

Message from the Manse: about Change

Rev Robert Ely

I have been on a “Pre-Retirement Course”! Not many of the people I have spoken to have had such a treat. We learnt about pensions and benefits, housing and the many opportunities open to “retired” ministers, as well as how to keep fit and healthy.

But does a minister ever retire? He or she never stops being a minister: it’s just that the way of life *changes*. It’s as well to be prepared, for the emotional and mental changes as well as the more obvious ones (like fewer meetings!)

Life is all about change, and there are many jokes about our dislike of it. But change is both necessary and valuable. Our new hymn book “Singing the Faith” for example, will introduce us to many lovely new hymns which will enrich our worship, although many of us may discover that some favourite of ours has not survived from “Hymns and Psalms”.

But we live in a world of change, even if we are sometimes tempted to regret it. (I think the thought of visiting the dentist without anaesthetic should stop us regretting all change!) Change is at the heart of our faith, for at Christmas we celebrate the birth of “The Man who Chopped History in Half” into BC and AD, as a book on my shelf puts it. His followers have brought about massive changes, founding schools and hospitals and many charities. Huge numbers of poor people have been given hope and courage, and innumerable followers of Jesus have found meaning and purpose for their lives through the change he brings.

Let us be positive about the changes our faith brings as we go forward with Jesus into 2012: in his company all will be well.

A truly happy Christmas to you all.

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Springdale Vestry News

Bernard Davis, Senior Steward



On Sunday 4 September the Circuit Service took place at St. Andrew's, Sedgley. There was no service at Springdale so some of us attended and took part in an innovative ATIC service: Altogether in Church. Roger, the minister, wanted to give us a taste of an all age worship using a mixture of new and old hymns, power point presentation, modern bible reading and a short talk. The service was very well attended and I enjoyed the challenge of learning to sing new hymns.

There was no evening service again the following Sunday, 11 September, because there was a very special occasion at Beckminster. Here is the background to the evening service:

Over thirty years ago the Junior Church at Beckminster sponsored a student at Starehe Boys' Centre in Nairobi in Kenya. Dan Wauconda was followed later by Njoroge Njambi and then the sponsorship through Save The Children lapsed. By coincidence some years later the son of college friends Andrew and Linda Donaldson went to teach music as a volunteer at Starehe Boys' Centre and School for the disadvantaged. Martyn Donaldson contributed greatly to the school during that time and after his untimely death at the age of thirty in 2002 family and friends formed the Martyn Donaldson Memorial Trust. Each year the Trust, as part of its activities, sends out volunteers to teach music at Starehe. Every two years students from Starehe come to Macclesfield, Martyn's home town, and join with Macclesfield Methodist Community Choir and Orchestra in an evening of music and dancing providing wholesome entertainment to a packed audience. They performed the previous night in Macclesfield and repeated the performance at Beckminster before the boys returned to Nairobi the following day. The evening was called 'A Musical Liquorice Allsorts', since there was a wide range of both popular and classical music e.g. Dvorak, Mozart, Lehar and music from 'Lord of the Rings', 'Sweet Charity' and 'The Wizard of Oz'.

During the second half the six boys from Nairobi danced and sang in various African languages. After dancing in school uniform they

changed into their national costume during a short talk about how their school was run. The dancing and singing livened up somewhat when they wore their national costume! A most enjoyable evening ended with prolonged applause.

Our Harvest Festival was celebrated on Sunday 25 September. Robert took the very well attended 10.30am Parade service. In a lively sketch, the Scouts helped Robert to make us think of everything that seeds need to grow e.g. farmers, tools, soil etc. Also, the importance of the education and training of the people in poorer countries so that they may learn which crops will grow in their own climate and soil. The importance of support organisations such as Cafod, Christian Aid and Oxfam etc., were highlighted. At the end of this lively, meaningful service Jack took a photo of the morning congregation on the steps outside the atrium. After coffee in the Fellowship Room we made our way to the Hall where the Scouts and their leaders had prepared a delicious lunch consisting of soup, ham salad, apple pie and coffee with mints. At 6.30pm Wendy led us in our Harvest Songs of Praise where people, if they wished, could say why they had chosen a certain hymn. As well as harvest hymns there was also poetry and we had an enjoyable evening service. Thanks are due to those who decorated the church so well with harvest produce and the Scouts and their leaders for an excellent Harvest Lunch. The produce, once again, was given to the Little Brothers in Wolverhampton.

On Sunday 16 of October we celebrated our Church Anniversary and Dedication of the New Entrance. The day began with 8.00am Quiet Communion and at 10.30am we worshipped Café Style in the hall. This was a very interesting and well planned service led by Robert with the help of Val, Mark, Amy and Helen Cook. The lively music was provided by Helen Cooper on the piano, Julian and James on guitars, Helen Cook on the violin and Eleanor on the flute. The service was very varied. At one point the congregation had to engage in group discussion about meeting celebrities - Audrey Grainger had actually met King George VI! After this there was an enactment of the Woman of Samaria by Amy and then a very clever paper tearing trick by Mark about the Good News. Prayer Stations had been set up - some with stones, some with balloons and some with pairs of shoes. We were invited to approach these stations and follow the prayer activities arranged there. The service ended traditionally with lively

hymns and prayer and then Robert led us out on to the steps of the atrium and we released the prayer balloons. Many people worked very hard to make this a wonderful, memorable act of worship, reflection and renewal. I have mentioned some but there are always others not seen who have prepared by setting up tables and chairs to make the necessary groups or setting up the sound system or providing food and drink and so on.

At 3.00pm we had our service of Dedication for the New entrance and Thanksgiving Celebration. This was very well attended and the stage was used for extra seating. During the service Robert dedicated the atrium from the new church door. We followed this by having refreshments in the hall where a Celebration Cake was cut by Mrs Freda Bristow, one of the Founder Members of Springdale Methodist Church. As Robert said in the afternoon service, there are too many people to name who have helped in different ways for the completion of the atrium. It is also true of today's three services of celebration. I heartily thank everyone who helped to make this a very special, worshipful and meaningful day.

