



**ANGLICAN RENEWAL MINISTRIES WALES**

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## What Hope for the World?

At this time of uncertainty with the threat of war and terrorism, with the economic situation sending us mixed messages we might wonder where God is in all this. How much is this His plan and how much have we brought it on ourselves through selfishness and greed? When Jesus Christ, the Messiah, came to earth 2000 years ago the Jews were also living in uncertainty. They were ruled by a foreign power and a selfish puppet King, surely not what God would have chosen for His people, so why did He allow it then and why does He allow it now?

Israel now rules not only itself but others who live within its borders and is seen as a threat to the neighbouring Arab lands. But the whole Moslem world seems to be against both it and those countries which support it. Does this make Islam the enemy of the West? Has that conclusion been reinforced by the fact that most of the International terror attacks have been perpetrated by Moslems or are the terrorists just dissatisfied unhappy people that just happen to be Moslems?

There is no doubt that the earth's wealth and resources are unequally distributed and there is no way that some of the Third World countries will ever catch up. When I taught computer studies in Zimbabwe, twelve years ago, I knew that they needed this skill but also that it could not make any difference at all to those out in the bush who had virtually no education and were struggling to make a living. These people today are even worse off and we blame a tyrant ruler and a corrupt regime. They are not Moslems but many of them also blame the West.

There are many different situations in the world where people have a grievance against affluent nominally Christian countries. Are these grievances justified? Surely we don't believe that we have a God given right to the best that creation affords whilst others suffer in poverty and degradation. Our God is a righteous, just and loving God. He sent His son to die for these people whatever we might think of them, the terrorists and the dictators, the gang leaders, the common criminal and even the paedophiles and child murderers. So how does the Church react? We are God's chosen people for a purpose, we have a responsibility to discover that purpose and to act on His instructions. It is not for us to condemn but be Christ to the world today.

At the start of His ministry Jesus read the passage from Isaiah 61.

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.”

(Luke 4:18-19)

Surely God has made it clear to the Church that this is now their role, the Great Commission - Matthew 28:19-20 spells it out:

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“...Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

We have a responsibility to obey His commands but we cannot do it without love. We have to love both God - the first commandment - and love the rest of mankind - the second. Awesome when we don't very much care for some of the people that Christ died for.

But He said that if we love Him we will obey Him (John 14:15,23) so do we really love Him? Why are the churches in conflict with each other, why don't we speak with one voice, a voice that will be heard by all sections of our community in Britain and in all the world? This grieves our Lord for He prayed that we might be one (John 17). This could be a voice of real concern for the world, a voice that expresses hope for all people both now on earth and for the future in Heaven. A voice that cannot be denied by those who have not yet met Jesus.

This unity of the Church and love for our fellow man starts with me and you working and praying together in the power of the Holy Spirit. May Christ's name be glorified.

This issue will I hope challenge us. Peter Bement our new Vice-Chairman suggests some self-examination, and of the role of A.R.M within the Church in Wales (Page 5). Our look at S.O.M.A (page 12) shows what we may have to give to the world-wide Anglican Church. An account of the work of the Maranatha Community by one of our members, Mavis McMutrie (page 16) shows that there is work for us all as we pray for the world. Brian Favell has started to write again and produced a new issue of his own magazine, 'The River' in September. He sent it to me just after we had produced the last issue of our magazine with a note that I could use it. I have therefore already put it onto the web-site The River. But the reason behind his activity is that he sees the 'Church in Crisis', I have therefore reproduced two of his essays (page 7) which should make us think further of our *raison d'être*. Brian Newsom in his capacity as secretary of A.R.M.(Wales) took notes during Steve Morgan's talk at our A.G.M. The summary produced just might give us that added push 'to do something new'.(page 10) Brian has also reviewed David Pytches autobiography 'Living at the Edge' (page 18) which leads us back to acknowledging that the Holy Spirit can make us very different people if we are prepared to let Him have control of our churches and of our lives.

I leave you with a few words that the Lord gave me in prayer.

### **Joy rides on the wings of our Saviour**

Does God have wings?

Risen with Healing in His wings - Alleluia

Come back, come back all who have wandered from the truth. Come back to the Cross and let me show you your sin. Do not be afraid for I want to comfort you not hurt you. My discipline is gentle as you allow me to have my way in you - as you allow me to disciple you. Trust and

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obey that is what I am asking. Feel my love that you might be filled and rejoice in it. For sorrow is never far away and you need my comfort, my healing.

Why are you so reluctant to listen and receive my prophetic voice? Only I can touch you in the deep places of your heart, because you keep them hidden and it is only I that know the pain buried in that place.

