



**ANGLICAN RENEWAL MINISTRIES WALES**

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## A Message from our Chairman Steve Waters

I was preparing my breakfast the other morning and as I stared absent mindedly at the toaster I found myself thinking about the way that toast is created, and how easy it is to turn a simple piece of bread into a tasty snack. It's something that we all do nearly every day but it is also something that we all take for granted, we put a slice or two of bread into the toaster and a minute or two later following the application of some heat, and without any further help from us, out pops some toast, clever stuff eh? But it doesn't end there, because the application of heat to things helps us in our daily lives a lot more than we probably realise. Take for instance the application of heat to our washed clothes to dry them, or the application of heat to our clothes via an iron – to make us look smart. Then there is the application of heat to water to make bathing a more pleasant experience or the application of heat to our houses to make them comfortable to live in; and what about the application of heat to injured and aching parts of our body to try to alleviate the pain. Most of us don't give it a second thought, but we really would be in a pickle without heat.

But heat can also have different meaning. When our lives start to get busier we say things are warming up. When we find ourselves in trouble or surrounded by problems we say the heat is on, and we are all familiar with the saying if you can't stand the heat stay out of the kitchen, and so heat as well as being beneficial to us, has also become associated with hardship or having problems hence the saying the heat is on, and it is in this capacity that God uses heat in our lives. The one thing that always happens when you apply heat to something is that whatever is on the receiving end of that heat changes, bread becomes toast and clothes dry and become crease free, water becomes more pleasant to use and cleans us more efficiently and our homes become pleasant places to be when it is cold, and that same principle of heat changing things applies to us when God puts the heat on us.

God allows us to experience heat in our lives precisely because he wants us to change, and change we must if we are to attain our goal of becoming more Christ-like. The big difference between us and bread, clothes and water is that they have no choice in how they respond to heat they must react in a set way, while we as human beings have got a choice. We can choose to co-operate with God and allow the change he is trying to bring about to happen, or we can choose to fight it. To embrace it and welcome it is to allow ourselves to become the better person that the heat will bring about, but on the other hand, to fight it is to prolong what is seldom a pleasant experience with the inevitable result that God will have his way in the end anyway. Think about it like this, people don't apply heat to a piece of bread just for the sake of it, we do it to transform that piece of bread into something better, and we apply heat to water and clothes for the same reason. God also does not apply heat to our lives for no reason, he does it to make us a better product, leaner, fitter, and better able to perform the task that he is going to require of us.

So if God is applying heat to your life at the moment don't fight it. Rather welcome it and embrace it in the certain knowledge that you are being improved in preparation for another exciting step in your walk with God.

God bless you all

Steve Waters



## God so loved the world.....by Mary Newsom

I am writing this during Passion week and I have been thinking about the relevance of the Cross to Renewal.

Often we are thought of as happy-clappy and yet that is so far from the truth. How can we convey the joys of Renewal and retain the sombreness and importance of Good Friday, and how can we show that the power of the Spirit within us comes from the same source as the power that raised Jesus from the dead?

We need to promote A.R.M.(Wales) in a way that will encourage those who are already Christians to move into a closer relationship with God. Mention of words like Renewal and Charismatic seem to drive people away and not necessarily because they are afraid of the Holy Spirit but because they are content with what they have and they don't think that there is anymore. Yet I know from personal experience that I didn't always think there was anything else, at least not for ordinary Christians who struggled to do their best in the knowledge that they were sinners. Holiness was something to be achieved only at death and on entry into a new after-life. But if I remove that one word 'after' from the last sentence and start to think about an application on this earth I get a new and exciting picture.

Holiness is to do with being set apart for God's use, all the implements used in Temple worship were consecrated, made clean for his use. That can apply to us, and it is through dying to sin that it is possible. Let us look at Romans 6:11

So you should consider yourselves dead to sin and able to live for the glory of God through Christ Jesus.

and 1 Peter 2:24

He personally carried away our sins in his own body on the cross so we can be dead to sin and live for what is right. You have been healed by his wounds!

So it is all to do with the cross and is available to all Christians. Yes I will continue to sin because I will make mistakes and not think about the consequences of my actions but I will not deliberately sin because I have a relationship with God based on love. Because I am able to feel that love I can start to love him and acknowledge the debt that I owe. Jesus Christ died for me!