The first wedding after the dedication of the atrium took place on Saturday 22 October at 2.30pm when Lucy Gilbert married Andrew Cook. In a packed church Robert conducted a very joyful and moving service. Lesley read an update of 1 Corinthians chapter 13 and Liz read verses from chapter 8 Song of Solomon. I particularly liked the choice of hymns - 'God Who Sets Us On a Journey', 'Come To A Wedding' and 'Love Divine'. Lucy and Andrew looked very happy and at ease throughout the whole service.

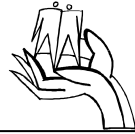
During November there were two very moving services. On the evening of 6 November we held a service to commemorate local people at whose funerals Robert had officiated, and on the morning of 13 November, along with the rest of the nation, we held our Remembrance Day service.

As I finish this article my thoughts turn to Advent and Christmas. Let us all make time for spiritual renewal as we prepare for Christmas parties, dinners and other celebrations,

Yours in Christ.

Wombourne Vestry News

Charles Clowes, Senior Steward



In September we met up with people from Springdale at Gospel Ash to hear Jeff Reynolds, the District Mission Enabler, lead us in thinking how we as churches can reach out to people in our community. Firstly, he said, “Be proud of what you do already”. I remember how one of the Wives Group said to me, “We have shared so much of our lives over the years, some good, some bad, but the way we support each other is the most important part of our group”. Jeff helped us to explore a few ideas of how we can move forward. So now we must take time to think and pray about our mission to the people of Wombourne.

Harvest festival was a joyful occasion when the choir sang and a ‘Faith Lunch’ was shared together afterwards. The fine display of harvest produce was given to the Good Shepherd in Wolverhampton. The beautiful sight of black grapes on the vine sprawling over the communion table reminded us that we are fruits of the vine and that everything we have was created by our Father God who loves us so much that he even gave his only son.

The choir sang again on ‘Ladies Day’ and David McKinlay gave us a quiz on women of the bible. What would we do without the many gifts of our women! I hate to admit it but we would be lost without them!

Wendy Gould led our ‘Remembrance Day’ Service. It was heartening to see so many Beavers, Cubs and Scouts, as well as other strangers who simply felt the need to stand with other people through out this country on this day. Wendy chose a hymn from the new ‘Singing the Faith’ hymn book - ‘By a Monument of Marble’ - to lead into the two minutes silence. The words were very poignant and made us really aware of why we were there.

On 5 November, ‘Gunpowder Treason and Plot’, David and Pauline Hotchkiss cooked a ‘Famine Breakfast’ in aid of Friends of Kenya’s Children. This was to highlight the fact that since the famine in East Africa food has

become so expensive they can only afford to give the children one bowl of porridge a day. They would love to give them a second meal. How lucky we were to be able to eat our bowls of delicious milky porridge with maple syrup and sugar, how much we take for granted! Sandra Noone came all the way from Derby to share Breakfast with us. She said that although we are all getting older and perhaps in time F. K. C. might fold up we should not be discouraged. For every child that has been fed has been given a better start in life. Every child that has been educated has the chance to become a nurse, a doctor or a teacher and make a difference in Kenya.

May every seed we sow, word we say, and good we do enable Christ to live in our world today and bear fruit in the future.

In Christ

Springdale Pastoral News

Jane Rawlings, Pastoral Secretary



Well here we are again, and by the time you are reading this we will be in Advent - the months and years seem to slip away.

On 9 October we welcomed Molli Brodie Mellissa Saull with her family and friends to her baptism. May she continue to grow in the knowledge that God is with her every step of the way.

Congratulations to Lucy and Andrew Cook who got married on 22 October. What a wonderful occasion - the weather was bright and it was lovely to see some old faces returning to join in with their celebrations. May you both continue to grow in your love of one another and enjoy a long and exciting life together. God bless you both. Emma Partridge, another of our family, has announced her engagement to Tom so we will have another wedding to look forward to in the future.

We remember all of our family at Springdale who are not well at present, thinking especially of Bob and Ruth Tong. Bob is still in hospital as I write this but hopefully with all the expertise and care he receives he

will be home soon recovering with Ruth. We also think of Geoff Race who is also in hospital recovering from a nasty fall. May God lay his healing hands upon all who need them and give strength to all who face difficult times ahead, whether in recovery or the care of a loved one. We continue to also think of Zherron Ferriday who is finding life a struggle - we pray for her and all her family as she continues to fight on.

On a happier note it is good to see Norman Priest getting around a bit more, it was lovely to see him in church on Sunday (13 November) and I understand he made it to bowling on Monday as well! It is great to see him looking better although he still has some way to go. Norman - we continue to pray for you and hope that God will bless you with the continued strength to take each day as it comes.

Congratulations to anyone who has or is celebrating a special occasion in the coming months.

Of course we are all going to celebrate the great occasion of Jesus' birth, and may I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

God bless you all.

Wombourne Pastoral News

Pauline Hotchkiss, Pastoral Secretary

As I write the news for Wombourne I am thinking that next Sunday will be Advent Sunday. Summer has gone and autumn is almost finished and when we read this it will be winter and we will be in the middle of Advent, looking forward, not back ward to welcoming Jesus into this world as a baby.

On 4 September we welcomed Matilda Amy Jane and her family and friends to celebrate her baptism. She seemed happy to be here and smiled all through the service. Matilda and her mum have joined the Prayers and Bears group, and Matilda is still smiling!

Our Memorial Service, held in November, was well attended. Everyone placed a card on the cross bearing prayers for their loved ones. Coffee was served after the service and many of those who attended stayed and chatted.

Our prayers are with those who are in hospital, or have been in hospital. Ivy Cartwright fell and fractured her leg; Elsie Martin has also fallen and hurt her leg. We ask that God will bless them both. We also think about those who have been ill, especially Cynthia Hatton, Edna Fellows and Walter Earham. We pray that they will soon be feeling well.

Congratulations to Edith and Donald Baily who celebrated 66 years of marriage in October. Congratulations also to Val Edwards on her 80th birthday and Bob Hughes who reached his 70th birthday, both in November.

Congratulations to Jak Doody, the grandson of Val Edwards, who has recently passed his driving test. Val is very proud of him and is over the moon that he passed first time. Well done Jak. Jak is a former member of Kids Club and is now a helper. He attends Shrewsbury College and is studying Art and Design.