Come my children, let me touch you, let me heal you from all the pain that has been accumulating over generations.

Why you ask should we do anything different from what has been done in the Church before?

“It is our need to rest in the traditions we trust.”

No my children, it is your need to trust in the Living God who speaks today and will speak to you if you will but listen. For sometimes you hear but do not understand and because it makes no sense, because you cannot perceive the truth, see the reality of it, you lay it down and forget it. I am asking that you take what you hear into your hearts and pray that it will grow and come to have meaning for you.

For you are precious, you have a place in the wider church. You are part of a great building that has to be maintained and repaired so that it is visible to the world outside. This is not a shiny, ornate minaret but a living entity, full of individuals with life and love, being built - bound into one, so that it can be seen as a unique whole throbbing with my life and my vision for the world - active in every part of the world, active where there is pain and distress as it gives space to my activity. For I will heal the land if you stop trying to do it, I will come to you, into each heart as you make space available.’

Wednesday, 06 November 2002

Mary Newsom

## **ARM: A MEMBER OF THE BODY by Peter Bement -Vice Chairman**

ARM exists to encourage the spiritual renewal of the Church in Wales and other Welsh churches. We believe that the Flames of Fire conference and our work in encouraging renewal within the dioceses are a vital nucleus for the revival of the church. During the past year, the Executive Committee has been thinking hard about the best way to develop and raise the

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profile of this work, convinced that God is calling us to a more visible and effective presence in the church and nation.

Our roots go deep into the charismatic movement, that rediscovery of the person and work of the Holy Spirit that has done so much to bring new life to churches of all denominations during the last 25 years or so. The vital elements of this have been the recovery of experiences of the presence and power of God in worship and in ministry, and of the possibilities of the prophetic and the miraculous in the church. But the charismatic movement has not been without its critics, and it is worth attending to what other parts of the Church have said, and continue to say, about us.

The most persistent criticism is that charismatics are excessively subjective and emotional, attempting to sustain their faith upon experiences rather than upon the unchanging and objective facts of salvation in Jesus Christ; emphasising feeling at the expense of doctrine. We reply with John Wesley that Christianity is nothing if it is not a religion of the heart; that worship devoid of emotion is at best a cold and cerebral thing; and that faith without experience is in danger of becoming a set of doctrinal propositions rather than a living relationship with Christ. Nonetheless, have we got the balance right?

Our critics also say that the charismatic movement is shaped by contemporary consumerist culture, which sees little beyond the individual's need to satisfy his or her desires. Do we, for example, detect a shadow of secular individualism in the concern with healing and deliverance? While obviously biblical, has the wholeness and happiness of the individual been pursued at the expense of other, equally biblical imperatives? The consequence of this individualism, the critics argue, is that the charismatic movement is almost entirely lacking an ecclesiology: that it has a very undeveloped sense of the wider Church in its catholicity and diversity, and of the great purposes that God has invested in it. We reply that healing is a sign of the Kingdom, that God loves us as individuals: and that it would be absurd to say with Lord Melbourne, Queen Victoria's minister, 'Things have come to a pretty pass when religion has become personal.' But have we got the balance right?

Most of the tensions around the charismatic movement, of course, are generated by its styles of worship, and people whose religious culture has been shaped by traditional Anglican worship have been quick to dismiss what they see as 'happy-clappy'. But there are more searching criticisms: no-one could deny that a very high proportion of the songs, choruses and anthems of charismatic worship are written in the first person ('I', 'me'), whilst the content of traditional hymns tends to be much more objective in its concerns with doctrine and biblical narrative. Compare a Nineteenth Century hymn such as Whittier's Immortal Love, forever full with, say, I get so excited Lord, / every time I realize / I'm forgiven, I'm forgiven ... We reply that traditional hymnody under-represents simple personal expressions of love for the Lord. But the fact is that we need both the subjective and the objective.

But another point about liturgy is also sometimes made. The charismatic preference is on the whole for expressive free-flowing worship which reaches its climax in prayer ministry - often for some grace or anointing, sometimes for healing or even deliverance. The traditional

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Anglican expectation is that the climax should be the Word (as at morning or evening prayer) or the sacrament of Communion, which is, after all, the central act of Christian worship. Do we need to ask ourselves about the place that Word and Sacrament have in charismatic worship, as compared with these traditional expectations? It could seem to the outside observer that the charismatic emphasis is rather too much on the worshipper and not enough on Christ; too much on healing and deliverance, not enough on salvation. (Luke 10:20.)

