

mission matters

Issue 12 May 2004



This edition of *Mission Matters* focuses on the following paragraphs taken from *A message to our churches*

Llandudno, 2003

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 marginalized. 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.

Nauru Refugees by Mick Lambe of PARI/AH



Outrage in a country of plenty

"It is an outrage that, in a country of plenty, I am regularly meeting people who have fled from their own countries and are resorting to sleeping on the streets of Britain".

So says Shari Brown, co-ordinator of RESTORE, a project run by Birmingham churches to befriend and support asylum seekers.

Last year 61,100 people sought asylum in Britain, a tiny fraction of the estimated 12 million refugees globally. Many of those approaching RESTORE are caught by "Section 55" which allows the Home Office to withdraw support from asylum seekers who do not apply for asylum as "soon as is reasonably practicable". People who apply for asylum just three days after entering the country can find themselves destitute.

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Outrage in a country of plenty

Resources

The Refugee Council is encouraging people to write to their MPs about Section 55. For more information see www.refugeecouncil.org.uk or tel: 020 7820 3046

Asylum Voices – Experiences of people seeking asylum in the UK, Andrew Bradstock and Arlington Trotman, CTBI 2003, ISBN 085169-287-7

(continued) from page 1

Research in spring 2004 showed that 61% of asylum seekers refused help under Section 55 had slept rough, and 70% lacked regular food. The research also found that welfare support was later reinstated in 67% of cases, indicating serious flaws in the system.

Shari Brown describes the case of a pregnant woman from the Democratic Republic of Congo. "Celeste had just been evicted from her emergency accommodation because she was judged to have applied for asylum too late, even though her pregnancy should have made her exempt. To get the eviction overturned she needed to prove to the court that she was pregnant. However the solicitors' books were full and no one could take her on. She was stuck. I can't describe the frustration of struggling to enforce someone's basic legal entitlements. And this was before I could even begin proving her claim for asylum was justified."

Section 55 was introduced as part of a raft of measures to reduce what was seen as an abuse of the asylum system. But Shari Brown says it raises fundamental concerns for Christians. "The political questions around asylum are complex and fraught. But we have to recognise our common humanity and respond to the needs of destitute asylum seekers as our brothers and sisters."

Rachel Lampard, Secretary for Parliamentary/Political Affairs

Proclaiming the good news for all

Good news for all will mean different things to people depending on their situation and their culture. However, the good news of the gospel offers hope and a new way of living that acknowledges God's life and presence in the world and in people.

Once Jesus was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, and he answered, "The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed; nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There it is!' For, in fact, the kingdom of God is among you."

Luke 17: 20,21 NRSV

Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied; "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you."

Luke 17: 20,21 NIV

These two translations of the words of Jesus about the kingdom of God come about due to the interpretations of the Greek phrase, *entos humor*, which can be interpreted either as being *among you* or *within you*. Both phrases provide a tantalising glimpse of this new way of living.

'The kingdom of God is among you' asks us to be aware that the work of God, his mission to the world, is happening wherever we may be and whatever activity we are engaged in.

'The kingdom of God is within you' challenges us to be aware that we, as individual Christians, are called to respond to the Holy Spirit working in our lives and to acknowledge that in working together we reveal something of the nature and purpose of God to the world.

The way we live our lives can and does make a difference, so let us be participators in this kingdom and celebrate the good news for all.