Congratulations also to Jake Thompson, a former member of Kid's Club. Jake is the eldest grandson of Diana and Peter Spreadbury. He has recently been selected to play rugby at County level for the under 15's. Jake has been an active member of Dudley and Kingswinford Rugby Football Club for the past five years where he regularly acts as a ball-boy for the first team. Jake also plays for the Black Country District and hopes to continue to progress and enjoy his rugby. Well done Jake!

I will finish by sending my thoughts and prayers for a Happy Christmas and Peaceful New-year to you all.

From a virgin womb to an empty tomb. A life stretched between two miracles.

Our Daily Bread

O Little Town of Bethlehem

by Wendy Ross Barker (used with permission)

O sad and troubled Bethlehem
We hear your longing cry
For peace and justice to be born
And cruel oppression die.
How deep your need for that great gift
Of love in human form;
Let Christ in you be seen again
And hearts by hope made warm.

While morning stars and evening stars
Shine out in your dark sky,
Despair now stalks your troubled streets
Where innocents still die.
And Jesus, child of Mary,
Whose love will never cease,
Feels even now your pain and fear;
Longs with you for your peace.

Amazingly and lovingly
Jesus the child has come
And, brought to birth through human pain,
Makes broken hearts his home.
He comes to comfort all who weep,
To challenge every wrong;
And living with the weak and poor
Becomes their hope, their song.

When Christ came into the world, peace was sung; and when He
went out of the world, peace was bequeathed.

Francis Bacon

Desert Island Castaway

Cathy Anderson

If you were invited to be a desert island castaway for a television programme you would be told you could take two books - the Bible and Shakespeare. The chances are you already possess these, possibly tucked away in a corner of your book shelves, rarely opened perhaps, due to the many pressing demands of twentieth century life, added to by the notion that they are difficult to comprehend and anyway out of date and out of fashion.

Many of the Old Testament writers recorded stories and events passed down generations by word of mouth. The New Testament writers, however, spoke of what they witnessed first-hand, or at least from those who had been present when Jesus was alive on earth, teaching, healing, loving and dying. Those who had been in his company were fired with enthusiasm to tell the world about him, by speaking to individuals or crowds, and in writing letters and recording the Good News (Gospels) in languages known and spoken at that time.

The news spread, after a while, to countries and diverse tribes who spoke other tongues and dialects and so were unable to read the Good News for themselves. The Roman Catholic Church in the West interpreted the scriptures for the people, in ritual, sermons and also murals for instance, but they lacked direct knowledge, until five hundred years ago when a German priest called Martin Luther came on the scene. Luther was inspired with the conviction that everyone, ordinary men and women, ought to have direct access to the Bible, the 'Word of God'. He set about translating the Bible into German. This wasn't easy as the German people (far from unified at that time) spoke a kaleidoscope of different variations of the language. With his linguistic talents, combined with his theological knowledge, he produced a version by combining elements of these. Ultimately his version turned out to be the basis of modern German.

Alongside this of course, Luther was the chief instigator of the Reformation, which soon spread to other European countries, prompting other scholars to translate the scriptures into their own languages. Hence

we in England eventually got what is known as the King James' Bible (or Authorised Version) in 1611. Several forerunners, such as William Tyndale, contributed to this. It did not come about without much conflict and bloodshed as the Roman Catholics and the Protestants opposed one another, but at last, thanks also to the invention of printing, the Bible became accessible to those who could read.

Later on, Christians were inspired by the same desire for ordinary people to be able to read the scriptures to set up schools for the purpose. In the nineteenth century the major concern of the 'Ragged Schools' (the origin of Sunday schools) was to enable children to read the Bible.

Considering the colossal effort and sacrifice that has gone into this process over the centuries is it not to our shame that we neglect to enter into such a goodly heritage? Why not dust down the ancient tome, or buy a new modern translation and look and learn for yourself what it has to say?

Advent Sundays

Bernard Davis

Advent brings us time for deep reflection.

Day by day we can draw nearer to God.

Very soon we shall celebrate Christ's birthday.

Every Sunday has different themes

Note: on the first Sunday we think about

The promise of God to put things right.

Second Sunday asks us to search the prophets

Until we find clear references to Jesus.

Now on the third Sunday we think of John

Daring us to prepare the way for Jesus,

And on the last Sunday we think of Mary,

Young yet willing to be part of God's plan.

So! What am I going to do during Advent?



Mission Shaped Ministry

Wolverhampton (Codsall) 2012

mission shaped ministry is an in depth one year learning experience for those seeking to develop fresh expressions or wanting to see their existing churches re-shaped for mission. Led by experienced local and national teachers and practitioners, *msm* helps people within a community of learning, understand how both fresh expressions, and their ministries within them, are formed and sustained.

For full information about the course, including the dates for the year (3 Saturdays, 1 weekend and 6 weeknights) please contact Anne Riddle on 07974 197806 or anne.riddle1@ntlworld.com. The all inclusive cost of the course is £299. (Please ask for details of paying by instalments. Training grants may be available to help). More details are available from [www.freshexpressions.org.uk/mission shaped ministry](http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk/mission%20shaped%20ministry).



New Stewards Required at Springdale for May 2012

Bernard Davis

Do you want to serve Jesus and the church at Springdale in a special and vital way? Do you want to grow in your faith? Then come and join a team of dedicated Christians: The Church Stewards - we have a sense of humour and are very supportive. **God may be calling you!**

Please pray that some church members will seriously consider God's call and be willing to undertake a four year commitment as a Church Steward. I have literature which explains what being a church steward entails. You will NOT be left in the dark to muddle through. Any steward will be prepared to discuss the role and responsibilities of the commitment with you.

Christmas Tree Festival

Pat Beddall



The 2011 Christmas Tree Festival will be held in Wombourne at the United Reformed Church, High Street, from 9 - 12 December. Once again the Methodist Kids' Club will be decorating their tree. Last year approximately 45 trees were on display, each different and beautiful in its own way. This is an event that is well worth a visit and an invitation is extended for you to come and see a truly wonderful sight.

