

mission matters

Issue 11 March 2004



A message to our churches from the Llandudno Conference 2003

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." (Luke 4:18,19)

We, the representatives of 61 Methodist, United and Uniting Churches around the world, greet you warmly in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are in Britain, at the invitation of the British Methodist Church, to take part in the Tercentenary Celebrations of John Wesley's birth and now to consult together as partner churches on the theme of "Challenges and Choices".

We affirm that Methodism is committed to apostolic faith, evangelism, discipline, preaching of the Word, class meetings, personal and social holiness – features that ought to continue to be evident in our work and witness as they are relevant to this and every age.

We affirm our commitment to the reign of God and the proclamation of good news for all. We feel challenged to continue to condemn the world economic system that has produced massive unemployment, exploitation of women and children, forced migration, inadequate health care, impoverishment, corruption, greed and

violence. To this end it is our responsibility to co-operate with organisations, agencies and groups that share similar aims.

We have been challenged afresh by the prophetic words of Scripture and made increasingly aware of the grace of God that is at work in our lives. We are called upon to engage in mission that is rooted in the justice of God's reign. The gospel so proclaimed brings salvation in Christ, promotes healing and solidarity with those who are disadvantaged, with the spiritually and materially poor and with the marginalised. We will continue to rely upon the Holy Spirit who leads us into all truth and who enables us to proclaim the gospel with conviction and power.

We proclaim the sanctity of life - a gift from God. We deplore the wanton killing of human beings whether in war or as they go about their everyday activities. We consider it criminal that children are lured onto the field of battle and so grow up with hate. Furthermore we condemn the abuse of women and children for prostitution.

We believe that it is important to keep before our people the seriousness of the HIV/AIDS pandemic that is tearing apart communities across the world. To this end, we consider it right and necessary to talk intentionally about sexual relationships and behaviour with our congregations, so that human sexuality is recognised as a gift from God to be used responsibly. We challenge each of our churches to work out appropriate responses in their particular situations.

We acknowledge how much we depend upon one another as members of the universal body of Christ. We agree to strengthen our partnership links and to facilitate the sharing of theological insights, of information, of personnel and of material resources that will continue to be an expression of our participation in God's mission. We invite all our churches to join together in this commitment as partners in our common mission.

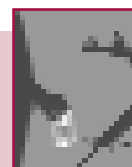
Llandudno 2003

A commitment was made to take back this message to each country and to explore ways of working with these themes.

To facilitate this, during 2004, Mission Matters will be covering:

- May** The commitment to the reign of God, focussing on economic and social justice and the promotion of healing and wholeness.
- September** The commitment to the sanctity of life, focussing on human sexuality, HIV/AIDS, and the empowerment of women and children.
- November** The commitment of Methodism to apostolic faith, evangelism, preaching, class meetings and the personal and social holiness.

We would love to be able to tell your mission stories that may inspire others to action. Please contact the Mission Education office with an article of 200 – 350 words. Deadlines 9 March, 5 July, 13 September



A Message to our Churches

The message that *Mission Matters* will explore in the next few issues would not have happened but for John Wesley. He began the movement called Methodism, that has become a world-wide family of Churches. The Tercentenary celebrations of John Wesley's birth enabled and inspired representatives of the different Churches to gather together in Britain.

So it was under the watchful eye of John Wesley that Heads, or their representatives, of 61 national Partner Churches gathered in Llandudno in June 2003. The theme was "Serving Christ by Working Together". The prepared programme was full, but we agreed at the outset that we needed to be flexible enough to let the Holy Spirit lead us where God wanted us to go. Thus it was that a proposed short and shared manifesto turned into 'A Message' that occupied much of our thinking and discussions (formal and informal) for our last two days together. Our friends from different parts of the world felt it was so important that we all owned the Message – it was from all and to all. "Please will you share it with the British Church, as we will share it with our Churches." And this we are doing.

Two things stand out for me personally. First, that the openness and honesty shared in the process was as important as the final document. Secondly, the importance of challenging an acceptance that this document should be drafted in English and then translated into other languages; and realising how different some of the phrases would have been if drafted in another language and then translated into English. In a global family, we need to keep challenging each other as well as sharing the joy.