Those who run away from renewal may well agree with me so far, but we have a basis now for discussion and we can consider how deep that relationship can become. We have been given the gift of the Holy Spirit but how do we know that he is present within us? That is an open question because we all feel the presence of

God in different ways and with different degrees of intensity. Can you say with St.Paul:

I myself no longer live, but Christ lives in me. So I live my life in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20) ?

There is so much in that verse, it means a lot to me personally as the Lord drew my attention to it when singing the chorus Reign in me. I was unable to sing it until I realized what it really meant. This is the meaning of renewal allowing Jesus to live in us through the Holy Spirit, he is the one through whom we can communicate with God.

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But the Anglican Church knows that, so why don't we see it in practice? The Holy Spirit is present at our baptism and our confirmation but have we really acknowledged him and allowed him into our lives? We must not run away from the idea of Baptism in the Holy Spirit we must actively seek all that God wants to give. But this is a phrase that worries so many because we don't agree as to its meaning. The more Catholics see it as given at the time of water baptism, even to infants, and the evangelicals as happening when we are born again and become Christians. In the early Church this was closer to the truth than it is today, but there were three cases in the book of Acts when the Holy Spirit's coming was either delayed or came before baptism. Two occasions might easily have been because God himself was teaching that he wanted the Samaritans and the Gentiles included in his Kingdom. (Acts 8:16 and 11:15-17). In the one case Peter laid hands on the believers in order that they received the Holy Spirit but in the other God stepped in first!

But the third case is especially interesting to us because it happened at Ephesus where Apollos had been preaching before he received some correction of his teaching from Priscilla and Aquila. (Acts 18:24-26) Paul clearly thought it necessary to ask the believers, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" Their reply shows that they did not know of the importance of Baptism in the Spirit. That seems to be the case with many Christians today.

But it is very easy for us to base our understanding on our own experiences and there have been few who have attempted to look at the subject theologically. We need to do this if we are to make an impact on the Anglican Church. God has already shown us that if we want him to change the Church then we must allow him to change us first in order that we might speak and act wisely and lovingly with no contamination from our preconceived ideas.

In this magazine you will find some pretty serious stuff but also some light relief in the form of cartoons produced by Paul and Pat Bond and several poems which remind us of Spring and the way that God renews his creation each year.

May He bless you all.

Mary Newsom

## **Prayer with fasting by Gerry Angel**

I was asked to prepare a talk on this subject and later shared it with the A.R.M.(Wales) Executive.

Fasting is not a particularly religious process. The final stage of this talk was prepared in a canteen. My chosen menu was a plate of salad and a fruit salad, recalling fasts recorded in the book of Daniel. However, two other dishes had also been bought for other members of the family; one was fish and chips, the other chicken korma with rice. One member of the family didn't want any food, the other took a small portion of the plate of fish and chips and an even

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smaller portion of the chicken korma. Having childhood memories of food rationing and recent memories of seeing Peruvians in their shacks dependent on one bowl of soup a day from a government soup kitchen, I felt that the remaining surplus food should not go waste. I ate it. That was 1 pm. By 8 pm we were in a Moroccan restaurant, and I fancied a kebab. I couldn't see kebabs on the menu, but my daughter asked a waiter to supply one. It was huge, with an accompanying pile of couscous. On the following morning the result of this binge was a 4lbs gain on the bathroom scales, over my normal weight. So I went without breakfast and had a light lunch and light supper. The following morning the scales recorded a loss of 4lbs. This process is the most common form of fasting in the Western world today, where 20% of the global population consumes 86% of the world's goods. We in Britain, like the USA and the wealthy people in all nations, fast to slim, while the majority people in the world are underfed. For fasting is nothing more than abstinence for a set time from food or drink or a sensual pleasure, totally or partially. Fasting is practised among all sorts of people, for various reasons. For example, to prove one's virility, or to put pressure on a supposed god, or to prepare for a ceremony. How is fasting presented in the Word of God, the Christian Scriptures?

Most of our information comes from the Old Testament, but there is some in the New. All the material can be divided between negative reactions to situations and positive initiatives. First, the negative reactions. Fasting, and prayer with fasting, is an emotional response to a disaster or shock, the kind of situation in which we often say, 'I don't feel like eating anything'. The Israelite army, shocked at being defeated by the Benjaminites, 'went back to Bethel and wept, sitting there before the Lord; they fasted that day until the evening' (Judg.20:29). The defeat put them completely off their food! The Israelites, and David in particular, mourned with fasting over the death in battle of Saul and Jonathan. King Ahab, confronted by the prophet Elijah's prediction of the imminent deaths of his wife and family, put sackcloth over his naked body and fasted. The seer Daniel in mourning for three weeks ate no rich food nor meat and drank no wine. Fasting in all these cases was an emotional response to a disaster (1 Sam. 31:13; 2 Sam.1:12; 1 Kings 21:27; Dan. 10:2-3).