Notice for Wombourne People...

Pauline Hotchkiss has agreed to liaise with anyone who has articles to submit for The Triangle. She will prepare the items for sending on to The Triangle through an e-mail. Please watch out for the next deadline which you will find on the back of the Triangle. She would suggest that items be with her by the Sunday before.

Blessed be God for his unspeakable gift. We need Him. Souls desire Him as the heart panteth after the waterbrooks. He came to the world in the fullness of time. He comes at this advent season to us. To-day may be for some soul here the fullness of time. Let us open the gates and admit Him, that this Christ may be our Christ forever; that living with Him and dying with Him, we may also be glorified together with Him.

David J. Burrell

What is an Atrium?

John Hodgson

You buy your dictionary/Google/whatever and you make your choice.

- 1 It is an inner courtyard open to the sky.
- 2 It is a chamber of the heart that receives blood from the veins and forces it into a ventricle or ventricles.
- 3 It is a central courtyard of a Roman house : a covered portico especially before a Church door.
- 4 It is a usually sky lit central court rising through several storeys with galleries and rooms opening off at each level.

The industrial revolution in the 19th century saw great advances in the manufacture of iron and glass and meant that otherwise open courtyards could have horizontal glazing overhead to eliminate some weather elements from the space, giving birth to the modern atrium.

There are many beautiful examples of atria (plural) in the world some being in Halifax in the Victoria Hall and Town Hall. The tallest one is in Dubai and the largest in the world is reputed to be in Las Vegas, and is about 2,000 times as large as ours at Springdale.

There are no doubt many more useless facts about atria but there can be no argument whatsoever that the atrium we have at Springdale is a magnificent addition to the life and work of our Church. May God bless all who pass through it.

I once had a man call at the last minute on a weekend. He wanted a private dining room. I explained that it was high season and we had nothing. "Well, if the Queen of England were coming, would you have a room for her to dine?" "Yes, of course," I said. The caller replied, "Well, she's not coming, so I'll take her room."

Restaurateur Billy Stolz

The League of Light

Taken from Action for Children magazine, Autumn 2011



Many of you have been supporting us for a long time, and will remember the League of Light. In fact, you might even have one of the League's beautiful lantern collection boxes sitting on a shelf somewhere. They were an iconic and integral part of a fundraising campaign founded on the dedication of local supporters like you.

The League of Light began in 1932, when Action for Children was known as the National Children's Home. The idea was that each member would put 2 1/2 d in their collection box every week - an annual donation of half a guinea. When The League was formed, artist John Buchanan was commissioned to design the collection boxes. He chose to make them lanterns - decorated with his striking signature illustrations - and each member was asked to recruit new members to The League, continuing the chain of lanterns being 'lit'.

By the 1950s there were more than 110,000 members and we know that many of you still collect your change using these boxes. We'd love you to send in pictures of yourself and your box, and tell us how long you and your family have been part of The League of Light. Pictures can be sent to Action for Children, 3 The Boulevard, Ascot Road, Watford, WD18 8AG.

John Buchanan was born in 1908 with no hands. Despite this, he went on to become an extraordinary and much-loved artist, with commissions from Queen Mary and awards from the Royal Society of Arts. And he grew up in the National Children's Home in Chipping Norton. John was taken into care when his parents couldn't cope with his disabilities, and it was there that he started to draw. Soon it was clear he had a genuine gift, and created the most intricate pen and ink designs and vivid illustrations. His links to the National Children's Home continued through his life, not just in The League of Light lanterns. He illustrated many books and calendars for NCH, including the handbook for the NCH Ladies' Association. The results were so stunning that one member set up a fund in his honour so that other children in care could attend university.

Food for thought as we approach Christmas!

Pauline Hotchkiss

I think the following applies just as much to our country as it does in the USA. Apparently the White House recently referred to Christmas Trees as Holiday Trees for the first time this year which prompted CBS presenter, Ben Stein, to present this piece which I would like to share with you. The following was written by Ben Stein and recited by him on CBS Sunday Morning Commentary.

My confession:

I am a Jew, and every single one of my ancestors was Jewish. And it does not bother me even a little bit when people call those beautiful lit up, bejewelled trees, Christmas trees. I don't feel threatened. I don't feel discriminated against. That's what they are, Christmas trees. It doesn't bother me a bit when people say, 'Merry Christmas' to me. I don't think they are slighting me or getting ready to put me in a ghetto. In fact, I kind of like it. It shows that we are all brothers and sisters celebrating this happy time of year. It doesn't bother me at all that there is a manger scene on display at a key intersection near my beach house in Malibu. If people want a crèche, it's just as fine with me as is the Menorah a few hundred yards away.

I don't like getting pushed around for being a Jew, and I don't think Christians like getting pushed around for being Christians. I think people who believe in God are sick and tired of getting pushed around, period. I have no idea where the concept came from, that America is an explicitly atheist country. I can't find it in the Constitution and I don't like it being shoved down my throat.

Or maybe I can put it another way: where did the idea come from that we should worship celebrities and we aren't allowed to worship God? I guess that's a sign that I'm getting old, too. But there are a lot of us who are wondering where these celebrities came from and where the America we knew went to.

In light of the many jokes we send to one another for a laugh, this is a little different: This is not intended to be a joke; it's not funny, it's intended to get you thinking.

Billy Graham's daughter was interviewed on the Early Show and Jane Clayson asked her 'How could God let something like this happen?' (regarding Hurricane Katrina). Anne Graham gave an extremely profound and insightful response. She said, 'I believe God is deeply saddened by this, just as we are, but for years we've been telling God to get out of our schools, to get out of our government and to get out of our lives. And being the gentleman He is, I believe He has calmly backed out. How can we expect God to give us His blessing and His protection if we demand He leave us alone?'

In light of recent events - terrorists attack, school shootings, etc. - I think it started when Madeleine Murray O'Hare (she was murdered, her body found a few years ago) complained she didn't want prayer in our schools, and we said OK. Then someone said you better not read the Bible in school. The Bible says thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not steal, and love your neighbour as yourself. And we said OK.

