



ANGLICAN RENEWAL MINISTRIES WALES

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A Message from our Chairman Steve Waters

Well my friends, by the time you read this Christmas will be over and done for another year. New years resolutions will have been made (and broken) and we will be into another new year. Probably our lives will have already settled down into some kind of routine and our new year may be turning out to be a carbon copy of the one that has just ended, with us unconsciously settling into the same rut that we settled into this time last year. Sometimes we forget that for us as Christians renewal is not just a one off thing that happens when we make the commitment of giving our lives to Christ, rather it should be an on-going process. We should all be making an effort to renew ourselves and our relationship with God on a regular basis, and what better time to renew ourselves than at the start of a new year. But new year is not only a time for us as individuals to seek renewal, it is also a time for us to seek renewal corporately for the work that we are doing for Christ, and this applies whether we are a group of two or three running a soup kitchen or something as large as new wine networks, and everyone in between, we all need to seek renewal on a regular basis.

We at Anglican Renewal ministries are doing just that. Having, in obedience to God, handed the Flames of Fire conference over to New Wine Cymru, we are now seeking to renew ourselves as an organisation, looking to our Lord to show us which road we are to take to leave the crossroads that we have arrived at. We are in a period of waiting, waiting on our Lord to see what he requires of us now, what our new responsibilities are going to be and how we will in future be advancing the kingdom of God in Wales, and while we wait we must be prayerful, diligent and patient.

Prayerful because we must be sure that what we do in future is God's will not ours.

Diligent because God may choose to make his will known to any one of us. Don't make the mistake of thinking that you have to be a member of the executive for God to speak to you concerning our future, you don't even have to be a member of ARM (Wales), God can speak to anyone at any time.

Patient because we are waiting on God's timing not ours and as we all know God's timing is not at all like our timing.

He may have to put key people in key places before his plan for A.R.M.(Wales) can be moved forward and this means that it could be a year or even two before we get any clear direction of where God is going to take us.

But whatever happens for the foreseeable future we must wait, watch and pray for however long it takes.

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But we mustn't in the meantime sit on our laurels and do nothing. There is plenty we can do within the current structure of A.R.M.(Wales). Our individual diocese groups will continue to have their own renewal days / weekends etc. that will need supporting, and there will continue to be new recruits to the kingdom of God who will need help and advice from us as to where to go to worship and how to grow in the kingdom. We can help all this along by attending the renewal events that we see advertised and by taking new recruits with us. We can also help by making the resources of A.R.M.(Wales) and our experience available to our diocese as and when required, so there is more than enough to keep us busy for God as we wait for his guidance.

There are without doubt exciting times ahead for us and I feel sure that God is going to do a mighty work here in Wales and what a privilege it will be to be a part of it. But, it is not going to happen overnight, there will be a period of waiting, and while we wait we will do well to remember the story of the virgins at the wedding and how those who were unprepared were left out, because I don't know about you, but I certainly do not want to be left out. When God moves us on from where we are now and begins his mighty work we must none of us be found wanting, we must All be ready with the words, "here I am Lord, send me" on our lips, because we are All going to have a part to play in the future work of A.R.M.(Wales). So I would like to finish now by asking each and every one of us to be prayerful, diligent, and patient before the Lord for as long as it takes, and May God's blessing be on you All.

Steve Waters

Thy Kingdom Come..... by Mary Newsom

When my husband Brian was ill in 1999 I realised that the only prayer I could offer was, "Thy Kingdom Come – Thy Will be done - and may Thy name be glorified". In a way we all know the relevance of the Lord's prayer and that we need no other and yet we send so many petitions to the throne of grace.

Recently I have considered the call of us all, what does God really want from us when He calls us? Thinking about two calls in particular I have come to realise something about the Kingdom that is absolutely vital if we are to achieve our mission within A.R.M.(Wales). It must grow, and it must grow within us.



The first call was the call of Samuel, only a child who “did not yet know the Lord” ! He only had to ask the Lord to speak. We can do that, but we also have to be prepared to listen!