It is not a 'perfect' document. Compromises were made, and acknowledged, by many of the signatories in Llandudno. But it represents an honest intention to engage the world family called Methodists in the things that are of importance to all of us, and we believe of importance to God who calls us and then leads us.

May you enjoy working out your own practical responses to some of the issues raised.

Michael King

Team Leader, World Church Office



Churches in Reading Women's Centre learning felt-making.

Some suggestions on using *A message to our churches*

1. If you are a large church you may like to ask different groups, children, young people, Women's Network, Fellowship etc, within the life of the church to choose a theme, do some research and then have an evening where everyone come together to share what you have learnt. If you are a small church you could consider doing this as a circuit venture.
2. Invite a key speaker
3. Plan themed preaching
4. Have an audit of your community to discover their needs
5. Get to know asylum seekers and the homeless in your town.
6. Support Fairtrade and lobby your local shops.
7. Pray with, as well as for, those who suffer from stigma and discrimination in all walks of life.
8. In groups look at what you value from within Methodism and have a celebration.



Representatives of 61 Partner Churches at Bodlondeb Castle Hotel, Llandudno

World Mission Conference 2004

4 June – 6 June

The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick

Latin America:
Chaos, Cross, Celebration
Discovering a spirituality for Life

Booking forms are available from:
Meg Bailey, 4 Brompton Road,
Heaton Mersey, Stockport, SK4 3HH
Tel: 0161 432 3854
E-mail: meg@baileymm.fsnet.co.uk



The spread of prosperity

Since the collapse of communism, the capitalist economic system dominates planning all around the globe. It has resulted in an unprecedented increase in the wealth and opportunity of millions of people, including most British Methodists. We can see this if we compare the contents of our houses with those of our grandparents.

But the Message contains a sharp reminder that not all have shared in these benefits. The challenge is to explore why this is so; and to identify what it is that needs to change to spread the right sort of prosperity more evenly.

John Ellis, Secretary for Business and Economic Affairs



'What are you going to do about it?' was a question we were asked more than once during our visit to Ghana, when people heard that our purpose was to learn about the effects of world trade rules on the people there.

Our fellow Christians in the Methodist Church Ghana constantly called us 'Brother' and 'Sister' because that is how they see us, but the question had an edge to it nevertheless, and so it should. There is much for us in the rich nations to do.

There is also much for us to stop doing. 'Stop Tony Blair selling us things we can make ourselves,' was a plea at one meeting, which sums up one of the basic injustices of the current unfair trade rules; countries like Ghana are unable to protect the wealth creation efforts of their own people.

Assin Nyankomasi, a project started with MRDF help in the 1980s, successfully enables local women to alleviate their families' poverty by growing and processing palm fruit and then selling the cooking oil in the market. Many children and adults have benefited from food, education and healthcare because of money earned by mothers here.

Lately the cooking oil has been more difficult to sell due to the heavily marketed and cleverly presented product from Unilever, 'Frytol'. Trade rules enforced by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) mean a government may not impede multinationals from competing in this way.

This might be 'free trade', but is it justice?

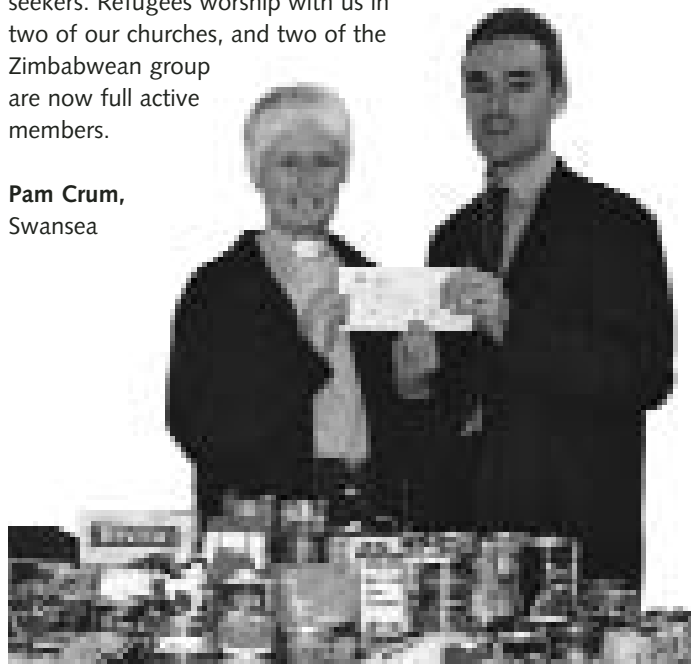
Steve Pearce Mission Education Secretary (Children)
Lizzie Jeans World Action Secretary

Is it
Justice?