Then Dr. Benjamin Spock said we shouldn't spank our children when they misbehave, because their little personalities would be warped and we might damage their self-esteem (Dr. Spock's son committed suicide). We said an expert should know what he's talking about. And we said OK

Now we're asking ourselves why our children have no conscience, why they don't know right from wrong, and why it doesn't bother them to kill strangers, their classmates, and themselves. Probably, if we think about it long and hard enough, we can figure it out. I think it has a great deal to do with 'WE REAP WHAT WE SOW.'

Funny how simple it is for people to trash God and then wonder why the world's going to hell. Funny how we believe what the newspapers say, but question what the Bible says. Funny how you can send 'jokes' through e-mail and they spread like wildfire, but when you start sending messages regarding the Lord, people think twice about sharing. Funny

how lewd, crude, vulgar and obscene articles pass freely through cyberspace, but public discussion of God is suppressed in the school and workplace.

Are you laughing yet?

Funny how when you forward this message, you will not send it to many on your address list because you're not sure what they believe, or what they will think of you for sending it.

Funny how we can be more worried about what other people think of us than what God thinks of us.

Pass it on if you think it has merit. If not, then just discard it - no one will know you did. But, if you discard this thought process, don't sit back and complain about what bad shape the world is in.

My Best Regards,

Honestly and respectfully, Ben Stein

There was a rich industrialist who was disturbed to find a fisherman sitting lazily beside his boat. "Why aren't you out there fishing?" he asked. "Because I've caught enough fish for today," said the fisherman. "Why don't you catch more fish than you need?" the rich man asked. "What would I do with them?" "You could earn more money," came the impatient reply, "and buy a better boat so you could go deeper and catch more fish. You could purchase nylon nets, catch even more fish, and make more money. Soon you'd have a fleet of boats and be rich like me."

The fisherman asked, "Then what would I do?" "You could sit down and enjoy life," said the industrialist. "What do you think I'm doing now?" the fisherman replied as he looked placidly out to sea.

Philip Parham

Harvest Lunch

John Hodgson

What a wonderful meal we were given at the lunch on harvest Sunday. It deserved not only our grateful thanks to God before the meal for the food about to be served, but also afterwards to the leaders and Scouts who did such a magnificent job in the expert and professional way in which they served us with the food and cleared away afterwards. And what a great variety and quantity. Perhaps we ought to have Harvest Festivals more often!!!

It does make me realise more fully that we have a wealth of talent and numbers of people at Springdale in Junior Church, Hot Pot, Scout Group and Guide Company, Shell Group, Youth Club, Chat Group, Prayers and Bears and any others I've forgotten to mention, who spend a lot of time and effort week by week, month by month and year by year both at Springdale, and in preparation for their weekly meetings and also in many "off-site" activities, so often forgotten and un-noticed. They all do such a splendid job. Maybe we should consider having a Sunday set aside each year when we would really make a special effort at morning and evening worship to appreciate and recognise the dedication, devotion and sacrifices our youth leaders all make and thank God that they are nurturing those who may be our Church of tomorrow. Church Council please note!

Our five-year-old Jeanie took to rising at 5:30 each morning and puttering around just long enough to wake the rest of us before climbing back into bed. Her reason was always the same- she had to see if there was a surprise. Finally we told her firmly that she must stop and that there wouldn't be any surprises until Christmas, which was months away. "I wasn't talking about living-room surprises," she said through her tears. "I was talking about like yesterday morning it was raining, and this morning real summer's here, and tomorrow morning I'll probably find some pink in the rosebuds." Jeanie still gets up each morning at 5:30!

Mrs Roy F Carter

Wombourne Prayers and Bears

Carole Walker

*'Our God is a great big God...
He's higher than a skyscraper...
He's deeper than a submarine'...*

These are just a few lines of one of our favourite songs sung at Prayers and Bears. During the fellowship after our short time of worship, one of our mums told me that her son, now at Infants' school asked her recently, "Is God under our floor, Mummy?" Not quite knowing how to answer, she asked, "Why do you ask?" Her son replied, "Well, He is deeper than a submarine!"

I would like to say how much Eric and I appreciate all the support we receive from our helpers each month. It is a real joy to get to know the little ones and their mums. We can learn so much from them. We are looking forward to our 'Special Visitor' in December (the one dressed in red), and our worship, remembering that first Christmas long ago, and what it means to us as Christians today.

There was a story of a duke who boarded a galley ship and went below to talk with the criminals manning the oars. He asked several of them what their offenses were. Almost every man claimed he was innocent, blaming someone else or accusing the judge of taking a bribe. One young fellow, however, replied, "Sir, I deserve to be here. I stole some money, No one is at fault but me. I'm guilty." Upon hearing this, the duke shouted, "You scoundrel, you! What are you doing here with all these honest men? Get out of their company at once.!" The duke ordered that this prisoner be released. He was set free, while the rest were left to tug at the oars.

Charles Spurgeon

Wombourne Famine Breakfast

David Hotchkiss

More than £200 was raised at a Famine Breakfast served at Wombourne on 5 November in aid of Friends of Kenya's Children. The church supports the charity in many ways, and this event was a response to the ongoing famine in the region.

FKC supports a school and an orphanage, which is currently feeding the very many children who "see the smoke" and know they can get a meal there. Demand has been so high that the normal minimum of two meals of maize porridge per day had been cut to one.

In sharing a simple breakfast of porridge or toast, and making a donation, it was hoped to help restore the children's two meals. The National Secretary of FKC, Sandra Noon, travelled down from Derby for the event bringing latest news from Kenya and some fabulous pictures. She also presented the church with a certificate showing our involvement in "Project 36", which sponsors teaching staff. For more information about the work of FKC, go to www.fkc.org.uk



Carole Walker hands Robert his bowl of porridge watched by Sandra Noon, the national secretary for FKC.



Wombourne Civic Carol Service

Robert Ely

On Thursday December 8th the annual Civic Carol Service in Wombourne will be held in the Civic Centre at 8 p.m. This is a really good chance to join with others in a celebration of our Christian faith: do come if you can!