The second was the call of Philip and Nathaniel, which you might have read in the gospel for Epiphany 2.(John 1.43-51) Philip was called first, simply to follow Jesus, and because he was excited about it he brought Nathaniel to him. Nathaniel was somewhat sceptical, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” he asked. But Jesus greets him with “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is nothing false”. What an amazing thing to say about someone you have only just met. Nathaniel questions, “How do you know me?” When Jesus tells him that He saw him yesterday standing under a fig tree he immediately recognizes the truth of what Philip had told him and responds with, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” Now Jesus is able to tell them that they will see great things - they will see the start of the New Israel, - that is the Kingdom of God on earth.

These two stories led me to think about what was expected of those called by God. So often we are so anxious to serve him in response to His love for us that we miss out on what He really wants. To come to him and listen so that you might learn from him. There is nothing arduous in that and it is what we need in order to live a fulfilled life on earth. We know from the rest of the gospel stories where it led Philip and Nathaniel, it led to living in the Kingdom where the laws are of love and obedience to the King.

John chapter 14 has been my favourite chapter of the Bible ever since I was a teenager. Verse 15, “If you love Me you will obey Me”, once seemed like a command but over the years I came to realise that as we love God more and more obedience becomes natural and inevitable. That is what God is wanting.

The rest of chapter 14 is about comfort, assurance and promise but above all about the Holy Spirit being available to God’s people. How slow the Church has been to take this on board, why don’t we just listen to Jesus’ own words and let him have His way.

It is through the Holy Spirit that we are made children of God (Rom.8:14) that is children of the King so how can we fail to live in His Kingdom? So I pray that we might play our part and hasten God’s rule on earth – but still I hear an echo of, “Yes, but how?”

Gathering the Remnants

We have throughout the country, churches that are on the point of closure because of diminishing congregations, often these are in small villages with only a small population from which to draw their members. In addition there are probably chapels with the same problems. No one can afford to put resources in from outside and the few remaining church-people are dependant on the goodwill of the local deanery. At first the churchwardens valiantly attempt to keep the church going, they rely on the area dean to provide them with someone else to take the Sunday services. But things aren’t like they used to be in the “good old days when the church was full” ! Frequently the solution is to try and absorb them into neighbouring groups, churches with whom they may have previously had little or no contact. When this happens

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even more members usually fall away. This absorption into neighbouring benefices can be beneficial – let the use of those two words be the source of spiritual reflection. It is usual to have one priest in charge of such a group of parishes, this has often seemed to the parishioners as being for the benefit of the diocese in saving a house and stipend. What have the parishes got out of it, yes they now have a priest but they almost inevitably have a reduction in the number of services on a Sunday. And it takes a brave leader to tackle the problems head-on from the start of their ministry in the new additional parish. Usually it will be seen as extra work by the people in that minister's existing parish and probably by the minister as well.

But it is an opportunity!

My concern for the future of the Church in Wales has caused me to take a greater interest at what is going on a deanery level. So it was as I reflected on the needs of our local churches that the words, "Feed my sheep", came to mind. What does that say to you? I then remembered the parable that led to the leaving of the ninety-nine in order to find the one that was lost.

But it was to Peter the Rock, that our Lord first said, "Feed my sheep". Peter who recognised that Jesus was the Messiah and as a result was considered worthy to be the rock on which the Church could be built. (Matt.16:15-19) Surely we have a few Peters around today, simple believing Christians just like Peter the fisherman. If we all take our faith seriously we shall change and the Church will grow.

I urge you to think on this, my mind is full of ideas but I won't share them yet. What God has for your area may be different, we have to set up groups of Christians willing to find God and the Kingdom in their midst.

So this magazine is a mixed bag of ideas and resources, listen to the Lord as you read.