I rehearse these familiar criticisms in order to stimulate self-examination. Of course we stand by the charismatic renewal, believing that it has much yet to do in our churches. We rejoice in the rediscovery of the Third Person of the Trinity, and that He has brought us closer to the Father and the Son. But there is always the danger that we might indeed become what others say we already are: inward-looking, self-obsessed, isolated from the rest of the Church. It is very noticeable that at the Flames of Fire Conference, it is speakers and seminars on personal subjects - overcoming the anxieties, problems and diseases that afflict us physically, emotionally and spiritually - that attract the most popular support. Topics relating to discipleship and the mission of the church are less often offered, and receive little response. There is a large demand for personal ministry at the end of meetings and at other times during the conference. On one level, of course, this points to a huge pastoral need in our constituency which is not being met by the local church. But on another level it makes us aware of the need to be seeking to mature in our faith. Paul reminds us that Jesus called the Church and its ministries into being in order 'to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ' [Ephesians 4:12-13].

Notice the key words and phrases here: works of service, body of Christ, unity in the faith, mature, fullness. And notice that the important pronoun is 'we', not 'me'. God is calling us through works of service into the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Please pray that ARM Wales will break through this year into a new dimension of witness to the Church and the Nation

## **WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN? by Brian Favell**

We'd better begin by finding out where that name comes from and what it means.

The Jews have always been expecting, waiting for the coming of the Messiah - which is their word for God's Anointed One, the Holy One of Israel. When the New Testament was written (in Greek) their translation of Messiah was the word Christos. Now although according to the Acts of the Apostles many Jews, among them a large number of priests, accepted the identification of Jesus with the Messiah, the Christ, the vast majority did not. To them he perhaps was a prophet, but he was condemned as a criminal and executed as such. 'Cursed be he who hangs on a tree' was a favourite text of theirs, so by their understanding Jesus was

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cursed and could not be holy, could not be identified with God or call him Father (Jesus was condemned and crucified mainly because he did just that).

But for the Apostles and their converts he was Jesus Son of God, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Their earliest Creed was the three words, 'Jesus is Lord'. And the word they used for 'Lord' was reserved for the Roman Caesar only. It was political dynamite to apply that word to anyone else. Indeed many early Christians were executed just because they did that. The name 'Christians' was given to them because they followed Christ and called him Lord. They were so convinced of his identity that over three centuries many were executed - some in very painful ways - because they refused to avoid all that went with the title 'Christian' no matter what the result. They were enthusiasts!

So twenty centuries later we are Christians and members of a Christian Church because we accept that title with all that it implies. If we say that he was only a man: if we deny his Godhead, his Birth, his Resurrection, then we deny the title and put ourselves exactly parallel with the Jews - except that they are often more faithful in matters of the Law and of worship!

So, no Resurrection - practical, physical Resurrection with no holds barred - then no Christian Church.

Problems arise because many even from infancy have acquired a taste for worship, hymns, prayers and liturgy after the Anglican style. But at the same time they have for one reason or another never encountered the Risen Lord. And never having met him and known him, the Bible testimonies about him seem, once these have grown out of their original childish acceptance of them, to be utterly incredible, unbelievable; legends, fairy tales. Nevertheless they value the ethos, the teachings and traditions of this or that Church (because the Anglican Church is not alone in this matter). They regard themselves as the heirs of all that is valuable in the Church and think they are forced to restate, reinvent, even discard those parts of the Bible which testify to the truth of what they regard as unbelievable.

What follows from this is that we who still hold firmly to the general body of Bible testimony - Godhead, healings, miracles and all - must appear to them to be gullible, ignorant, out-of-date or round the bend. After all, no rational person in full possession of his wits could possibly believe all that in defiance of scientific discoveries, the Enlightenment and whatever! So we end up with a situation in which those who have never yet met the Lord regard themselves as the only true Church, while those who have had actual experience of the Lord and the things he does find themselves increasingly shut out of the club, the material organisation which churches so often become. And those who are so shut out become in the Lord's eyes and often in their own, the Faithful Remnant of Israel!

There is no help for it at least in my mind: either we are in Christ - and like it or not, increasingly the consequences of being in Christ become ever more unpleasant and even dangerous - or we cling to the name and the kudos and all the rest which sticks to it, and call ourselves Christian without any idea of what it means.



In the Middle East, Africa, India and Pakistan, and in the Far East, being a committed Christian already means for many, persecution or danger to life and limb. How many of those now claiming ownership of the Church in its present de-Spirited and social gospel form, will find it worth adhering to when that persecution and danger comes to the West - as it will?