Refugees in Swansea

During the last year the Swansea and Gower Circuit have become very involved in the support of asylum seekers and refugees. One of our churches is used as a drop in centre one evening a week and another church has been approached to do the same. Members across the Circuit responded well to an appeal last year for clothing and household items for one group of Zimbabwean refugees. The circuit has also given generously to a Harvest appeal for non-perishable foods, for a store being built up by the Refugee Council to meet particular crisis needs among asylum seekers. Refugees worship with us in two of our churches, and two of the Zimbabwean group are now full active members.

Pam Crum,
Swansea



David Farnsworth, chief of the Welsh Refugee Council

Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel

Would you like to know more about the present situation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip?

Would you like to accompany Palestinian and Israelis in their non-violent and concerted advocacy efforts to end the occupation?

This programme was initiated by the World Council of Churches in 2002 after responding to a request made by the heads of churches in Jerusalem. More information can be found on the website; www.quaker.org.uk/eappi or from EAPPI, QPSW, Friends House 173 Euston Road London NW1 2BJ

The EAPPI has several returned accompaniers who are willing to speak to people about their experiences since October 2003.

If you would like to invite someone to come to your church or would like to volunteer, please contact the Programme Co-ordinators Lynda MacInnes or Eleanor Chowns at eappi@quaker.org.uk Tel 020 7663 1144

Commitment for Life is the programme of the United Reformed Church that seeks to raise awareness around issues of justice and development. Regular e-mails are produced under the title: *Moving Stories*. If you would like to receive *Moving Stories*, just e-mail: michael.hopkins@urc.org.uk
Commitment for Life - United Reformed Church, 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT 020 7691 9867



WORLDWIDE OPPORTUNITIES

Whether or not you have professional skills, there could be a place for you overseas through the Methodist Church.

Mission partners serve for two years or more.

Needs include:

- Cameroon** - gynaecologist or surgeon;
- Guinea** - French-speaking minister for a mission area;
- Italy** - Italian-speaking minister for circuit work;
- Japan** - graduates to teach English at secondary level;
- Kenya** - urgent need for a physician or GP;
- Nepal** - primary teachers for tutorial groups;
- Poland** - TEFL teachers for Methodist colleges;
- Tonga** - experienced biblical tutor.

... and many more.

The Experience Exchange Programme is for volunteers to spend 6-12 months learning from a new culture and experiencing the Church there.

Placements include:

- Gambia** - assist with Methodist nursery schools;
 - Germany** - German speaker in community projects in the East German Conference;
 - India** - teaching handicrafts at a hospice;
 - South Africa** - a home for children affected by HIV/AIDS;
 - Uruguay** - assist with teaching in English;
 - Zambia** - Scripture Union 'Life Skills' seminars;
- ... and many more.

If you are interested, please contact Gabrielle Grace at: Methodist Church House, 25 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5JR
Telephone: 020 7467 5154, fax: 020 7467 5283, e-mail: WCO.Personnel@methodistchurch.org.uk



On the road in India with Chris and Liz

Dr Elizabeth Harris and Chris Elliott-Hall visited India in January to meet with people of different faiths and explore the joys and challenges of living together.

Modern India was founded on the slogan 'Unity in Diversity', but today many feel this is under pressure.