May He bless you all beyond anything you can imagine. Mary Newsom



Let the Living Water Flow - A meditation and reflection by Mary Newsom

Ever since I chose the waterfalls, Sgwd y Pannwr and Sgwd yr Eira, for this cover I have felt that they point to the flow of Living Water. Over the years God has shown me that this is a necessity if we are to mature as Christians and I long to see that within our churches.



Back in 1996 when praying for A.R.M.(Wales) and our role within the Church, I had a vision of a narrow deep valley. The sides were steep and I wondered where this place was.

Inevitably it was dark but I felt that it was water that was missing. There should have been a waterfall, but at the head was a shallow rocky basin. I would have expected a pool, instead there was a small amount of mist or steam coming up from the rocks below. At the time I couldn't make out whether the empty

pool would fill from above or below but this valley was going to come back to life. We have always liked waterfalls but this vision causes me to pray whenever we visit one.

After the 1996 conference at Builth Wells, then called Fanning the Flames, I asked the Lord when the Living Water would flow. I had an immediate answer, "It will my daughter, it will." I have shared that before and I repeat it now because I believe that it is up to us.

In John 7.37-8 Jesus says:

"If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.

Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."

Verse 39 continues:

By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive.

Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified. (NIV)

Do you believe enough for the water to flow from within you?

But I noted too that God called me his daughter, He was also telling me that we must become his children.



In Jeremiah 2:13 and 17:13 God tells us that He is that Living Water and in Zechariah 14:8 He speaks of Living Water flowing out from Jerusalem.

But in the story of the woman at the well (John 4) we hear Jesus offering Living Water as a drink, “but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst.”

There is one more mention of Living Water in the Bible in Revelation 7, where the Lamb will lead us beside Streams of Living Water.



If you use these texts for meditation and reflection you will hear the Lord speak.

The Academy of Christian Discipleship 2004-2005 by Sarah Moulding

My interest in doing the Academy of Christian Discipleship course was instigated when my housemate signed up for the first year. It wasn't until two years later however that I felt it was the right time to start on the course myself. My future thoughts were focused towards long term overseas work yet I felt there were some valuable basic skills and understanding that I could glean from such a course. Skills and understanding that would serve to set me up with a firm foundation for any future ministry.

My year of study at the academy was an enjoyable and rewarding time. The year began with a week of intensive outward bounds activities, most of which I thoroughly enjoyed. That week enabled us as the students to form close bonds of friendship and trust to a level that would never have been achieved in just a classroom setting.

From that exhausting start we launched into a full programme of lectures two days a week and varying placement activities. I had previously been involved with many of the church placements that we were assigned to as I had been a member of the church. But there was one placement in particular however that provided a very new experience and threw me far out of my comfort zone. This was the placement working with the youth. It was the one placement that I really struggled with from beginning to end, yet despite that I learnt so much from it. When I was in a situation right out of my depth, God was there and helped me learn from the experience.

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After a busy Christmas period, and a production for the Sunday Club children in the New Year we had a well earned break at a retreat centre up in Bala, North Wales. This was a very rewarding time spent relaxing, having fun, and spending some quality time with God, to hear what He had to say to us individually.

During the second half of the year we had the opportunity to be involved with organisations apart from the church setting. My placement at this time was with Tearfund, helping to promote their work and raise the awareness of poverty in a variety of different setting. These included a community fundraising event for the tsunami, and various talks about 'make poverty history' at a primary school, girls club, and within church.

Our lectures covered wide and varied topics including: doctrine, church history, issues in pastoral care, sharing the gospel with people of all ages, and an overview of the entire Bible. One of the most memorable lectures was looking at the creative ways in which God speaks to us and the way in which we can respond back to him. Part of this involved a session doing pottery. Throughout much of this session I was struggling to create some grand masterpiece to take home. My frustration got more and more as each piece I worked on ended up turning to mush. This continued until I took a step back and said, 'Ok God, use me to make what you will and to produce something beautiful'. This is just what He did. What resulted was quite plain and simple yet it was beautiful too. I learnt a lot that day, to not try and struggle to do things on my own all the time but to seek God and what He wants to do, and allow him to do it.