“Come to the Manger”

Robert Ely

Last year we planned a new venture with the Anglicans of Holy Cross Church Bobbington, which unfortunately had to be cancelled because of the dire weather. So this year we shall try again to hold a carol service with a difference in the old barn at Whittimere Farm. The barn is about 400 years old, but has been wonderfully restored and will provide the ideal setting for our Christmas carols. You are advised to dress warmly, but you will have neither mud around your ankles nor wind around your knees! We start at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday December 20th: an event not to be missed!

Carol Singing in Wombourne

Robert Ely

You have four chances to sing carols in Wombourne this Christmas! On Monday December 12th we meet at 7 p.m. in the Car Park of “The Bede” to revive the tradition of singing around the Gidgetty Estate. On Saturday 17th we shall be singing around the “Maypole” from 10:30, and on Monday 19th between 7 and 8 p.m. the venue is Sainsbury’s. And of course on Sunday 18th at 6:30 p.m. our Carol Service takes place in the Methodist Church. You could be at all four events!



“Kairos” Palestine

Robert Ely

About two dozen of us gathered at Springdale one November morning to hear about the appalling situation faced by our fellow Christians and many other Palestinians in what we call “The Holy Land”. They live separated from their livelihoods, needing permits to travel in their own country, and being forced to queue for hours to pass through the Separation Wall that protects Israeli settlements, many of them illegal under international law. They suffer evictions and even demolition of their houses as the settlers continue to encroach on Palestinian land. Yet they remain determined to persist in nonviolent resistance: and they appeal for our help.

“Kairos” means “the moment”: this is it! What can we do? We can become better informed, we can support the Palestinian economy by buying their crafts and fairly traded olive oil, and we can join the boycott on goods produced on occupied land. And of course we can pray. If nothing else, please do that.

(page 28 onwards has more details)

One Sunday I was entertained in a farm home of a member of a rural church. I was impressed by the intelligence and unusually good behaviour of the only child in the home, a little four-year-old boy. Then I discovered one reason for the child's charm. The mother was at the kitchen sink, washing the intricate parts of the cream separator when the little fellow came to her with a magazine. "Mother," he asked, "what is this man in the picture doing?" To my surprise she dried her hands, sat down on a chair and taking the boy in her lap she spent ten minutes answering his questions. After the child had left I commented on her having interrupted her chores to answer the boy's questions, saying, "Most mothers wouldn't have bothered." "I expect to be washing cream separators for the rest of my life," she told me, "But never again will my son ask me that question!"

Unknown

Fairtrade News

Teresa Ely

First of all we want to say a very big thank you to all of you who have supported the various Fair Trade events recently.

The Just Fayre at Beckminster was a great success with over £2,000 taken on the day: Nearly £400 was sent to Traidcraft Exchange and over £1800 of Fair Trade items sold. Book the date for next year's Just Fayre – **Saturday October 13th at Lanesfield from 11am to 3pm!**

The open House Days at the manse were also successful. We enjoyed the fellowship, nearly £750 of goods was sold, and we sent £110 to Traidcraft Exchange.

Your regular support of our stalls after worship and your orders also help to keep our turnover up. But don't forget anyone can call into the **Wolverhampton Fair Traid** Shop in Darlington Street to buy or browse. The shop is now open on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 10am to 4pm and also on Wednesday and Thursday evenings from 5.30 – 7.30pm. Volunteers are always needed for a variety of jobs in the shop, so if you think you can help, please contact one of us. Wherever you shop please do look out for the Fair Trade label and buy Fair Trade products wherever you can.

Fairtrade Fortnight 2012 will take place from **27th February - 11th March**. In 2012 we'll be asking everyone to 'Take a step' for Fairtrade. That step can simply be changing one product in your shopping basket to Fair Trade. What other steps might we take as individuals or churches to use our purchasing power to make life better for those who produce our food and clothing? If you want to know any more about Fair Trade, or if you want a catalogue, please ask us! Thank you again for the difference you are making to lives round the world.

Teresa Ely

Diana Beaumont

amos trust

The Bethlehem Pack - Information taken from their website

The Bethlehem Pack is a resource to help churches talk about the current situation in Bethlehem at carol services and Christmas events.

We have included in this pack the words of people living in Bethlehem today. These pieces are suitable to be read out in a carol service or Christmas event. The pack also contains a liturgy to use with a large olive wood walled nativity set and links to photos of the separation wall to use in services. The pack is put together by Amos Trust, a Christian charity supporting projects run by Palestinian Christians in Bethlehem, Nazareth and Gaza. Amos are the founders of *A Just Peace for Palestine*, a campaign for faith groups, churches, and other community groups who believe that justice for the Palestinians is the best foundation for a peaceful future for both Israelis and Palestinians. Though this pack focuses on the Christian presence in Bethlehem, it is important to remember the Muslim and Jewish communities in the region in our prayers, particularly as the coverage we see of the situation so often frames the conflict in religious terms.

Many people may not be aware just how hopeless and how oppressive the situation in Bethlehem has become. For peace to come to the Holy Land, we must speak out about the injustices faced by the people of Bethlehem and the Palestinians, supporting them with our prayers, both at Christmas and throughout the year. Let's not remain silent this year. As our friend Bishop Riah Abu El Assal, former Bishop of Jerusalem put it: "My message for the churches at Christmas is stop mentioning the word Bethlehem unless you care about us. Stop singing 'Oh little town of Bethlehem' unless you come and visit with its people, unless you do something about protecting the holiness of the place, and the Christian history of this wonderful place."

Facts about Bethlehem today

These facts could be printed on a service sheet for a carol service, projected during a time of reflection, or read out as inspiration for prayers for peace. You can download photos of Bethlehem and the separation wall to accompany these facts via www.amostrust.org/downloads.

Today Bethlehem is surrounded by an eight metre high separation wall with military watch towers. It was built by the Israeli occupation forces. The International Court of Justice in The Hague has stated that the wall goes against international law and should come down. No-one can enter Bethlehem without going through a military checkpoint and showing their ID. If Jesus was born today in Bethlehem, the Wise Men would spend several hours queuing to enter the town.