## **Whose Church is it Anyway? By Brian Favell**

Of course I mean the Church of England, or the Church in Wales where I spent much of my ministry. The Church which has tens of thousands of buildings filled (?) with faithful members; with all its little pastoral subdivisions called dioceses and parishes where bishops and incumbents and Synods rule unchallenged over the people, telling them where and how to worship, with what Prayer Books and hymn books. Whom does it belong to? The Bishops, the Vicars? The P.C.C.'s and subcommittees and teams etc.? The Anglican Communion worldwide?

### **WRONG.**

It belongs to Jesus: Messiah, Lord of all Creation. And it does NOT consist of buildings or hymn and service books or Canon Law. Jesus died for it. He rose again for it, he taught it and poured out his Holy Spirit for it, sweated blood for it and suffered agonies for it - People, men and women and children. People in Kenya and Uganda, born and brought up in poverty and danger - the very real danger of animism (the worship of spirits, demons, call them what you will), and set free from that danger by the power of his Spirit, their lives changed and renewed by that same Spirit.

People in Britain and the United States, in possession of luxuries, machines, hot and cold running water - even computers such as I am using now! - that were unimaginable as little as fifty years ago to the vast majority in the Western world and are still unimaginable to the East and third world. People subjected to the dreadful pressures of advertising, fashion, cupidity and greed. People encouraged by the media - radio, T.V., newspapers and magazines - to spend their substance on things which begin to lose their savour from the moment they touch them: clothes, houses, cars, caravans; pleasure, pleasure and more pleasures. People who are encouraged to believe that such things are the whole end and aim of life and get angry if they are denied them for whatever reason.

All these people Jesus loves: he rejoices in their joys, agonises with them in their pain, dies with them in their deaths. And he calls them, invites them to meet him, to be loved by him and healed by him and changed by him into new Life. He invites them to set all these things into their rightful place - second to him, for he is Lord.



Does this sound unfamiliar? If it does then all the machinery of religion, of churches and bishops and the rest - prayer books and hymns, liturgy, candles and committees - have failed to make him known. And if they go on failing then I am afraid we are in danger of being thrown with them onto the rubbish heap, because that failure is our fault, not his.

So here I am telling you again what I believe, with countless others over centuries: that what matters is getting to know Jesus as a Person as well as God, so that he can get to work on us, set right the things that are wrong in us, remake us like a car recalled by the manufacturers to put right the unintended but ingrown faults.

You don't have to believe this just because I say so: you must make up your own minds. The only thing is, don't shut your minds against Jesus like slamming a door in his face - that's no way to find truth. And remember I'm not the only person to say this sort of thing.

AND DON'T, whatever you do, imagine for a moment that you have rights over yourselves, over other people, and certainly not over God. For he made us and we are his - not our own! He gives us life and takes it away - or gives us New Life... We do not own him, manufacture him, design him or rule him; and any 'religion' that tells us we need to fashion him to suit our own theories and desires and preferences is a load of dangerous nonsense. In the face of this, do you want Him?

Or do you want to go on sitting in draughty, cold buildings (only Baptists and such-like seem to know how to heat their churches!) singing words that you knew as a child and now don't believe, listening to sermons that tell you about anything except the Living Lord, instead of turning to Life?

By all means question: look for Truth; doubt whether you have it yet. But you cannot and must not claim the right to doubt as a continuing policy of life - that leads to death. And don't, whatever you do, reckon there are no answers. There always are if you want them and look for them - Truth Himself will lead you to them! For anyone who like Pontius Pilate, wearily and cynically says, "What is truth?" in the face of God is dead already and is only waiting for the soil to be shovelled onto his coffin, and for Oblivion.....

### **Notes of AGM 2002 address given by Steve Morgan**

Pain - Vision - Gain. (Steve was being provocative, as usual; and cryptic with it.) While there's death there's hope! (Work that one out!) Just now, most of the trees have lost their leaves, (that's true, it's November). Are they alive or dead? How can you tell? You could look at the season and wait until next year and see if they sprout again. Or you could cut off a branch and see if it is green inside - is it alive? Can we do this with the Church in Wales? And when you look inside, what do you see? While there's death there's hope turns the crucifixion upside down.

The tactics of the enemy are divide and rule. There are more denominations in Wales than anywhere else in the world. (Are there really?) Is God in control of history? Yes. Then why

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has he allowed this? Wales birthed more revivals than anywhere else. In John 17:20ff., Jesus prayed for all those who would believe as a result of the spread of the gospel, therefore this land of revival will be so again. But God must allow the Church in Wales to be utterly fragmented. Then when they come together it will be the greatest indication of unity. How does God achieve that? All wrapping must be stripped away and we must become a mission church.