For our valedictory service we were each asked to select a particular verse from scripture that has come to mean something significant through the course of the year. The verse I selected was from John 15:4

'Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me'.

It was a strong lesson that I learnt through my time doing the academy, and am still learning today in every area of my life.

Since finishing the Academy course my husband and I have moved away from Aberystwyth and are now both studying full time for a one year course in Applied Theology in Cross Cultural contexts at Redcliffe Bible College in Gloucester with a view to go out and work in Bolivia at some point in the next few years.

(Sarah was in receipt of an A.R.M.(Wales) bursary during her studies. Details are available from the secretary)



News from our Members

Mission in action - The Church in the Pub

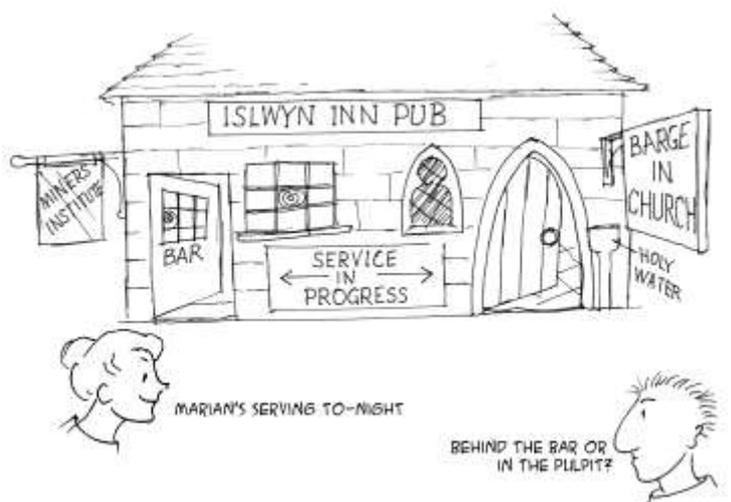
The Sowers of Wyllie

When our deacon Revd. Marian Barge was ordained in 2000 she was given the unenviable task of planting a church and spreading the Gospel in the village of Wyllie.

Wyllie being a small cul-de-sac village located south of Pontllanfraith near Blackwood in the Benefice of Mynyddislwyn. The village was built in 1925 primarily for the workers of Wyllie Colliery, and in the heyday of coal the community thrived. However with the passing of the years Wyllie gradually deteriorated, the mine went, followed closely by the Christian worship, as the small Methodist chapel closed its doors and the Anglican Sunday Services also ceased at the Miners Institute (later to become the pub) all some 36 years ago. Today the community consists of approximately 170 houses, a part-time post office and the "Islwyn Inn" - the pub.

The Lord however had not forgotten this place and once more through Marian his purpose for the people of the village was under construction. Marian was led to some amazing disciples, one lady had actually moved to Wyllie from the other side of the world to commence God's work! These workers became known as "The Sowers of Wyllie."

Regular prayer times began, consisting of personal, mountain top, and walking prayers, the ground was being claimed for our Lord Jesus Christ again, Alleluia! Marian on her first visit to the "Islwyn Inn" was cordially introduced to the proprietors Dexter and Penny Moffat who gladly offered us their restaurant area for our first service, a carol service - have faith and he will provide for all your needs.



With great enthusiasm, a lot of hard graft and large portions of faith, God's work continues today at the church. We regularly leaflet-drop every house in the Wyllie, originally this task

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was actioned by us, but now a lovely family from the village whom God has touched through Marian's ministry, undertakes the operation. This informs the villagers of our activities be it an Easter or harvest service, Mothering Sunday, Remembrance, or a summer BBQ. Over the years we have been proud and privileged to have many Christian folk with a diversity of gifts come to spread the word. Music groups, puppeteers, and numerous ministers, not to mention the now Archbishop of Canterbury and our own Bishop Dominic - he enjoyed his drink.