Another negative reaction is fasting as a desperate cry for help in the wake of a disaster, combined with a penitent cry for deliverance. This is like saying to God, "I'll even go without something to show that I am serious in my plea." A bit of this kind of thinking can creep into our Lenten fasting. King David heard that the child which Uriah's wife Bathsheba had borne him was desperately ill. His reaction was to weep, eat no food, and lie on the ground pleading to the Lord for the baby's life for seven days, until the child died and then he stopped. Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, was heading towards a massive enemy army and in fear 'set himself to seek the Lord and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah'. When Nehemiah heard that people who had escaped captivity were desperate and that the city of Jerusalem was in ruins, he wept and mourned, fasted and prayed for days asking God for a remedy. When Ezra the Scribe was leading a troop of exiles back to rebuild the Jerusalem Temple and re-establish the cult, he proclaimed a fast, asking God for a safe journey, because he had told the pagan king Darius that 'our God is gracious to all who seek him' and he didn't want to ask the king for an armed escort. When a destructive plague of locusts was infesting the returned exiles and their property, the prophet Joel calls on all the people to turn to the Lord in penitence, proclaim a great fast, and plead with the Lord to spare them. When praying for his sick enemies, David the Psalmist had fasted (2 Sam.12:16-20; 2 Chron.20:3; Neh.1:4-11; Ezra 8:21-23; Joel 1:8-2:17; Ps. 35:13-14).

Another reaction is only partially negative, namely ritual fasting. This is something done regularly and formally, an act of self-denial to identify with a great event in the life of the nation. The motive for participating in this kind of fasting is duty, not desperation, as if to say, 'I really ought to do this, out of respect.' The great fast in Israel and in later Jewry occurred on



the Day of Atonement, held on a specific date, the 10th day of the 7th month, when all Israelites were to refrain for a day from food, drink and work. It survived in New Testament times. This was the day when the sins of the nation were atoned for. Another ritual fast was held in the years following the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. Fasts were to be held in the 4th, 5th, 7th and 10th months of each year. Another traditional fast was held immediately before the Feast of Purim, a fast held each year on the 13th day of the month Adar to recall the fasting of the Jews when Haman planned to eradicate them and to celebrate the fast called by Esther when she was going to plead the Jewish cause before the king. (Leviticus 16:31-34; 23:26-32; Acts 27:9; Zech.7:1-7; Esther 4:3, 16; 9:31).

This approach to fasting - a ritual fast - is still practised in the Christian Church. Wednesdays, Fridays and for a time Saturdays; 2 days and then 40 days before Easter up to the 4th Century; in the Mediaeval Eastern Church in Advent and from Trinity to the Feasts of SS. Peter and Paul; in the Mediaeval Western Church in vigils before the great feasts and Ember days. Some Reformers reasoned that ritual fasting was 'contrary to the Gospel', but fast days are given in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer 1662 including every Friday, unless it happens to be Christmas Day. Today all able-bodied Roman Catholics are meant to fast on Fridays, and also on Wednesdays in Lent. The Greek Orthodox churches observe up to 150 fast days a year. (See the Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, the New International Dictionary of the Christian Church, the Book of Common Prayer 'Tables and Rules for the Feasts and Fasts through the whole year'). Asian Charismatic Christians in particular today fast as they pray, but this seems more like the 'cry from the heart' fasting of the Old Testament than the ritual fasts.

But how impressed is the Lord with all this? In the Old Testament, ritual fasts are enjoined by the Lord, but through his prophets he shows a distaste for fasts which are not matched by obedience. Let Jeremiah put the case, 'Thus says the Lord, concerning this people: truly they have loved to wander, they have not restrained their feet; therefore the Lord does not accept them, now he will remember their iniquity and punish their sins. The Lord said to me: Do not pray for the welfare of this people. Although they fast, I do not hear their cry, and although they offer burnt offering and grain offering, I do not accept them; but by the sword, by famine and by pestilence I consume them' (14:10-12 NRSV). So how does the Lord view fasting positively?