Bishop Barry said we have nine years before the Governing Body stops paying clergy. Parishes will have to provide everything. We anticipate that in nine years' time, three out of four clergy will have to be tent makers. In Merthyr they have to budget for eleven clergy now, but it will be only three in five years' time. And the fourteen churches will be reduced to five. We need a radically new understanding about cutting off the branch. In the time when leaves are falling and things look dead - churches will close - we say this is Winter - and a new Spring is due.

In India intercessors were praying for Wales, when told about Wales they were greatly chuffed. Paul Yonghi-Cho told his people to pray for Wales because people from Wales started a church in South Korea and he expects a come-back. God is going to feed us in new ways. See the video "Raising the dead". Jesus is the same - yesterday, today and tomorrow - anything that happened in the Bible can happen today. Jesus said: "On this rock I will build my Church" (Matt 16:18). The bench of bishops now believe in the ministry of the Priesthood of all Believers. In Argentina two million people are praying daily for revival in Wales. There has never been a revival where people overseas have been told to pray for it.

Why this land of Wales? It is unique: It is the only country never to have had its own government. What nation is going to be saved? - Israel. There are many similarities between Israel and Wales. Steve has been asked to lead a party of politicians etc. to visit Israel to see Sharon, Netenyahu and the Knesset. Just think, of all the countries in the world, God has caused you to live in this land. Here is a prophecy: "there will be a call going out for training two hundred thousand pastors to deal with a population of 2.8 million people; that means a ratio of one pastor to fourteen."

So what kind of church does Jesus want? The answer is house churches, just as the Early Church met in houses - usually 30-35 people, and also smaller groups. To prepare these new churches we need books, three books particularly impacted on the bench of bishops of the Church in Wales. \*(see below)

We can't plan things of God but we must move in behind God's plans. We should use our cash for 21st Century research centres in the Church of God; working out how to birth 21st Century churches. We have nine years left, there is no subsidy. God is in charge. We also need a stewardship campaign. In Merthyr, giving is higher per capita than anywhere else. We didn't ask for money but simply gave parishioners the reason why they should give. Usually the last part of a person to be converted is their wallet. Paul said he came to the Corinthians in fear and trembling (1Cor 2) - conversion rests in the Holy Spirit. Can ARM (Wales) accept this vision by facilitating people who want to do research behind what God is doing. Can we formally

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commission someone, such as Phil, for example, to go round Wales on an apostolic mission, establishing research centres. Post-Modernists want experience before they believe and commit themselves to marriage, for example. But it is the way for power evangelism - it is what Jesus did, and now is an ideal opportunity for the Church - proclamation and demonstration.

Afterwards there was some discussion: Phil Rees said we need to get hold of these principles. We hear bishops and others saying, "go ahead". We do things because we are expected to do them; now the Church is saying, "Do more productive things". Ruth Taylor asked, "What about people in those parts of the Church where the leadership is not thinking along these lines?" The answer was - "they need discipling". Brian Waters said, "You can find groups of such people in every congregation - they are Anglicans who want to move on".

\* The books Steve mentioned are:

Leslie Newbiggin. The Gospel in a Pluralist Society. 0 281 04435 X

David Bosch. Transforming Mission.

Stewart Murray. Church Planting. 0 85364 825 5

But see also:

Michael Nazir Ali. Shapes of the Church to come. 0 85476 8912

Michael Moynagh. Changing World Changing Church. 1 85424 5163

Rob Warner. 21st Century Church. 0 85476 8917 3

## **What SOMA is all about.... by William Mather (Associate Director SOMA UK)**

Mission statement 'Working for the transformation of individuals, churches and communities world-wide through renewal by the Holy Spirit, sending teams on short-term mission within the Anglican Communion.'

Many churches that are experiencing the Holy Spirit transforming their lives, ministries, outreach and communities are finding an outlet with SOMA to take such insights overseas. SOMA stands for Sharing of Ministries Abroad. Here William Mather, Associate Director shares impressions from his first three months working fulltime with SOMA UK

### EXCITEMENT AND LONELINESS

Sitting in an airport restaurant is an unlikely place to be writing an article.

"Tell us a bit about what you are doing," said a friendly editor, over the phone just before I left.

So here I am at St John's airport, Newfoundland, waiting for a plane that leaves for Heathrow at midnight. In a funny way this is what working with SOMA is like. There are seemingly exciting and glamorous moments but there is loneliness too.



“Anything else you’d like sir?” said the soft-spoken Canadian waitress.

“Only my wife,” I joked.

“Well, I’m sorry I can’t do that sir!”, she replied.

But as I sit alone at a table with ice hockey on the TV and pop music on the intercom I think about some recent special moments.

