

Sharing *News*

Dear friends Are we ready for change?

1. **The Christian Gospel is about change** - a change of heart. God's grace empowers us to make large steps or small steps towards a Christ-like life. The process of change is familiar. It is a mixture of the positive and the negative. On the positive side: a vision of what might be; and leadership which inspires and encourages us. And on the negative side: facing our failures and mistakes; and grieving what has to be left behind if we are to move in a new direction.
2. **The Church is ready for change** - or is it? Some churches want to be left alone, simply surviving, unchanged and unchanging. Overall, however, I believe the Methodist Church is ready for change. We want to engage constructively with the world around us. We want to make a difference to other people's lives. We want to connect with the ups and downs of everyday life and with the big questions people ask in contemporary Britain. We want to worship God in more rounded and engaging ways.

The energy for change of heart comes from Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit. Christ models what it might be like to be fully alive, in tune with God's will; and Christ leads us from where we are to where God longs for us to go. And Christ it is who enables us to repent: he bears for us our regret about how we have lived, and the pain of accepting responsibility for what has been and must now be put behind us.

Christian discipleship is a life-long journey of inner change. It leads us outwards towards others, in love and service & witness.

The coming Methodist Conference will be invited to endorse a small number of key priorities for the whole Church, which will help us all to pull together in effecting change.

3. **Expect constant change.** I recently visited the Methodist Church of the Caribbean and the Americas. I preached on a Sunday morning to a French-speaking Methodist Church plant in Guadeloupe. The lay leader of the congregation said to me: "Every month we must take a step forward." A challenging mind set. It turns vision into practice!

David G Deeks

Countering Political Extremism - A new resource for churches

On 10 June 2004 there will be the European elections, the London Mayoral and Assembly elections and local elections in many parts of the country. The British National Party is planning to put forward as many candidates as possible.

The Methodist Church, along with other churches and faith communities, has been very concerned by the growing presence of extremist parties in local elections and their threat to community cohesion. The Church has stated that racism, in all its forms, is a sin, and a denial of God's love for each of God's children.

As part of their response The Methodist Church has produced a web-based resource designed for churches in areas where the BNP is standing for election. It offers guidance on how to:

- find out more about the BNP and their policies
- encourage people in your church to reflect on the issues raised by extremism and racism in politics
- issue a public statement encouraging people to vote for parties which promote inclusive policies
- join in with local community campaigns around the election

By means of the cross he united both races into one body ... So Christ came and preached the good news of peace to all ... (Ephesians 2: 14-17)

The resource is available at
www.methodist.org.uk (Site Ref: NE160404)

Sangam

SANGAM, a racial justice information pack, accompanies the two-year social action project on racial justice and can be used by anyone. Sangam is a Hindi word meaning "coming together".

In creating this resource material, the task group responsible for its publication felt that it did just that; it brings. The purpose of creating this resource was to compile a range of material to enable, encourage and equip us all to come together to eradicate the injustice of racism and help us all recreate "One Race, The Human Race".

The colourful pack contains four booklets: **Setting the Scene**, **Study Material**, **Orders of Service** and **Resources**, all of which help us to increase our understanding of the issues around racial justice. A poster and a game are included and we would appreciate any feedback you can give on the evaluation card inside. All the material is photocopyable. This resource holds enough material to keep any fellowship or study group occupied for at least several months.

Sangam costs £9.95, plus postage and packing, and is available from:
Methodist Publishing House, 4 John Wesley Road, Werrington, Peterborough PE4 6ZP
www.mph.org.uk Tel: 01733 325002

"Many who use this manual will no doubt be challenged and transformed by it. Sangam adds value to the challenge to promote racial justice."

Naboth Muchopa, Racial Justice office.

www.methodist.org.uk (Site Ref: RJ111203)

The Bam Earthquake Appeal

Thank you to everybody who has donated to the Iran earthquake appeal. We have now raised almost £62,000 which is being sent to where it is most needed. The earthquake that hit southern Iran on Boxing Day registered 6.3 on the Richter scale and destroyed almost all of the historic city of Bam.

The effects of the earthquake were devastating; Iranian officials now put the death toll at over 43,000 people and a further 100,000 residents have been left homeless and traumatised.

Your donations are being channelled through Action by Churches Together (ACT), which works with partner organisations on the ground who know what the situation demands.

Now that the immediate relief needs have been met, your money is giving the people of Bam the resources they need to slowly start to rebuild their lives.

How your money has been spent:

Initially, many people were sleeping outside in the ruins of their houses where their loved ones had died. This left them vulnerable to the freezing cold and to aftershocks. ACT has helped to build large camps on the outskirts of the city for the survivors and is now building more permanent, earthquake resistant housing.

The earthquake devastated the health service, damaging buildings and killing 40% of the area's health staff. Your donations have allowed ACT to provide boxes of medical supplies and mobile field hospitals whilst the health infrastructure is rebuilt.

Rebuilding the damaged infrastructure is crucial to the future of the region. Organisations like ACT are working to do that and to provide skills-training and small-scale loans to the people of Bam that will allow

them to start earning a living again.

The earthquake did not just destroy buildings, it left thousands of people traumatised and bereaved and over 5,000 have lost at least one parent. ACT is providing counselling and mental health services to those who need them.

www.mrdf.org.uk

The Life We Share: a study pack on inter faith relations

This is now out - and the response has been very positive. It is designed for groups and individuals who want to be challenged by what people of other faiths say about the struggles and joys of life. Jointly produced by the Methodist Church and the Anglican mission agency, USPG, it features:

- **Audio CD** - with the voices of 15 people from 5 religions speaking about 9 life themes
- **CD Rom** with printable group reflection sheets
- **Introductory booklet**
- **Bible study booklet** - to help Christians explore what the Bible says about these themes
- **Worship resources booklet**

Obtainable at £10.00 plus £3.00 p&p per order from:

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

www.methodist.org.uk (Site Ref: IF111203)

MAY 2004

- 9 Christian Aid Week begins
- 10-13 Fellowship of the Kingdom conference, 'Holiness in an Unholy World' (Derbyshire). Further info: Revd Roy Queripel, Tel: 01773 822858
- 15 Connexional Link published
- 19 Disciple 2 training day, MPH Peterborough
- 20 Ascension Day
- 21 Magnet published, theme 'Yes, but...'
- 23 Aldersgate Sunday
- 30 Pentecost

JUNE 2004

- 4-6 World Mission Conference 'Latin America – Chaos, Cross, Celebration' (Swanwick). Further info: Meg Bailey, Tel: 0161 432 3854 www.mwm.org.uk
- 6 Trinity Sunday
- 6 Environment Sunday
- 11-13 Women's Network annual conference 'Will you come and follow me' Further info: 020 7467 5175
- 15 Flame July/August issue published
- 26-1 July. Methodist Conference, Loughborough

JULY 2004

- 9-11 Breakout MAYC National Event - see www.breakout-online.org.uk for further details
- 11 NCH Sunday

SEPTEMBER 2004

- 12 Racial Justice Sunday

www.methodist.org.uk (Site Ref: DY111203)

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.

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, they will be a witness for Christ in the ICAN recovery house.

Describing the situation of some of the men that ICAN is trying to reach, Carol writes: *"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."*

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

www.methodist.org.uk (Site Ref: ME111203)