Using the Bible calls for common sense as well as for unfailing obedience to what the Lord tells his people in it. Now not everything that the Lord's people do in the biblical records is binding on all Christians. Much of the behaviour of the Israelites was not in line with the teachings of Jesus later, in particular on deceit and war. So what I have to present from this point onwards is drawn from the teaching of Jesus or from OT prophecy which gives a clear call of the Lord on his people with regard to fasting.

So what positive value in fasting arises from this teaching? First, it can give a concentrated focus on the Lord. Once Jesus had been revealed publicly to be the son of God at his baptism, he was driven into the wilderness by the Spirit of God to be tested on the nature of his sonship. He fasted 40 days and nights as he concentrated exclusively on how his Father meant him to behave as God's son. Similarly, Moses fasted for 40 days and nights in the presence of the Lord at the renewing of the Covenant and the re-writing of the Ten Commandments. When the people had wandered after the Golden Calf, Moses needed to concentrate on the Lord exclusively. When the returned exiles were keeping the fasts begun after the destruction of Jerusalem, the prophet Zechariah declares that the Lord sees them as self-centred; what he really wants are fasts which are seasons of joy and gladness, cheerful festivals. Therefore love truth and peace'. Here are echoes of Jesus' teaching. Replying to complaints that the disciples



of Jesus were not fasting like the disciples of the Pharisees or of John the Baptist, Jesus replies that they need to rejoice while he is with them, but they can fast in the Pharisees' sense when he is removed from them. I write 'in the Pharisees sense' because Jesus did expect his disciples to fast, but in a way in which it was not obvious to any human being. The disciples were to appear in celebratory mode, while God alone could see that they were fasting. Jesus' distaste for making one's fast obvious to others appears in his cartoon of the self-absorbed Pharisee who was fasting far more often than the Law required and who made sure that his God knew that. Fasting for the disciples of Jesus was self-effacing and totally focussed on the Lord. Had Jesus in his re-interpretation of fasting intended that his disciples should never fast, it is doubtful whether St. Paul would have admitted, under unwelcome pressure to affirm his devotion as an apostle, to being 'often without food' (NRSV, literally 'in fastings often'). One positive motive of fasting is to help focus on the Lord in a concentrated way. (Matt.4:1-11; Exod.34:28; Zech.7:1-7; 8:19; Mark 2:18-20; Matt.6:16-18; Lk.18:12; 2 Cor.11:27).

Second, fasting can enhance obedience to the Lord. This point is clear in the OT prophets. Aside from Jeremiah's repudiation of fasting which does not accompany obedience, Joel's famous Ash Wednesday text calls on the people of God to 'rend your hearts and not your garments. Return to the Lord.' Isaiah has a text which spells out the Lord's idea of a positive fast, which is highly appropriate for Christians in the affluent Western world. Though long, it is worth quoting in full.

'Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet! Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins. Yet day after day they seek me and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that practised righteousness and did not forsake the ordinance of the Lord their God; they ask of me righteous judgements, they delight to draw near to God. "Why do we fast and you do not see? Why humble ourselves and you do not notice?" Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day, and oppress all your workers. Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist. Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high. Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I choose; to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Then your light shall shine forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindication shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.'

This says it all. We can afford to go without many of the things we want but do not need in order improve our lining up with the Lord's bias for the oppressed and needy. (Jer. 14:10-12; Joel 2:13; Isa. 58:1-9)

Third, fasting can help a deeper trust in the Lord in prayer. Christian practice of prayer accompanied by fasting appeals to the text of Mark 9:29 in the Authorised Version and other translations which follow the Majority Text in the ancient Greek manuscripts. Readers of the NIV and NRSV find the words 'and fasting' in the footnotes as an alternative manuscript reading. I am not going to debate which reading is best, but I do want to point to the parallel passages in Matthew and Luke. Many writers of commentaries today still write as if Matthew and Luke had access to a version of Mark's Gospel when they wrote theirs. Scholars who seek for the particular emphases in any of these three Gospels still assume, in order to detect special emphases in one or other Gospel, that one Gospel writer was familiar with what one or both of the others wrote. Usually scholars engaged in his sort of comparison act as if a version of