Susan Johnson, Mission Education Co-ordinator

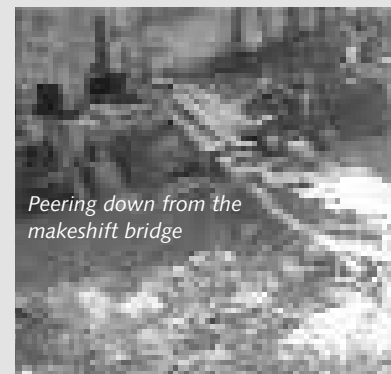
Bringing Healing

Carol and Roger Smith, Church Mission Society (CMS) Mission Partners are involved with Islamabad Christians Against Narcotics (ICAN) in Rawalpindi in Pakistan. ICAN is one of the projects of the Methodist Church of Pakistan. It works with men who, due to life circumstances, have become addicted to drugs. Their detoxification programme has been supported by grants from the Methodist Church Fund for World Mission. Under their new long-term programme, clients are gradually admitted into the ICAN house, where an office has been converted into a prayer room. The vision is that these young men will grow in faith during early recovery and some of them will go on to further discipleship. Along with the staff team, this group will be a witness for Christ in the ICAN recovery house.

CAROL WRITES:

“ They live deep down in the sewer. They live high up on the rooftops. They have lost touch with their own humanity. They keep to secret places away from families, society and police. They hide away so their shame will not be seen. We made a steep descent and we peered into the pitch darkness of the sewer. We were almost overcome by the stench. We crouched down on a makeshift bridge across the open part of the sewer and again we peered down deep under the city of Rawalpindi. We saw the gentle flicker of their candles. Then gradually we could make out their human forms. We went up high, high onto the rooftops of some disused buildings. We passed many bundles of rags on the way. We passed some dead rats on the way. We were startled by one of the bundles of rags moving. Each bundle was an addicted man. ”

During March Carol worked with the staff team to assess men for admission to the new ICAN Programme. One of the young men relies on selling hashish to feed his family. He tells us that when he was a young boy he was flying a kite from the roof with his younger brother. His brother fell off the roof and died. Since then he has tried to obliterate the memory through drugs. Another young man left school aged nine years and became an apprentice tailor, but, following the death of his mother, he was plied with constant alcohol.



Peering down from the makeshift bridge

Your giving to the Fund for World Mission enables work such as this to continue.

Please contact Mission Education for details of further projects. Tel 020 7467 5116 e-mail: missioneducation@methodistchurch.org.uk

Common Ground

A project for the benefit of disadvantaged street children

Parents in Ghana are often obliged to let their children leave home, mainly due to poverty. If the children are female and their schooling is incomplete, young girls are unable to make a living and these are the ones who end up as 'street children'. Now there is some good news for girls like this in Tamale, Northern Ghana. A place called *Common Ground* offers them a place to learn skills, enabling them to seek paid work and a place to live.

Instead of a dangerous life on the city streets, girls are learning sewing, weaving, hairdressing, batik, tie-dyeing, soap making, bakery, carpentry, plumbing and more. *Common Ground* was set up by the local Methodist Church several years ago. To help continue its excellent work *Common Ground* received a Special Grant from the Fund for World Mission this year

50 Years in God's Hand

The Methodist Church (UK) is represented in Nepal through the United Mission to Nepal (UMN), an international, interdenominational Christian development organisation serving the people of Nepal in the Name and Spirit of Jesus Christ. Today, over fifty Christian organisations from around the world co-operate in its work to which MCKUK contributes six mission partners. They are part of a team of some 150 sponsored expatriates who use their skills in the areas of education, health, engineering and rural development and in finance, personnel, marketing and other support functions. About 700 Nepali staff are employed by the Mission. This year UMN celebrates its 50th anniversary, commemorating half a century of making a difference to people's lives in one of the poorest countries in the world.

The Mission's Anniversary Appeal aims to further the work of making a difference to people's lives, particularly by providing educational opportunities to both children and adults. For example, we will be involved in educating children in remote areas, training school teachers, enabling qualified but needy students to study nursing, teaching village women about health (including HIV/AIDS) and training farmers in agricultural innovations. We will also assist our Nepali partner organisations by training their staff and, through them, providing emergency relief for victims of natural disasters and assistance for those who, due to conflict, are internally displaced.

Michael Hawksworth Mission Partner.

If you would like to learn more about the work of UMN please contact Mission Education.