The Holy Spirit in Jesus is touching the hearts of this once forgotten community. God is building a spirit of restoration, belonging, wholeness and love. We are now very much part of the village life, most recognise us, and Marian regularly visits people in their homes. The Sowers are invited to all the events staged in Wyllie, for there is now a Residents Association, and Dexter and Penny have seen their business flourish, the Lord has honoured their kind generosity in allowing us to use "the church" every Monday when the pub is closed.

Our latest adventure with Jesus is holding Alpha courses, who knows what's next, but one thing is for sure anything is possible with God, even having his Church where he wills.

Was the Celtic Church Charismatic? - Water into Wine by Stephan Jenkins

The title refers to a miracle performed by St. Columba while a deacon in Ireland, where water was turned into Wine for a Eucharist, which, being a deacon at the time, he may not himself have consecrated. The story is taken from Adomnan's Life of Columba, written possibly to commemorate the centenary of the saint's death in A.D.697. Adomnan's book is full of accounts of miracles: the healing of a monk with a bleeding nose, of healed hips, of visions of descending fire, the raising of a dead child and judgement upon a magician who had caused her death.

Adomnan (Light to the Isles by Douglas Dales, p.60-67, Lutterworth 1997) sees three strands in the life of Columba which other authors parallel in the life of the other Celtic saints: The voice of the Father in prophecy, the hand of Christ in miracles and the fire of the Spirit in visions and dreams.

Some have said that the spirituality of the Celtic Church appealed to the Celtic race because of the pagan Celts' inclination towards the supernatural and the Celtic belief in a three-part God. There are parallels between the folk religion of Hindus and Celts before Christ, and the Celtic saints not only challenged the druid magicians, just as Paul challenged Elymas, but there were also shows of strength; not unlike Elijah challenging the priests of Baal, particularly in the life of St. Patrick. If the Celtic race was converted to Christ it was not because of a 'spirituality'

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but because of the Holy Spirit applying the Word to hearts.(Acts 4:31; 16:6, Ephesians 6:17). Mission to the Celts was no easier than to Hindus today. Under Illtyd (AD 425) men studied the scriptures in several versions, and he travelled from his university at Llantwit Major throughout Wales and the West of England. Boisil, who helped to train the young Cuthbert at Melrose, read through the whole of John's Gospel with him in Boisil's dying weeks. Leslie Hardinge, (quoted in Restoring the Woven Cord by Michael Mitton, p.25, D.L.T. 1995), writes of the Celt's love of the Bible that it influenced their theology, worship, education, poetry, interpretation of history and language 'as well as becoming the dynamic for the production of the most beautiful, hand written books ever made.'

The Celtic Church not only operated a variety of gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4), in the same Spirit, but those gifts were understood as living biblical faith (Mark 16:20). Michael Mitton (p8) reflects on the 'cords' of the Church: the Evangelical awakening, the Oxford movement, liberal discoveries about social justice and the Pentecostal charismatic discoveries of the twentieth century. He writes: 'All these have been necessary discoveries but usually each group has discovered only one or two strands of the whole cord, and not only that but forged their identity by denouncing the other strands thus rendering the cord weak again'.

Cuthbert, a later Celtic saint (A.D 670), was not only an evangelist and teacher but had the gift of prophecy which foretold disaster and 'forthtold' to the pagan and Christian kings. Visions, including the 'Macedonian vision of Patrick' and the vision confirming Caedmon's poetic skill, were to have a profound influence on the mission of the Celtic Church. Hilda's successor, Aefflaed was not only healed by touching a belt from Cuthbert but also received prophecy about her future and the future of the realm. Yet many miracles which included Aidans's stilling of the storm, Columbanus' calming of animals, Patrick's drawing water from a rock and Samson's raising from the dead and exorcisms were not displays of power for power's sake or to impress. Illtyd once said to Samson, "It is not meet to practise worldly magic along with heavenly wisdom" (Dales p45). There is the well-known story told in Bede of a challenge between the followers of Augustine and the Celtic Bishops on the borders of the two churches. Augustine performed a trial, healing miracle on a sick Englishman. Whether or not it was trickery, the Bishops were instructed by the Abbot Dinoot of Bangor-is-y-coed to judge Augustine of Canterbury by whether, in humility, he stands when they enter. Alongside these seemingly more dramatic gifts of the Spirit there were miraculous demonstrations of help, such as feeding and supplying water that turned into milk (St. Bridget b.A.D. 460). The feeding of whole communities in the film, Viva Christo Rey (1980's Roman Catholic Community book and film, Assemblies of God Publishing House, U.S.A.) and the testimonies in the recent Transformations videos have more to say to us than the spectacular or the weird and wacky demonstrations of personal prowess.