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Mark was available to the other two, Matthew and Luke. So let us assume that both Matthew and Luke knew a version of Mark's 9:29. When Matthew 17:19-20 recounts the same incident, Jesus rebukes the disciples for lack of faith. He makes no mention of prayer nor fasting. When Luke 9:37-43 recounts the same incident, Jesus rounds on the disciples with 'you faithless and perverse generation'. No mention is made of prayer nor fasting. What is clear is that both Matthew and Luke believed that Jesus' main focus in his reaction to the disciples' failure to exorcise the boy is trust in God, faith. Once the Principal of Trinity College, Bristol, asked a Sudanese bishop why the church is growing in Africa but not in Europe. The bishop replied, 'You have things and God. We only have God.' Fasting - temporarily- removes the 'things' and leaves us with God alone, as we bring him our needs. The first Christian church practised this. When the Holy Spirit blessed the persecution of Christians at Jerusalem with dispersion and successful evangelism, groups of followers of the Way grew up in places like Antioch in Syria. Barnabus brought Saul out of retreat in Tarsus into the infant church in Antioch to fellowship with the church and to teach people. This church was blessed with prophets and teachers. They had come from many places: Tarsus, Cyprus, Cyrene in N Africa. One was called 'the Black', another was a member of the court of the (Jewish) King Herod. They worshipped and fasted, and while they were doing this, the Lord spoke to them in a way which initiated mission by design, as distinct from mission by default through persecution and dispersion. Again they

fasted and prayed before they obeyed what the Lord had told them to do. Their obedience was a measure of their trust in the Lord, and their prayer with fasting accompanied their trust and obedience. All of us need to concentrate our focus on the Lord when business can easily distract us; to be more clean cut in lining up with his will, in obedience; to trust him more completely when we make our decisions and requests. Fasting will help us in all this, as long as we don't advertise it to others.



**There must be more than this by Roy Godwin - Ffald-y-Brenin**



"DOESN'T IT SAY, ENCOURAGE THE WEAK, HELP THE TIMID, BE PATIENT WITH EVERYONE?"

Do you feel discouraged by the current state of your local church and denomination? Do you feel as though you are somehow hanging in there with too few signs of life?

"THAT WAS CHURCH IN WALES - I'M NEO LUTHERAN NOW!"



Are you generally dissatisfied with your personal spiritual life? Are you living a life that satisfies today or are you simply holding on for a better tomorrow?

If your answer is "yes" to some, or all, of the above, then take heart! You might be picking

up the stirrings and yearnings of God himself.

Let me explain. I committed my life to God when I was a child, and over the following years began to realise the immensity of that commitment. When I was 21 my local church sent me to

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train for ministry, and there I encountered charismatic renewal for the first time (referred to then as neo-Pentecostalism). It was glorious! I found that the Bible came alive and my fruitfulness as a Christian multiplied a hundredfold. Gifts flowed freely and I saw a wonderful harvest of souls. Over the following years I worked with the Anglican and Free Churches and within the New Church movement. Life was exciting. Then the pace slowed and the cutting edge seemed dulled and it wasn't very satisfying any more.

Then, like many, I was powerfully impacted in 1994 by the so-called Toronto Blessing (it wasn't Toronto's, it was God's) and life got exciting once more. The supernatural had broken out all over again. But it did not herald the revival many had hoped for; rather, it was a gracious wave of blessing for a limited period of time. Many lives were profoundly and lastingly affected, but the wave passed.

So post-Toronto and the golden age of 20th Century renewal, what is happening today? Not much?

From inside the Church, a cry of holy dissatisfaction is arising from many Christians – “there must be more than this!” Many people, perhaps including you, are dissatisfied with the church as they see it and with their personal spiritual lives. At the same time people outside the church are looking at it and also saying “there must be more than this”, and are seeking to find spiritual answers to life's major questions anywhere except from Christianity. What's going on here?

I want to suggest that in all this, what is going on is – God! I believe that he is totally fed up with what we have turned church into, and desires to recapture it, to win the church back to himself. Secondly, he is fed up with the paucity, the emptiness, of our spiritual lives. To help move his agenda of redemption forward he is sharing his heart-throb with us, and the frustration we feel is simply a reflection of the frustration he feels.

Thirdly, there is the imperative for speedy action, for what will happen to those who are seeking spiritual truth apart from Christianity?

So how might we respond to all this?

A bad response might be to agitate for the church to change, pouring effort and energy into tackling what we perceive to be wrong, and upsetting and hurting many people in the process.

The best response might be to seek to become a changed person by focussing on Jesus instead of on the church's shortcomings, burrowing into his heart, listening to his quiet, healing voice, and learning to fall in love with him all over again. Our personal change then automatically changes the church. How about repenting of our personal attitudes towards the church, praying for it and blessing it, and calling upon the Lord of the Church to have mercy and release his agenda upon it in place of our own.