The population of Bethlehem is Muslim and Christian Palestinian people. Muslims and Christians have been living together peacefully in Bethlehem for generations. Many Palestinian Christian families in Bethlehem can trace their ancestry back to the earliest Christian community. All Palestinians, Muslim or Christian, no longer have the right to move freely. They require a permit from the Israeli authorities in order to come and go from their home town.

Trees, especially olive trees, are very important in Palestinian culture. Since 1994, almost 60,000 trees have been uprooted, burnt or cut down by Israeli forces in the Bethlehem area. Just this year, hundreds more have been uprooted in Al Walajah and Nablus. The separation wall isolates 25% of Bethlehem's agricultural land, meaning Palestinian farmers have to obtain permits and go through military checkpoints every day to get to their land. Checkpoints are often closed without warning or farmers are turned back for no reason.

In the Bethlehem area alone, there are 19 illegal Israeli settlements taking Palestinian land from local families and choking Palestinian communities. If Jesus was born today in Bethlehem, much of the shepherds' fields would have been confiscated for illegal Israeli settlements. 87% of Bethlehem's land has been taken by Israeli occupation enforced restrictions. This means that people are forced to live in cramped conditions. In some places the separation wall is built so close to buildings that the windows are blocked and daylight can't get in. The wall has cut people off from their shops and their land, and has made busy roads into dead ends. One in five people in Bethlehem are now unemployed in what was once a thriving town. If Jesus was born in Bethlehem today, the innkeeper would be struggling to keep his business going.

Palestinian Christians speak

Here are some words from four Palestinian Christians who live in Bethlehem and one living in Nazareth. These statements are intended to be read aloud as part of a service, perhaps leading into prayers for peace.

Jasmine Rishmawi is from Beit Sahour, the site of the Shepherds' fields, close to Bethlehem.

Christmas has always been my favourite time of year. As soon as December starts, you can feel a warm breeze around which you'll never experience unless you are in Bethlehem for Christmas. Just by walking around this little blessed town, you will feel the pure touch of God in your soul; Jesus is born in your heart.

Whenever I think of Christmas, the picture of my family gathering just pops into my head causing me to smile effortlessly. One of my best memories is the year my brother and sisters and I got my Dad to take us around Bethlehem to see the Christmas lights and the Santas all around the town giving out chocolates and balloons, spreading good cheer. It is a memory of the good times and great laughs in spite of everything.

Another Christmas I'll never forget is when my sister got stuck on the Jordanian – Israeli border on Christmas Eve. She had to stay in Jordan and missed Christmas with the family. I will never forget the year I was returning home to Bethlehem for Christmas from my school in Ramallah. At the checkpoint soldiers searched through my backpack and unwrapped all the gifts I had brought for my family.

I will never ever forget the year when my college friends and I decided to spend Christmas in Jerusalem for a change, but after hours of humiliation and harassment at the checkpoint, we had to go back home, celebrations forgotten.

This Christmas, I won't beg my Dad for a ride around town even though it is still decorated amazingly. Every time I see that huge eight metre high wall around my little town, I lose any hope I have in my heart. This Christmas I don't want pictures of the wall to be saved in my memory destroying my hopes. I want to keep my hope alive; the hope from the

birth of Jesus of a better life coming filled with peace and love. I want to keep my hope of life in which you're allowed to dream and to live a life that is not prohibited by an army or a wall. It's the life that I wouldn't trade for anything; it's the life that I am always dreaming of.

Sami Awad is the Director of the Holy Land Trust, a Christian peace organisation that is a partner of Amos Trust. The Holy Land Trust promotes non-violent resistance and peaceful protest, and is based in Bethlehem.

Greetings to you this Christmas season from the little town of Bethlehem. This little town, the place where the Prince of Peace was born continues to face daily hardships. Just this year alone, in the surrounding beautiful villages, hundreds if not thousands of olive trees were burned by illegal Israeli settlers for absolutely no reason but to humiliate and damage the source of livelihood for hundreds of Palestinian families. Land theft for the building of the illegal separation wall and expanding illegal settlements is worse than ever before. No matter where you stand in Bethlehem, you can see the effects of the cold grip of this brutal and humiliating occupation.

It is important for us here in Bethlehem to know that other Christians around the world agree that this occupation has to end. It is encouraging for us to know that people have realised that you can stand up for the human rights of the Palestinians without compromising the rights of Israelis to also live in peace. You do not have to pick a side. I invite you this Christmas season to continue praying for peace for both communities that live in what we all call the Holy Land.

I remind you this Christmas season of the story of the Magi who came to Bethlehem requested by King Herod to go and find out what is happening there. Once they came, saw, met, and worshiped with those who lived in this town, their lives were transformed fully and they could not go back the way they came. They did not declare war on King Herod or demand that he was overthrown; they simply chose a different path, a path that honoured the true message and spirit of the Prince of Peace, a message of peace on earth and goodwill to all, including both Israelis and Palestinians.

Rana Salman is from Bethlehem in the Occupied West Bank where she works for the Palestinian NGO, The Holy Land Trust.

In Bethlehem, getting families together during Christmas is a big challenge! People are separated from each other by an eight meter-high wall. Each town is surrounded by a checkpoint. Families have to apply for a permit issued by the Israeli Authority to visit each other during this season. Sometimes, you may get one while some of your family members won't or just the opposite. It happens randomly and you never know if your name will be picked or not. Although it is supposed to be a joyous day, things don't happen as we expect in Palestine.

Luke 2:15 says: *When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us."* If I could send a message to churches in the UK this Christmas, I would ask all churches who make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land to visit not only historic sites and churches in Bethlehem but to visit the '*living stones*'- the Palestinian Christians and spend time with them, share a meal or serve the community to discover the real joy, just as the shepherds did!

People ask what Jesus would do if He visited modern Bethlehem but I'm not sure if Jesus can make it to Bethlehem today! Being a Jew living in Nazareth, Jesus will not be allowed by his own leadership to enter Bethlehem. He will have to "*illegally*" sneak into Bethlehem and maybe get searched at a checkpoint. As He approached Bethlehem and saw the reality, he would probably weep over the town of his birthplace the same way he wept over Jerusalem.

My hopes for next year are to end all systems of oppression, injustice and brutal violence and to just have peace for all: peace in our families, peace in the world and especially peace in the land we are privileged to call Holy!