Ahmedabad

Taking a break after worshipping at Ellisbridge, Church of North India (CNI) church, enjoying the fragrance of beautiful red rose garlands and drinking fresh lime sodas we are reflecting on the past few days and some of the programmes and projects we have visited. Two in particular stand out. The Henry Martyn Institute (HMI) Aman Shanti Centre in Sultan Shahi neighbourhood in Hyderabad old city. This centre is on the dividing line between the segregated Hindu and Muslim communities. Here, Muslims Hindus and Dalits work and learn together to build the trust and solidarity that could prevent future communal violence. Already there have been examples where this friendship has proved itself.

The other group is SAATH, (the Gujarati word for together) in Ahmedabad. After the riots of 2002 this Hindu organisation knew it had to work with Muslims who had been attacked. Their policy is to have Muslim and Hindu leaders working together (and in some communities there are Christian teachers) building the community trust and aiming to meet the needs the community have identified. Thursday 15 January was the annual kite festival and SAARTH gave all the children white kites with the phrase 'we are Indian - we are one' a powerful symbol of unity in diversity.

Chris Elliott Hall, World Church Secretary, Asia and Pacific and
Dr Elizabeth Harris, Secretary for Interfaith Relations.



September Conference at Hothorpe Hall

Free Church Chaplains meeting at Hothorpe Hall

The Methodist Church has a long history of concern for the prisoner beginning with visits made by both John and Charles Wesley and their friends in the Holy Club to Oxford Castle. Since 1863, when local magistrates were empowered by an Act of Parliament to appoint and pay Roman Catholic and Methodist clergy to visit their members in prison, the Methodist Church has continued to appoint a minister to every prison.

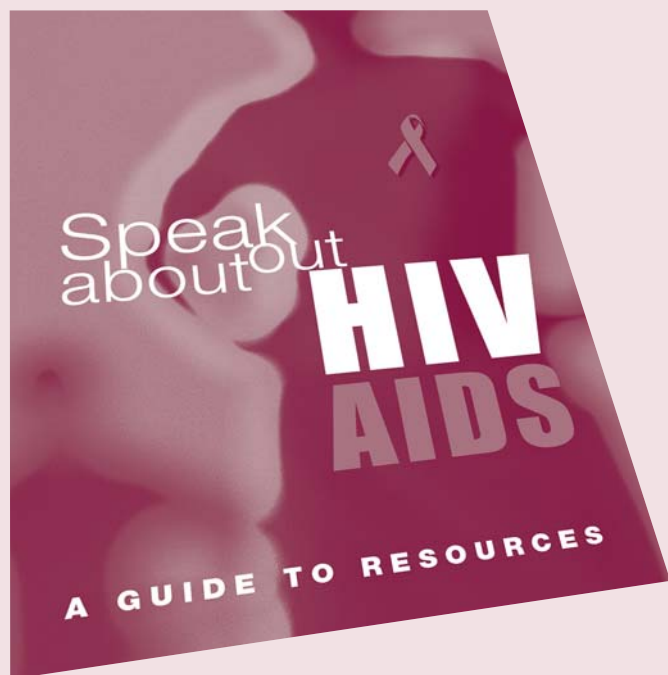
The Methodist Church has traditionally been regarded as the 'lead' denomination, with the majority of Chaplaincy posts being

filled by Methodist Ministers and Local Preachers. More recently, however, efforts have been made to encourage Ministers from all denominations in membership with the Free Church Group of 'Churches Together' to apply for posts, which has better enabled us to resource Chaplaincy and reflect the rich diversity of the Free Churches.

In September, the full-time Free Church Chaplains met at Hothorpe Hall for a two-day conference which included Chaplains from The Assemblies of God, The New Testament Church of God, the Baptist Union, Churches in Communities, The Salvation Army and the United Reformed Church. Speakers included the Revd Phillippe Nevue from the New Testament Church of God whose address prompted us to acknowledge that often Chaplains from mainstream denominations have difficulty meeting the needs of inmates from different cultural and religious backgrounds, and that consideration should be given to appointing more Chaplains from the black community in line with the prison population. Stephen Pryor, a former prison Governor, addressed the conference on the theme of 'Delivering Imprisonment with 'Humanity' in which he sketched some of the main reasons we lock people up and asks whether by doing so we might actually be making people worse and exposing the public to more risk rather than protecting them.