On 27-29 February, 30 young Methodist campaigners came together in Birmingham to take *Action for Trade Justice*. The first ever *World Action Weekend* was led by Peter Kelsall and Tom Charlett, both from Christian Aid, and Lizzie Jeans of World Action. Lizzie says:

We wanted to trial a new event purely focusing on World Action, with time to go deeper into the issues of trade justice and develop people's understanding. There was a real community feel to the weekend, and we hope that a World Action network can develop, as people share action ideas and support each other in their campaigning across the country.

Activities included the *Trade Rules simulation* game giving the participants "firsthand" experience of the injustices of world trade rules. Other activities included: measuring the world (showing the depth & breadth of global poverty); jargon-busting; looking at trade justice in the day's newspapers; times for worship and reflection and a solidarity meal - *hunger for justice*. Peter Nottage from Lincolnshire wrote this prayer inspired by the weekend:

**Lord, we thank you for uniting us young people
to help fight for a fair and equal world.
Through the help you give us, we can make a
difference
And all our small differences can add up
And help make the world a better place,
For me, you and the entire human race.
Amen**

World Action Weekend



WORLD
ACTION

The Reign of God and the World Economic System

The Message exudes the pain of those who have not benefited from the world economic system. A key point to remember is that economic forces are not like natural forces which cannot be changed; economic forces are the result of the accumulation of human decisions. So Christian hope for change is never just wishful thinking and prayers are never pointless: economic forces can always be changed if enough people in the right places desire it. The obligation to work for change falls most heavily on those of us in the countries that have the greatest influence on the world's economic choices.

One of the latest initiatives of the British Government – and something of a personal crusade of the Chancellor of the Exchequer – is the proposed International Finance Facility (IFF). Recognising the difficulty of persuading governments to increase their flows of grant aid to the poorest countries, the IFF would use the high credit standing of Western Governments to guarantee extra private sector flows to the poorest nations. Responsibility for eventually repaying the private sector financiers would lie with the Western governments, so the debt burden of emerging countries would not be increased.

For Gordon Brown this is not just a clever idea but also a moral issue. "We must rouse the conscience of the world anew, each of us playing our part" he says. "All of us who believe that globalisation must also mean justice on a global scale [must] agree to work together to make the radical changes required." Britain will have a special opportunity to lead and shape international

opinion in this area next year when we hold the Presidency of both the European Union and the G8 group of powerful Western nations. The Prime Minister has said that 'for the sake of Africa and the poorest nations we will make our 2005 G8 Presidency a "Development Presidency"'.

In addition to fresh initiatives like the IFF, we also need further progress on making the rules of world trade fairer. Part of the problem is the approach of the European Union and helping the signatories to the Llandudno Message is likely to mean higher food prices for some British Methodists or fewer jobs in British agriculture. The complexity of identifying where justice lies may be especially evident to rural chapels serving farming communities.

Nonetheless, if we are to take the Message seriously we cannot ignore the imbalance in the world economic system. The build-up to the 2005 Presidencies could provide British Christians with a unique opportunity to encourage their political leaders to put these issues at the centre of their agenda. Then prayers might be answered and hopes fulfilled.

John Ellis Secretary for Business and Economic Affairs

MACEDONIA



Boris Trajkovski

Boris Trajkovski, president of the Republic of Macedonia, was killed in a plane crash in western Bosnia in February 2004. President Trajkovski was a leader whose faith formed who he was and all that he did; his death was a great loss to the Republic of Macedonia and to the Methodist Church. He was a tireless worker for peace and reconciliation in the midst of the most recent political and social upheaval in the Balkans. His commitment to the unity and stability of the people of Macedonia meant he lived his own life under pressure and not without threat or risk from those who wanted a different outcome. In recognition he was presented the Peace Award of the World Methodist Council in 2002.

Boris brought to the name of *Methodist* respect and honour in a part of the world where the label of sect is easily levelled at minorities. He demonstrated that God's grace crosses boundaries of race and culture. We give thanks for his witness. We pray that it might inspire many more to work for peace and see the way of reconciliation as the future hope. We pray for the leaders of the Macedonian Orthodox Church and other confessions and faiths, and for all the politicians and community leaders who must now take responsibility for the life of the nation. We mourn his death but give thanks for his life, for his courage and witness to the God who calls each one of us into the ways of reconciliation and peace.