Rifat Kassis is a Palestinian activist from Beit Sahour, a village close to Bethlehem which is the site of the Shepherds' fields. Rifat is one of the authors of the Kairos Palestine document, a call and challenge from the Christian community in Palestine to Churches around the world.

To our Christian brothers and sisters in UK, on behalf of Kairos Palestine, I send my warmest greetings to your communities and families as Christmas approaches. I also write with three humble calls about the oppressive reality we face in Palestine in general and Bethlehem in particular.

The first call is to *come and see*. Many pilgrims travel to Bethlehem to see the holy sites, but they leave without ever seeing *us*, the Palestinian Christians who live in the grip of occupation. Bethlehem -- its lands constrained by illegal settlements and devoured by the eight-meter Separation Wall, its residents governed by punishing movement restrictions -- remains in a chokehold, as do our lives.

There is, then, a tremendous gap between the reality we live and the touristic image distributed to travellers, including Christian pilgrims. But the gap can be bridged. It begins with this call: "come and see." We believe in the power of tourism as an economic and political force that can advocate for the Palestinian struggle with peace with justice.

The second call is to *support us economically*. Purchasing Palestinian products, food, and handicrafts; staying in Palestinian-run hotels; and using Palestinian buses and tour companies are not only economic decisions, but also political ones. They support our heritage and sustainability at a time when Israel seeks to dominate both the tourist industry and the tourist narrative.

And our third call is to *pray for us*. Many Palestinians, including Christians, remain hopeful, and we are empowered by the joint efforts of committed, peace-seeking Jews and members of the international community.

We invite you to come, to see, to pray, and to act in the name of peace with justice. We wish you a blessed Christmas season.

Susan Barhoum is from Nazareth in Israel, where she and her husband pastor a church. As Palestinian Arab Christians they are part of a discriminated minority in Israeli society.

Palestinian Arabs living in Israel are just 20% of the population of Israel. They do not have equal rights with Israeli people, and there are over 50 laws that discriminate against them, restricting their rights to work, educate their children and travel. Palestinian Arab Christians in Israel are a minority within this minority. The Christian community in the Holy Land is dwindling, as more and more Christians are leaving to find better lives abroad for themselves and their families. Christians in Israel have existed since the day of Pentecost and we do not want the churches to merely become buildings. However Christian people are not furniture or artefacts to be preserved, but people with needs and aspirations just like you in the west.

As we celebrate Christmas and think of baby Jesus, we are encouraged by the Virgin Mary, who was chosen to bring him into the world. She was brave enough to accept God's blessings on her at a time when she could have faced death as a pregnant unwed young woman. Today, in the city of Nazareth, where Jesus grew up, Christians are facing a constant struggle for existence, but God provides us with hope to persevere during this difficult time.

Your prayers, solidarity and support, particularly at Christmas, are greatly needed and appreciated, because as it says in 1 Corinthians verse 12: *'we are one body and its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.'* May God bless you as you remember your Christian brothers and sisters who live in Israel.

What next? - campaigning & visiting

A Just Peace for Palestine is a campaign for churches and faith groups to engage with the issues surrounding the current situation in Palestine and Israel, which takes its lead from local partners on the ground. The campaign website www.justpeaceforpalestine.org has lots of clear, basic information about the situation in Palestine, the impact of the wall and the occupation, as well as suggestions of action churches and groups can

can take to lend their voice to seeking a just peace for Palestine and a fair future for Israel.

Amos Trust is one of the founder organisations of the campaign, which is endorsed by over 30 groups including BMS World Mission, CMS, Friends of Sabeel, Greenbelt Festival, Amos's partners the Holy Land Trust, ICAHD UK, Jews for Justice for Palestinians, the Methodist Church in the UK and Ireland, Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Pax Christi and War on Want. It has also received individual endorsements including from the Archbishop of Wales, as well as Christian, Jewish, and Muslim leaders, activists, and authors. We encourage you to sign up to the campaign via www.justpeaceforpalestine.org

The Kairos Palestine Document

A Just Peace for Palestine came about as a result of the Kairos Palestine Document, which was published in December 2009. Kairos is the Greek word for 'special or significant moment in time.' The document was the work of a group of Palestinian Christian leaders and theologians, and was endorsed by a large number of churches and church groups in Israel, Palestine and internationally. It appeals to the church worldwide for solidarity and a response to the situation in Palestine. This historic call was described by Amos Trust's director Garth Hewitt as a "heartfelt cry from the suffering of the Christian voices of the Palestinian people." You can read more about the Kairos Document here, www.kairospalestine.ps

Made in Palestine

Made in Palestine is Amos Trust's new initiative which centres around products that get people talking about Palestine. The t-shirts and Christmas cards all feature the same design and can be bought from the made in Palestine website www.madeinpalestine.co.uk. We want you to wear a t-shirt or send a card this year to get your friends and family thinking about why the phrase Made in Palestine is so significant. Let's make Palestine the focus this Christmas.

See for yourself: visits to the Holy Land

Amos Trust organises annual visits to the Holy Land. To find out more, visit www.amostrust.org/travel

God of liberation

May there be a just peace for Palestine
And therefore peace and security for Israelis too.
May the road to justice in the Holy Land
Bring hope, peace and dignity -
For both Palestinians and Israelis
So both communities see each other clearly,
Treat each other fairly,
And find a way forward that brings equality,
Democracy, freedom,
And human rights for all.
God of liberation
May Palestinians find justice at last
So Palestinians and Israelis can both live in peace –
Both live securely –
Both live in freedom -
Without walls, without checkpoints, closures and curfews.
May all realise the great message of hope
That all are chosen or none -
We are all in this together -
One God, one community, one hope, one future.



Garth Hewitt

Deadline for the next edition of Triangle is
Sunday 26 February, 2012

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Please hand in your articles directly, or via your stewards, to **Helen Cooper** Alternatively, follow the link on the Springdale website in the “contacts” section (www.springdalechurch.org.uk) or just email to [triangle\[at\]springdalechurch.org.uk](mailto:triangle[at]springdalechurch.org.uk)