This morning, for instance I was with a group of eight ladies at Cox’s Cove, a tiny former fishing village on the West Coast. We were having a Bible Study in the basement of the little white painted wooden church. They had never prayed out loud before and were terrified. So we went round the circle with simple sentences of praise — and they ALL did it! Some added some very real and personal prayer requests.

Joan Coles, the young vicar, who had only been there six months, was thrilled.

On Sunday evening there was another wonderful moment. Joan had been praying for St Nicholas’ Church to be able to move into times of prayer ministry. I had been asked to preach and the worship was led by a wonderful local Country and Western Gospel group called Genesis. The Lord opened the way for some very real prayer ministry. The Spirit’s presence was tangible and reassuring. Many came forward for prayer and we did not leave the church until 11.00pm.

I was staying with the village post-mistress Yvonne and her husband Irvine. Yvonne said there had been very positive come-back over the next few days about “the service”.

It was also thrilling to be taking communion that morning down the shore line at the next village of Melvers. It suddenly hit me what a remarkable work of God the Anglican Communion really is. To be breaking bread so many thousands of miles away in an Anglican Church and to know the glorious presence of Jesus in such a palpable way was just wonderful. We are ONE Church.

And really this is the essence of SOMA. It is sharing the love of Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit and helping others to grow in such ministry, so that lives, churches and communities are radically changed.

I was in Canada for the National Directors’ Meeting, an annual event hosted by different countries for leaders of different national SOMA bodies. There were 15 of us meeting in a diocesan conference centre, which rejoices in the name of Killdevil Camp, after the local Killdevil Mountain.

It was so heartening to be part of this body. There were some wonderful Bible studies and opportunities to learn more about SOMA’s world-wide ministry.

I was moved to see the vital part that relationships play at the heart of this “SOMA family”. Time was given for sharing of news and personal concerns and I felt genuinely welcomed as a

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newcomer of only three months. I was also deeply impressed and challenged by the passion and seriousness for intercessory prayer as an essential weapon in SOMA's ongoing mission and ministry.

My mind also goes back to other moments to Uganda and a recent ministry visit in which I was privileged to take part.

In particular there were extraordinary moments preaching in the open air and hot sun to a huge congregation at the West Ankole Diocesan Silver Jubilee Conference and Revival Convention. Numbers ranged from about 2,000 up to 4,000 on the last day. I had been asked to lead the three morning Bible Readings on Joshua 1:9, "Be strong and courageous .....for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

Such numbers of people could go to your head. Yet two days later there was an equally challenging and humbling moment, giving a day's teaching to a dozen people in St John's, Mityana Diocese on how to follow up new Christians - I was only asked to do this the night before.

There was also the time in Kampala at the Anglican Renewal Ministries Uganda Conference leading seminars and workshops on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. This included in-depth study on deliverance ministry - a much-needed topic in a culture where tribal religions and witchcraft are still influential.

A final moment comes back of preaching the gospel to a packed church of at least 200 people at Nyakinoni, miles away in the country in Kinkiizi Diocese. There was a very large interest in making a commitment or re-commitment to Christ with about half the church seeming to respond.

As I sit over coffee in the airport I ponder at how much there is to take in. There are so many people to pray for. There is the whole area of helping build an efficient office. There is also a deep desire to raise up greater awareness among more churches to this phenomena that is SOMA.

I am reminded of a recent visit to the little British church of St Michael's, Beanacre in Melksham Parish near Bath, which had just had its harvest festival. I was there to commission a team going out to Nigeria.

This was it; a tiny church, which, thanks to initiatives such as the Alpha Course, was experiencing a real move of the Spirit. Now they were sending out a SOMA team to help share all that the Spirit of God was doing for them.

Beanacre is not well known, but it is a lovely Christian church, growing in confidence in the Holy Spirit and wanting to work with SOMA in sharing such ministry abroad.



This is an adapted version for wider circulation of the article first written for the magazine of St Peter's, Littleover, Derby. October 28th 2002

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## **A Mission in Uganda by Dr. Nigel Dilkes**

A day in the Bangor Diocese team visit

One hour's drive down a rutted dust-track and we're feeling hot and weary. Tall elephant grass closes in on both sides, alternating with stretches of dense papyrus swamp or, sometimes, small cultivated plots. Clusters of small children appear occasionally along the roadside, stepping back from the path of our vehicle; some stare silently, some wave and shout enthusiastically. Just as we're wondering if we can take any more bouncing, the rank vegetation gives way to an open school field with large colourful groups of children sitting attentively in the spreading shade of mango trees. Everyone becomes more alert as we sense we're close to our destination. Then suddenly on the road in front of us a lively crowd of women appears, shining white in their spotless gomasi, waving their ebony arms rhythmically in the air. These ladies are the Mothers' Union. As we slow to a halt, the shrill sound of their welcome greets our ears, and our weariness melts away in a second. Our minibus is escorted in royal procession off the track to a small cluster of village buildings where an even larger crowd awaits our arrival.