Promoting Solidarity with the disadvantaged

Mission partner, Revd Dr Sue Jansen, works as Chaplain of a Methodist School in the centre of the city of Mendoza, Argentina and is minister of a small Methodist Church in a "deprived area" of the city. She seeks to walk alongside all the people she meets - sharing the love of God - and she feels a specific call to work with the people of the streets. Sue writes:

Our Project with Our Friends of the Street continues to go from strength to strength, for which I praise and thank God on a daily basis. I feel fully used by God when I'm accompanying my friends in their street lives. After much prayer and a long period when our team was very small, we now have three new adults working with us two days a week. On these days we are able to spend time with our Street Friends, sharing tea, the love of God, and giving medical help. In addition, our twice-monthly Sunday evening services are developing in very positive and interesting ways and are touching the lives of many people. Please do continue to pray for this work.

In Patron, Santiago, we have our Sunday School on Saturday morning, beginning with breakfast and followed by 20 to 25 minutes of praise songs and 40 minutes of discussion. This is followed by creative activities focusing on the theme of the Sunday New Testament reading. All of the children have concentration problems, but they love to sing and to make things; this is why we use this approach.

Wildlife Gardens in Notting Hill Gate, London

Around 300 people out of 1000 will experience mental health problems every year in Britain

Meanwhile Gardens date back to the early 1970s when a group of local residents managed to save some land from developers – the name is a tribute to its transitory nature. The Wildlife Garden, run by the National Association for Mental Health (MIND) inhabits a small site sandwiched between a canal towpath and a busy road.

The ethos of the Meanwhile Wildlife Garden is to create a supportive environment for trainees as well as managing a garden. Its achievements include ponds, a bog garden, a meadow area, a herb garden and a variety of tree species such as alder, hazel, birch, oak and beech. Its location helps attract birds and insects to the site.

It is very much a managed 'garden' requiring as much planning and tending as other gardens to achieve its 'wildness'. Open access helps incorporate those involved in the project into the local community. Although the park gates are always open, only small acts of vandalism have taken place.

Local people visit the site to use recycling bins. Recycling has also been used to convert goods found in local skips to useful items, for example, the timber used in the gardens as fencing posts, and zinc waste-bins dotted about the garden. The team also has a partnership with local offices, collecting and shredding paper waste and adding it to compost in the gardens.

David Scoffield, tel: 020 8960 6336
E-mail: davidscoffield@btconnect.com
MIND website: <http://www.mind.org.uk>



Creating Sacred Space – outside the walls of the church

Deacon Marion Sharp is Chaplain to the University of Bradford and in this capacity she has helped them with planning to re-landscape an area of the university as a 'peace garden' for people of all faiths and none. She is also a member of the staff team at Touchstone, Bradford and of the Forum of Creative Arts in Methodism. Her own background is in gardening.

Many of our churches are surrounded by an area of land which could be enhanced to provide a haven from the stress we experience daily. As a faith community we are looking for common ground for the common good – bringing us to the vision for creating 'Sacred Space'.

I believe the garden has enormous potential. It's a safe place, a place where scent and colour and form create an atmosphere of peace. A place for healing and a place where friendships can grow; a place of reconciliation where faith communities can meet each other in respect for life and its diversity; and where the secular world can catch a glimpse of mystery.

Cultural interests in the twenty first century in Britain today are diverse and complex. For many people the secular world and its materialist focus has proved to be less than satisfying and fulfilling. One positive outcome is that there is a well of interest in spiritual exploration, both individually and corporately. In Methodism I believe we have an opportunity to work with this in a particular way. As a Church we need fresh vision, we need to be relevant, we need to engage with the communities we serve.

If you are interested, share the idea with others in your communities and create your sacred space outdoors.