Finally, the Gifts of the Holy Spirit were for the whole Church (1 Corinthians 12:7, 12; Luke 4:18; 10:9; Isaiah 61:1,2) What can be seen is the variety of gifts which operated in the lives of the earliest Celts such as Patrick and Bridget in the fifth century through to Hilda and Cuthbert in the seventh century. The Celtic stream had come out of the whole Church. Cuthbert and Columbanus had been influenced by the life of the fourth century St.Martin of Tours whose kiss cured a leprous man. Patrick had been sent from Rome and Samson and Columbanus

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went on to Europe, working with some of the Bishops there. Columbanus had a profound effect on the Benedictine communities as far away as Bobbio in Northern Italy which in turn was to affect St. Francis' life in the miraculous, years later. Some Celtic saints reputedly made pilgrimages to Jerusalem and there were frequent references to the work of the Early Fathers in the monastic schools and a reliance on Eastern and Western traditions. It is this unity, despite different views about the mode of baptism, the date of Easter, married or celibate priests and monastic communities, that continued well into medieval times, well past the Synod of Whitby.

The miracle of Columba and the water into wine took place in the context of the Eucharist. Several hundred years later, in his final sermon, Columbanus preached of Christ, "He who loves drinks of him - he drinks who burns with the love of wisdom." Perhaps God had his people in every age who moved in the Spirit and taught the Word. Are we the people, am I the person who will be in that succession?

A BISHOP'S VISION by Graham Wattle

When Rose and I went on holiday to Rome this year we, like most tourists, absorbed the sights and scenes, visited the art galleries and museums, shopped, sat in its squares, drank coffee and watched the people go by. From our hotel window, we could see an intriguing variety of people's homes; but as on most holidays, there was no chance of meeting a Roman family and being invited into one of them. In Tanzania, of all places, where I went recently with my son, we were taken deep into the bush and there, in the village of Uhambingeto, the Pastor invited us into his home, first to take tea on our arrival; and later, after attending the service in the village church, to lunch. And this was just the first of many such invitations.

To get to the village, we were driven along a red mud road. It was well built, cambered, and had ditches on each side to carry away the rainwater. Nevertheless there were formidable ruts in places. The road was busy, not with vehicles, but with people: walking mostly although some had bicycles. The men were dressed usually in clean white shirts and with long trousers; the women in brightly coloured printed cotton, and the children dressed like children anywhere.

Much of the walking was to fetch water or wood or to trade something. Subsistence farming is what life is about for most people living in the bush. They grow enough on their shamba (a plantation) for the family to live on and they trade with any surpluses.

People walking on the road would wave to us as we drove by and we waved back. But it was embarrassing because we left them in a haze of red dust thrown up by the wheels of our vehicle.

As we approached Uhambingeto village we could see people on their shambas clearing the ground ready for planting maize when the rains come, which is usually at the end of

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November. Their homes were spread out over a wide area among the trees and the hard red soil. We drove up to the church, which had mud walls and a thin thatched roof, and we noted the church bell (a wheel hub) hanging in a nearby tree. We walked along a track leading to the Pastor's house, which like all the other houses in the village, had mud walls and a thatched roof. It consisted of a group of huts around a small courtyard.