We are visiting the village of Abuli, near to the large town of Lira in northern Uganda where we have been staying for over a week. Each day we have travelled out into the countryside to a different village, and everywhere there has been the same joyful and enthusiastic welcome: churches packed to bursting, vibrant worship, and faces thirsty for our message. Abuli is similar, but also different; the church building is a small traditional structure with squat mud walls and thatched roof. Beautiful hand-painted murals, the first we have seen, decorate the walls inside and out, depicting scenes from the life of Jesus. The dark interior of the building is completely inadequate to accommodate the people gathered here. Instead, they are seated on the ground in the shade of some trees, waiting expectantly and singing without pause. From the minute our vehicle disgorges us, eager hands reach out to shake ours – women, children, old men, then the pastor and his wife.

We are guided to a row of wooden chairs in the middle of gathering, and the proceedings begin. First, the church leaders, men and women, are introduced to us in Lango, the language of the region. Revd. Johnson translates for us; he is the Provincial Mission Co-ordinator for the whole the Church of Uganda and, along with his wife Vicky, has been with us and taken care

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of us from the moment we flew into Entebbe. Next, we learn that the church in this remote village has grown so fantastically in the last few years that it is to be split off from the mother parish and designated a parish in its own right. The inauguration of the new parish has been timed to coincide with our visit today, and the official letter from Bishop Charles is handed over to the congregation in front of us. Spontaneously, the whole congregation breaks into song again, voices entering one over the other, building instant harmony. Seated on the ground in front of us a row of musicians play adungus, home-built harp-like instruments, in catchy rhythmic patterns. Our hands clap along irresistibly, and we find ourselves joining in the harmonies.

Then it's our turn. Each team member stands up and gives a brief introduction to themselves. Revd. Johnson translates into Lango. The congregation are laughing, and so are we: 'Llanfairpwll...' is not in the Lango vocabulary, but Revd. Johnson has been rehearsing! We are happy and privileged to be with this congregation and we tell them so. "We bring you the love of the people in our congregations in Bangor Diocese; we want to take your love back home to them." We hand over cards with greetings written by church members back home. The people respond enthusiastically. This is a region traumatised by recent rebel activity, and thousands have been displaced. Life is at best at the subsistence level, and many people know tragedy at first hand. Yet here they are, praising God joyfully. It's very hard for us not to be moved. Two of our team give their testimonies, telling how God has worked in their lives. The people drink in every detail, relating to each incident, their eyes willing us to tell whatever we can. Another member of our team hands over a gift of cash to the pastor. This is money that the people in Bangor Diocese have generously donated for our visit. Just behind the old church building is the shell of a larger brick building that will be the new church one day. With our donation, the village's dream of a place of worship to accommodate all is about to become reality. More music. They want us to sing something, and we get our guitars out and sing songs we have learnt in their language.

The necessity of the new building is about to be brought home to us. Even before Revd. Ann from Y Felinheli stands up to deliver her address, a darkening sky has been inexorably heading our way. Just as she starts to speak, as it happens on the subject of the Holy Spirit, a strong wind whips up and the translator shouts to be heard. Even as the address is finishing, large rain drops spatter the ground and the congregation scatters. We take refuge in a small thatched hut next to the old church, fumbling in pitch darkness even though it's mid-afternoon. Someone finds a candle and we sit out the storm. Despite this, the village's organisation is in full flow, and food is brought in by the Mothers' Union ladies. We guess in the darkness that it is goat-meat stew, rice and matooke, a heavy mash made from green bananas. We eat with 'African forks', our fingers. The people have made a huge sacrifice to bring us this food. What is left will provide all the adults and children of the village with a much-needed meal. So we eat with grateful minds to make up for our slightly less grateful palates.

Suddenly, the sun is shining again, and the ground steaming. We step blinking out of the hut to the sound of joyful singing. The musicians and children have gathered outside and are in unstoppable flow. The Mothers' Union ladies are dancing. We join in, "Jesus, Number One! Jesus, Number One!..." It's not 'them' and 'us', we're all one together. They will not forget



our visit today; they badly needed to have our support and encouragement. Likewise, we cannot forget them, and it's difficult for us not to be changed by their joy. We arrive back at our base in Lira after dark, very tired and dusty, but looking forward to tomorrow: it will be Sunday and we will be back in church again!

## **The Maranatha Community by Mavis McMutrie**

This is a Community of love, prayer, truth, integrity and social action. A work of God emerging in 1981 through the work of a Methodist layman, Dennis Wrigley and a Roman Catholic Priest, Mgr. Michael Buckley.

