "He's done it again!"

## **Elizabeth Caswell says Goodbye to the Eastern Synod**

On 17 May a large gathering at Stowmarket URC said Farewell to Elizabeth, who has been our Synod Moderator for the last eleven years. Present were members of URC congregations around the Eastern Province and of Synod committees, as well as ecumenical representatives including Bishop John from Chelmsford.

There were a few speeches. The Revd Professor David Thompson spoke of how Elizabeth had put the emphasis on Grace in the Gospel. A Methodist minister paid tribute to Elizabeth's ecumenical contribution; not only because of what she represented – a female leader in a world of male church leaders - but also because of her wise counsel in meetings. In the worship afterwards, Elizabeth reflected her passion for Mission.



Elizabeth, pictured above with her husband Graham, will spend the final four years prior to her retirement as minister at Abbey Hill URC in Kenilworth, and will also have a role as Area Minister for Coventry and Warwickshire.

## **Dates for Meditation and Concern**

8 June Environment Sunday [www.arocha.org.uk](http://www.arocha.org.uk)  
15-21 June Refugee week [www.refugeeweek.org.uk](http://www.refugeeweek.org.uk)

*(From the Public Issues Calendar of the Baptist Union,  
the United Reformed Church and the Methodist Church)*

### **An Invitation to a Quiet Afternoon in June**

'Comforting, uplifting, supportive, emotional, calming, reflective'... These were just some of the words people used to express what prayer meant to them during the meeting in the church a few weeks ago. Many of us find books of prayers or particular prayers helpful as part of our own life of prayer.

On Thursday afternoon, 19<sup>th</sup> June from 2.30 pm in the Kathleen Martin room, there will be an informal opportunity to share together some of our experiences through books of prayer. Kathleen (Martin) will bring along some books and talk a little about them, but we hope that other people will have a favourite prayer that they would like to read or a book of prayers that they would like to say a little about. All friends welcome and we will share a cup of tea too! One or two books of prayer are in the Church Library. If you are able to let me know if you are thinking of coming, that would be helpful.

*Margaret Derbyshire*

## PRAYING TOGETHER

Sometimes it seems impossible to see God's face in a world devastated by huge natural disasters and by wars and conflicts. Sometimes we cannot find God in our own lives. Yet, when we pray we are seeking for that lifeline, that way of understanding which reaches further into God's presence in our world and in our own lives and which can be a light for us in our day to day existence.

O Lord, we pray for your light in our violent and uncertain and fast-moving world. May we find your eternal truths, as we search you out in continuing prayer and conversation about your world and our own small part in it. As you have given to us, in love and understanding through our Lord Jesus Christ, may we share those gifts with others near to us and further away and those not known to us. May all be encompassed with your compassionate loving care, and may we see your face more clearly in our own lives.

### ENDPIECE

#### **The World Council of Churches takes action for Peace in Israel/Palestine**

As the conflict situation between Israelis and Palestinians deteriorates with little movement towards a peaceful resolution, the World Council of Churches has asked Christian Churches to take part in a week of action for peace from 4<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> June 2008. International Church Action for Peace in Palestine and Israel (A joint advocacy initiative convened by the World Council of Churches [www.oikumene.org/en/events\\_sections/icappi\\_2008/html](http://www.oikumene.org/en/events_sections/icappi_2008/html)). This meditation *'It's time for Palestine'* which comes from the WCC speaks to many conflict situations and can be used as a meditation on the pain that lies at the heart of the Holy Land and in God's world.

#### **It's time for Palestine**

It's time for Palestine.

It's time for Palestinians and Israelis to share a just peace.

It's time to respect human lives in the land called holy.

It's time for healing to begin in wounded souls.

It's time to end 60 years of conflict, oppression and fear.  
It's time for freedom from occupation.

It's time for equal rights.

It's time to stop discrimination, segregation and restrictions on movement.

It's time for those who put up walls and fences to build them on their own property.

It's time to stop bulldozing one community's homes and building homes for the other community on land that is not theirs.

It's time to do away with double standards.

It's time for Israeli citizens to have security and secure borders agreed with their neighbours.

It's time for the international community to implement 60 years of United Nations resolutions.

It's time for Israel's government to complete the bargain offered in the Arab Peace Initiative.

It's time for those who represent the Palestinian people to all be involved in making peace.

It's time for people who have been refugees for 60 years to regain their rights and a permanent home.

It's time to assist settlers in the Occupied Palestinian Territories to make their home in Israel.

It's time for self-determination.

It's time for foreigners to visit Bethlehem and other towns imprisoned by the wall.

It's time to see settlements in their comfort and refugee camps in their despair.

It's time for people living 41 years under occupation to feel new solidarity from a watching world.

It's time to name the shame of collective punishment and to end it in all its forms.

It's time to be revolted by violence against civilians and for civilians on both sides to be safe.

It's time for both sides to release their prisoners and give those justly accused a fair trial.

It's time to reunite the people of Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

It's time for all parties to obey international and human rights law.

It's time to share Jerusalem as the capital of two nations and a city holy to three religions.

It's time for Muslim, Jewish and Christian communities to be free to visit their holy sites.

It's time in Palestine as in Israel for olive trees to flourish and grow old.

It's time to honour all who have suffered, Palestinians and Israelis.

It's time to learn from past wrongs.

It's time to understand pent-up anger and begin to set things right.

It's time for those with blood on their hands to acknowledge what they have done.

It's time to seek forgiveness between communities and to repair a broken land together.

It's time to move forward as human beings who are all made in the image of God.

All who are able to speak truth to power must speak it.

All who would break the silence surrounding injustice must break it.

All who have something to give for peace must give it.

For Palestine, for Israel and for a troubled world.

**It's time for peace.**