Revd Alan Ogier,
Superintendent Chaplain for the Methodist/Free Churches,
HM Prison Service Chaplaincy

Speak out about HIV/AIDS



This is the title of a booklet that provides a guide to the resources available for those wishing to take up the challenge and explore the issues around HIV/AIDS. There is a danger that HIV/AIDS is seen as an issue only for the developing world, but HIV infections in the UK are expected to rise from 24,000 today to over 31,000 by 2010. It is possible that there will be, in every church, the knowledge of someone who is living with HIV. Therefore, it is important that:

“within churches, HIV/AIDS needs to be talked about honestly and openly by all members. Church leaders must include HIV/AIDS in their theology that will increase people’s awareness and decrease stigma and discrimination against those affected by HIV/AIDS and enable people to give care and comfort to those affected.”

World Church Report 2003.

Suggestions are put forward for discussions in groups with children, young people and adults. You may also find helpful suggestions for use in worship.

The **FREE** booklet can be obtained from Methodist Publishing House, with a contribution towards postage.

Youth friendly Christian meetings

In the world of reality TV we need to allow young people to see the reality of Christ. Gadgets and creativity are meaningless in themselves and no amount of technology and cultural relevance can change hearts. However they can provide reference points that make sense to young people.

In Raynes Park we have been pioneering a new style of Church meeting for young Christians. The meeting starts with an opportunity to explore key themes of faith, love, worship and truth. A variety of stations are set up around the softly lit room. A station may contain fashion magazines and chart music quotes with an overview to examine ‘image’. It may contain materials to make wallet ID cards to explore ‘identity’. All of the stations are set up with the aim to open discussion and provoke deeper questions.

Instead of one long sermon, there are two speakers who use film excerpts, vox pops and pop videos to introduce their theme. They are each limited to five minutes and this is followed by questions and discussion.

For a generation hooked on hip-hop and dance music we have an array of contemporary sounds. The young people can express their worship and prayers through dance, art and stillness, as well as through song. We need to be innovative in connecting with society on many different levels if we are to show that Jesus is as relevant today as he was 2000 years ago

Andy Frost, Share Jesus International



DJ Libert E leading worship on the decks!

Trade in small arms out of control

Sierra Leone has experienced nearly 11 years of rebel war causing gross human rights violations and producing a lasting legacy of suffering. Mission Partner, Dr Mary Jefferson, worked with the women's network of the Methodist Church Sierra Leone. Many members saw their husbands murdered and provide horrifying accounts of children being bribed, brain-washed and drugged in order to persuade them to commit atrocities in their own communities. Now women in the Methodist Church are in the forefront of peace-building and awareness-raising initiatives and have established a skill development programme with six regional centres to help war-affected young women get back on their feet.

© Amnesty International

Since peace came Mary has been impressed with the capacity of communities to forgive. She is also impressed by the vital work of the church, providing leadership in many traumatised communities, facilitating reconciliation initiatives, delivering medical services and running rehabilitation and other social programmes. For example, one project of the Methodist Church Sierra Leone seeks to restore services from the Nixon Memorial Hospital that serves a large area in the eastern part of the country.

In civil wars such as those in Sierra Leone, the forces involved are increasingly turning to the plunder of natural resources and extortion from civilians to fund the conflict or, indeed, as a primary purpose for the continuation of conflict.

By the end of the 1990s nearly 90% of war-victims were non-combatants and at least half of these were children. The trade in small arms fuels these wars, wasting life, natural resources and vast sums of money.

There are around 639 million small arms and light weapons in the world today. Eight million more are produced every year.

During the war in Sierra Leone Chief Mohammed Koroma of Boajibu made the following plea. 'Our diamonds are being exchanged for guns, and they are coming in through the back way. If I had the power, no one would ever trade in arms in my country, because I have seen war. I appeal to the people who sell arms to our brothers to destroy us, to stop doing it.'

National arms export controls are riddled with loopholes. They are inadequate for the regulation of what has become a highly profitable global business with complex networks of traders. Amnesty International, Oxfam and others are calling for an International Arms Control Treaty. The proposed Treaty is backed by seven national governments and many MPs.