'Maranatha', an Aramaic word, is taken from the last verse of the Bible and means 'Come, Lord Jesus'.

Maranatha isn't a Church, but has scattered groups within the U.K., members retaining their allegiance to their own Churches; it has strong international links. The various traditions are represented throughout the Community.

The Lord gave three words at its inception — Healing, Renewal and Unity and these have been the basis of its life. (We are called to pray and work for wholeness: in ourselves, our society and the world. For new life in our personal lives, our churches and our nation. For oneness with God, ourselves, others in the Body). Three further words were given later -Simplicity, Poverty, Urgency. (We are called to live and speak the simple Gospel and to be little brothers and sisters of Jesus. To be poor in spirit, to relinquish ownership, to be pilgrims and to travel light. To be watchmen and prophets and to warn of today's crisis in church and society and to give hope).

Large gatherings are held throughout the U.K. where there is worship, teaching, sharing and healing. Similar local groups meet on a regular basis.

Small groups of people have been going to N.Ireland regularly over the years to love, to listen and to share. We are involved in helping and housing those expelled from the Province.

Other spheres of work are:

Mothers' Prayers - which is now international. Small groups of mothers (and fathers) come together to pray for our children. This group came about after Dennis wrote a prayer "What on earth are we doing to our children? This is a charity in its own right. (Dennis attended the United Nations Summit on Children earlier this year).

Trumpet Call — a bulletin is issued throughout the community and members write to their M.P.'s /T.V. companies/various bodies about various social issues.

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Seedcorn - a training centre in Kenya where at present 25 youngsters are learning skills.

Barnabus - a double-decker bus which goes onto the streets of Manchester at night taking a mobile medical unit and soup kitchen reaching out to the needy including drug addicts and prostitutes. Seedcorn and Barnabus are both now charities in their own right.

Taste and See - A café and bookshop serving the local community, housed in Flixton Manchester (where the office is also based) run by members of Maranatha.

An extensive range of teaching material has been written including 'Christian Healing'; 'Family and Marriage—A review of the current situation in the United Kingdom; 'Homosexuality (the medical, social and religious implications); Christian folders have been written including 'The Shalom Prayer (a personal prayer for peace with God) which has helped thousands of people; C.D.s and tapes have also been produced. Maranatha is in touch with Parliament on many current issues such as Persecuted Christians. Religious Freedom, sex education of Children, Cannabis, Reiki. Maranatha has developed important links and has opened many doors in Parliament.

The Community hold weekend gatherings, Quiet days and Retreats throughout the country. The 'Light out of Darkness Retreat' (based on a book written by Sister Kathleen O'Sullivan) has been a wonderful instrument under God for helping many in their spiritual pilgrimage.

I have been a member of Maranatha almost from the time of its inception and have found Jesus very present in all that is done. Prayer underlines everything. Prayer triplets function all over the country with a telephone prayer network for urgent requests. Love is paramount and is shown to all. I co-ordinate the group in Conwy (we actually meet in Llandudno) once a month. We have members from different traditions. (Further info. tel. 01492 650169)

Further information can be obtained from Maranatha Community. 102 Flixton Road Manchester M41 6JT. Tel. 0161 748 4858.

## **Mary's Child by Val. from Rhymney**

Mary looked down at her first born child with pride,  
Perfect, Perfection on earth.  
There was no doubt in her mind whom he looked like.  
He was a minute replica of His Father,  
and she knew one day He would grow up to be  
His Father's mirror image on the outside and inside.  
As she looked into His little eyes that were now barely functioning

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she knew that one day they would weep over the perfection  
His Father had once created, and would be uncaringly totally destroyed.  
His little ears that were now hearing unfamiliar sounds  
would one day hear words that His Father had never spoken or written.  
His little nose that was now smelling strange smells  
would one day have to endure the smell of the filth of life.  
His little mouth that was now looking to be fed would one day feed the world  
with knowledge beyond compare.  
His little tongue that was now tasting the sweetness of milk,  
would one day have to turn away from the bitterness offered.  
His little arms slightly moving, would one day bring comfort,  
but would also have to bear all the burdens of the world.  
She held His little hands so small and tender, hands that one day would work miracles, but  
would also be maimed and broken.  
Little legs that were now gently kicking would one day continually keep walking doing his  
Fathers work,  
but would also stumble and fall before reaching home.  
Little feet so small and soft would one day stand tall and strong  
and firm in His creation.  
And always be there ready to lead His Father's other children home.

What will you name that child Mary?

His name shall be JESUS CHRIST!