## What are you saying? By Peter Mackriell

How is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Acts 2.8

The work of the Holy Spirit is to make clear. At Pentecost, people were able to hear the disciples' preaching, whatever their first language was. They knew what was being said – and they also knew that they needed to respond to the message. This was true communication.

In British Sign Language there is a strong semantic link between the signs for 'clear', 'clean' and 'holy'. The Spirit who comes at Pentecost with the holiness of God not only calls people to repentance, to cleansing, but also creates a clear link to God, a channel of communication. When the Holy Spirit comes, he comes to make the reconciliation guaranteed by the cross a reality in the lives of those who respond.

So if the Holy Spirit comes to clarify, why is it that people are so often confused? Why is ministry offered in the name of God the Holy Spirit so often shrouded in theological jargon and precisely honed formulae?

I caricature. But I also struggle with this in my own ministry (in a parish until very recently) and in the wider context of God's mission in this generation. What is the appropriate language for our work? How do we express what some will tell me is a mystery, the very essence of holiness, beyond our understanding?

Those who have taught children in R.E. lessons, in collective worship or in church activities, will recognise the challenge. Comfortable as we may be with the theology of Paul, the intricacies of Leviticus or even the true meaning of Jesus' parables, we have to find a way that communicates these things to young people in a way that they will understand and, if they are to learn, will help them to remember. And sometimes the process of talking to children brings us to that uncomfortable point, which we seem to reach less often in our preaching to adults, when we have to say to ourselves "is that really what I believe?"

So perhaps our words are sometimes a cover, shielding us from the reality of our faith. That is why the study of Theology has traditionally got a bad name – too many people (apparently) lost faith when they realised that the Emperor had no clothes. Academia killed the rising star. Maybe. But when we remember that our faith is not dependent on our understanding, that we cannot possibly hold the whole of God in our minds, then we are free to trust him for the bits of the picture that we can't yet see. My experience at theological college was that the more I learnt, the more I had to be willing to let go of my prejudices and accept the challenge to seek God where I had never looked for him before. It is a truism to say that the more you know, the more you know you need to know. But like many a cliché, it's also true!





Vulnerability frightens us. But it's the essence of the incarnation and the crucifixion. And perhaps God never made himself so vulnerable as at Pentecost when he entrusted his mission to a group of Galilean misfits! Or maybe he took an even greater risk when he entrusted his mission to me? When we make ourselves vulnerable, by stepping out from the shelter of our doctrinal vocabulary to talk to real people about a real God who is at work in the real world, we may be terrified. But we may also find that it is at that moment that the Holy Spirit is most able to communicate through us.

You are doubly vulnerable when speaking in a language that is not your own. Just speaking out is hard – the first level of vulnerability – but doing so across linguistic and cultural boundaries sometimes feels impossible. Yet since Jesus' disciples first balanced on the Jerusalem rooftops and demonstrated the reality of God in their lives, that is what Christians have been required to do.

I have had to learn to communicate in British Sign Language, the first or preferred language of many profoundly Deaf people. Not only am I using a language that is not my own, it's a visual language operating in a different way to the spoken word. People have to look at you when you are communicating (or you won't be) – and that feels very embarrassing at first. It would have been convenient if I had had a Pentecostal experience and been able to sign without attending any classes, but I don't deny the work of the Holy Spirit in taking me in my vulnerability and using even that to further God's mission. Positive and trusting relationships can be built up when you can say, 'please help me learn your language'.

And so when we go into our communities with a passion to preach the gospel, there are things we will have to learn before we can communicate. We will have to be humble and open – an excellent position from which to receive the Spirit. Help me to learn your language. Because then I have something wonderful to communicate with you – the real work of a real God in real people's lives.

I am a storyteller. In my Diocesan role I want to tell these stories of faith. The work of the Holy Spirit is dynamic, creative, literally inspiring. What better tales can there be than those of God? When we can clearly say what God means to us then people will really hear the message that we long to convey. Our language should not obscure God's work – but beautifully and powerfully amplify it.

(Revd. Peter Mackriell is the Chaplain to the Deaf People and Diocesan Communications Officer, St. Asaph.)