Deacon Marian Sharp

Why Touchstone?

One type of 'touchstone' is a very ordinary looking rock which is used to test the purity of gold and gold alloys – the metal leaves streaks when drawn across the touchstone. Our ordinary looking house is a place where people can discover the best in themselves.

(taken from the Touchstone website

www.touchstone-bradford.org.uk/)

Reflecting on our services of worship, how do we include:

- acknowledgement of being part of a broken world;
- confession and contrition at our lack of care for God's earth;
- encouragement to build a better environment; opportunities of healing?

(From the *Mission is...* booklet; featuring the nine *Mission is...* posters together with text for worship leaders, house groups, children's youth and all-age groups. For a copy (£3+pp) please contact Methodist Publishing House, tel: 01733 325002, e-mail: sales@mph.org.uk)

"...I think (the booklet) is really fabulous. It manages to define the new Methodism. If only we could get the whole church to breathe life in this way" **Anthea Cox**

Methodist Council says: Reject parties that promote racist policies

The Methodist Council, meeting on 14th February, discussed the concern expressed by church members since last year over the high profile election victories of the British National Party. The Council affirmed that the policies and practices of those who promote racism and religious intolerance are incompatible with the Methodist Church's social witness, biblical teaching and our understanding of the love of God for all people.

The council also agreed to encourage people to vote in local, national and European elections. While not endorsing any particular political party, they urge people not to vote for candidates who promote racist policies or any party that attempts to stir up racial and religious hatred and fear of asylum seekers (taken from E-news see page 8)

Events and Resources

Mission Adventure 2005

4-6 February at Swanwick, Derbyshire. We invite you to come and share your story, to learn from others as we continue to work as partners in mission. We are honoured to have as our keynote speaker the Revd Dr Mvume Dandala, General Secretary, All Africa Conference of Churches. Mrs Hilary Faith Jones will be our guide to storytelling as she encourages us to look at the greatest story ever told. The cost for the weekend is £35 excluding travel to and from Swanwick.
Booking forms from John Nutt, Mission Education.

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E-mail: postgrad@cliffcollege.org.uk

Website with full details: <http://www.cliffcollege.org>

World Mission Conference 2004

4 June – 6 June

The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick

Latin America: Chaos, Cross, Celebration

Booking forms from: Meg Bailey

Tel: 0161 432 3854,

www.mwm.org.uk

E-NEWS

E-News, the monthly electronic news bulletin of the Methodist Church in Britain is now available. Readers are free to circulate the stories by cutting and pasting into their church newsletter or magazine, or printing them out and pinning them on their notice boards.

Visit www.methodist.org.uk (Site Ref: EM111203) to subscribe.

MAYC WORLD ACTION Vote for Trade Justice

BREAKOUT will be held at Blackpool on the weekend of **9-11 July 2004**. Young people will have the chance to take part in the Trade Justice Movement's major new campaign action, Vote for Trade Justice. From this summer, campaigners will be asked to collect as many votes as possible - in town centres, churches, colleges and workplaces - wherever.

In September **VOTE FOR TRADE JUSTICE** moves to Brighton. The aim is to put trade justice in the news in a way that has never been done before by inviting thousands of campaigners to Brighton on **Sunday 26 September** - the opening day of the Labour Party conference, the UK's governing party.

TO FIND OUT MORE please contact Lizzie Jeans, World Action, tel: 020 7467 5197 or e-mail: jeansl@methodistchurch.org.uk

Deadline for contributions

Please let us have your mission story that might inspire others to action - contact the Mission Education office with an article of 150-350 words.

- **Deadline 5 July** - the commitment to the sanctity of life, human sexuality, HIV/AIDS, and the empowerment of women and children
- **Deadline 13 September** - the commitment of Methodism to apostolic faith, evangelism, preaching, class meetings and the personal and social holiness.



Further Information

Please contact John Nutt, Mission Education Administrator, Methodist Church House, 25 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5JR
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