You can help to bring about effective arms control by asking your MP to support

the Early Day Motion number 109 calling for an International Arms Trade Treaty and explaining why you feel that it is necessary. You can find out whether your MP has already signed from the following web page:- <http://edm.ais.co.uk/weblink/html/motion.html/ref=109>

If as a result your MP commits to signing the motion please let us know by sending an email to internationalaffairs@methodistchurch.org.uk

Further information can be obtained from: -

The Control Arms Coalition - www.controlarms.org
Campaign Against the Arms Trade - www.caat.org.uk

Steve Hucklesby
Secretary for International Affairs

HIV/AIDS

A new book "*Breaking the Conspiracy of Silence - Christian Churches and the Global AIDS Crisis*" by Donald E Messer was launched in the UK on 9 March 2004. The book is aimed at awakening Christian compassion to the fathomless tragedy of HIV/AIDS, that has been with us for over 20 years. The author, Donald E. Messer is Henry White Warren Professor of Practical Theology and Director of the Centre for Global Pastoral Ministries at Iliff School of Theology, Denver, USA. President emeritus of the school and of Dakota Wesleyan University, he is also widely experienced in global ministries.

If you are seeking to encourage conversations in your church in this area of mission this is a good book to have to hand. The book will be available in May from The Bookshop, Methodist Church House, 25 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5JR. Cost £10.99 + Postage

Events and Resources

United College of Ascension - Encounter and reflection courses

Crossing Frontiers 7-9 May

Frontiers can be barriers for refugees and asylum seekers and also barriers in our own minds.

Rethinking partnership in mission 22 May

To explore the theological roots and effectiveness of cross cultural partnership

Giving a voice to the people of God - the power of hymns 12 June

Meditation in the Buddhist tradition 22-24 June

For more information
<http://www.sellyoak.ac.uk/uca/encounter.html> or
 Tel: +44 (0)121 415 6810



New collection boxes for The Methodist Church Funds for Home and World Mission are available from Methodist Publishing House. We would be grateful if you could send a contribution to packing and postage of £3 (up to 20 boxes) and £5.00 (for more than 20).

Available from Methodist Publishing House

Envelopes - a reminder.

In the March 2003 edition of *Mission Matters* it was reported that the old style 'Self-denial' envelopes were discontinued and replaced by the Methodist Church Fund for World Mission envelopes. Also available are the Methodist Church Fund for Home Mission envelopes.

A contribution towards packing and postage of £3.00 would be appreciated by Methodist Publishing House.

Methodist Publishing House. 4 John Wesley Road, Werrington, Peterborough PE4 6ZP
 Tel: 01733 325002 E-mail: sales@mph.org.uk

'Mission Is..... Mission Matters'

A full set of posters illustrating the nine mission statements of the Methodist Church is now available, free, from Methodist Publishing House. Also available is a booklet, cost £3.00, to be used in Bible study and fellowship groups that explores the poster images in depth. If you would like to use the posters in worship and show them on a screen a CD-Rom is available from the Mission Education Office.



EASTER SERVIETTES

Once again, Linda Ashford has Easter Serviettes available. Last year these serviettes, together with a hot cross bun, were given out to hundreds of people on Good Friday, when churches used them as a way to tell people about the message of Easter. The message on the serviette includes a Bible verse.

- 1 pack costs £5 plus P&P £3:20 Total £8:20
- 2 packs cost £4 each plus P&P £6:04 Total £14:04
- 3 Packs cost £4 each plus P&P £8:19 Total £20:19

Each pack contains 100 serviettes
 Please make your cheque payable to **Methodist Church Fund for Home Mission** Please order from: Mrs L Ashford, 231 Laleham Road, Staines, Middx. TW18 2NS



Further Information

Please contact John Nutt, Mission Education Administrator, Methodist Church House, 25 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5JR
 Tel: 020 7467 5116 Fax: 020 7467 5281
 E-mail: missioneducation@methodistchurch.org.uk

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- District Mission Officers
- Circuit Mission Officers
- Ministers and Deacons in pastoral charge
- Mission Funds supporters

Who else in your church might find this useful?

- Members of your local mission committee
- Local preachers
- House group leaders

Please write their names and get them to tick the box when they have received or seen a copy.