## **A Selection of Poems**

### **SPRINGTIME**

The daffodil, the crocus,  
The snowdrop shy and white,  
All heralds of the Springtime

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As earth moves from winter's night;  
So quietly they've been growing  
Beneath the frozen sod,  
But now they're shoots appearing  
Bravely point our thoughts to God.

Has life seemed dark and frozen?  
Have the days been long and drear?  
Has hope been sometimes fading  
In the ice-cold grip of fear?  
Take heart, your soul's been growing  
Beneath the chastening rod  
And soon new life emerging  
Will point others up to God.

Pam Worsey

### **SUNSHINE AND SHOWERS**

Does He send you sunshine?  
Then enjoy it's warmth and light.  
Or maybe storms surround you  
And all seems darkest night.  
Whatever God allows to come  
Will grace your earthly life,  
For always it is tempered  
As He wields His surgeon's knife.

Are you feeling lonesome,  
Maybe suffering or in pain?  
Then lift your thoughts to Jesus  
He will strengthen you again.  
Remember how He's been with you  
Along life's varied way?  
Well He will ne'er desert you  
But He'll turn your night to day.

Do you want to rise now  
Soar above your care and woe  
Well open up to Jesus  
Let His Holy Spirit flow;



He'll fill your life with hope and joy  
Give blessings from above  
As you yield yourself completely  
To the One Who's Name is Love.

Pam Worsey

### WOOD SORREL

Late May, the day after Trinity, and a fine clear evening after rain;  
I am walking the old path the miners walked  
down from the high places and into the dark wood.  
The peat springs back beneath my feet,  
the amber sun lifts my heart,  
and I have seen the valley through buzzard's eyes  
atop those jumbled rocks.  
Now my boots are treading down between the larches,  
and I brush against the berrywhin  
as I make for the road and home.  
Suddenly, where the path turns almost back upon itself  
the woodland floor has become the night sky  
so studded with stars it takes my breath away.  
Closer. I see there are hundreds of flowers each one single and alone:  
the white and delicate sorrel has taken sole charge here,  
and every flower is love lit amid the darkness,  
every threefold leaf a hymn to God.

Bill Rowell, June 2002



## A Wedding in the Family

March 31st 2006

Congratulations to Michael and Vicky



They met because their parents have always been to Flames of Fire and have played major parts in the event.

Michael's father is our new Chairman Steve Waters, known to most as the man in charge of First-Aid during our week at Builth Wells.

Vicky's mother is Ros Lee who has made banners to decorate the conference walls and is usually to be seen waving her brilliant coloured banners along with a number of attendant children.

We wish the young couple a long and happy life together.

## Book Review Ephesus to Laodicea by Clifford & Monica Hill.

The Handsel Press 2005. ISBN 1 871828 65 1.

We mentioned this book in our article on a visit to the Seven Churches of Revelation in the Magazine issue 40, It is a beautifully presented study guide to the history, archaeology and spiritual significance of this area of Turkey. In addition there is a CD ROM with many marvellous photographs of the seven sites together with Colossae, Hierapolis and Miletus, as well as two PowerPoint presentations of the slides with notes. In fact the CD ROM alone is worth the price of £9.95.

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Part 1: Background and Introduction gives the history of the region; the story of the Early Church in the Roman Empire; and the biblical context which links what John wrote in Revelation to what was happening on the ground at that time.

Part 2 takes each of Christ's messages to the Seven Churches as relayed by John, and describes the archaeology of the present site, an exegesis of the text and the ongoing relevance of the message for today.

Part 3 asks: What can we learn? The authors emphasise that the Book of Revelation was written for the contemporary generation in the Early Church and that the apocryphal, symbolic style of writing was used so that its message would be unintelligible to those who were hostile to the Gospel. On the other hand there is much in the message that is very relevant to our own situation today. We too have churches with congregations that are persevering but loveless like Ephesus; physically alive but spiritually dead like Sardis; and lukewarm in their faith like Laodicea. But there are also those who are poor but spiritually rich and faithful like Smyrna.

The message of Revelation and its implications and repercussions are all skilfully portrayed in this study guide, but it is not enough to read about the churches and their congregations, you really need to go there. To see the ravaged beauty of what was once the great city of Ephesus, or feel the evil, brooding presence of the satanic Altar of Zeus overlooking Pergamum is to put yourself in the sandals of those early Christians, praying and worshipping together, often in secret, ever fearful of the fateful knock at the door. This book is the indispensable guide for the modern, Christian pilgrim.

Brian Newsom.