We were there because my son's church is one of the churches supporting the Anglican church in Tanzania and the Bishop had invited him to see for himself how his – the Bishop's – vision for bringing God's love in Christ to the people of Tanzania is working out. This vision has four main thrusts: to build and staff clinics in remote areas to offer health care; to build and staff schools to provide Christian education; and more generally to bring help, for example by improving water supplies to the villages. Finally, and essential to the vision, to build and staff new churches. We worshipped in small mud-built churches, but beside them large brick churches were under construction. In the Amani Bible College in Iringa, the Pastors and Evangelists are trained. Despite there being many suitable men and women wanting to take the training however, the College needs help to fund the courses.

St. Paul's Church in Sketty, Swansea is raising money to support the Bishop's vision and I would like to say a big thank you to this year's Flames of Fire for their generous gift of £1850 which has been put towards the £4000 required by the Bishop to provide two of the clinics with their initial supply of drugs and medicines.

A Feast of Books

QUALITIES of ENDURING LOVE Patrick Whitworth (ed)

Terra Nova Publications 2005

The above named book edited by Patrick Whitworth has several contributors, it is certainly recommended reading. In his introduction, Sandy Millar makes the point regarding the title - we need to pass on to others, even when we don't feel like it, the quality of enduring love shown and given to us by God.

Seven different subjects are covered under the umbrella title, starting with, Fulfilling Promises, and Learning to Change and ending with Recycling Grace. God shows his enduring love for us by the promises He makes and keeps, for example his covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15).

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Chapter 3 starts with an emphasis on Love, that quality used to bind all relationships together (see Philippians 1:9-11). This chapter also draws our attention to the Fruits of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23. As well as learning to love, we are told to 'Learn to Listen' (James 1:19). But be ready to change, we are reminded of St. Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 5:17, we are new people in Christ Jesus.

Another aspect of our title is the fact that we all belong to a community – human and spiritual. Ephesians 1:5 tells us we are created to belong to God's family, with all that it implies. And any conflicts, they will arise, must be dealt with in a godly manner. Relationships will include conflict from time to time, even with the best of friendships.

Christian history has a long record of pilgrim life; in communities, and on journeys. Sharing resources, and hardships showing love, giving protection, and being there for other people. John Wesley is recorded as saying, "There is no such thing as a solitary religion". The New Testament teaches us that the church is, 'a Body' not a collection of individuals. Hebrews 10:24 tells us to, spur one another on towards love and good deeds.

The book ends with the chapter on 'Recycling Grace' reminding us that:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son, that we should not perish. (John 3:16)

Remember the parable of the prodigal son, and the welcome the wayward son received from his father. God is waiting to welcome us. May our love be enduring, by helping, and welcoming others into God's family.

Brian Waters

Understanding Revelation by Paul Langham.

Terra Nova Publications 2005 ISBN 1 90194 935 4

Paul Langham is Vicar of Holy Trinity Combe Down, Monkton Combe and South Stoke, and was formerly Chaplain and Fellow at St Catherine's College, Cambridge. It will not take you long to read this book but doing so may change your whole life, because, as he says: 'The real point about biblical teaching is not information but transformation.' He is principally concerned with the prophecies about End-times, which means the time between Christ's departure and return, and so does not include the letters to the seven churches in chapters two and three in his discussion.

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Langham starts by explaining why we should read the Book of Revelation and how it should be interpreted. And here he sees some virtue in each of the Preterist, Historicist and Futurist approaches while dismissing the Idealist out of hand. Then he looks at what the Old and New Testaments, apart from Revelation, have to say about End times, before getting stuck into the meat of his subject, the interpretation of John's apocalyptic message.

He dismisses the popular view of Revelation which sees the succession of seven seals, trumpets and bowls as representing events in a chronological order. Instead they are much better understood as a cyclical pattern. So John is not giving us a time scale, where we can identify historical events as they unfold, but is showing the way in which historical events move through cycles of increasingly intense disruption, tribulation and judgment, with periods of respite in between. A perfect example of history repeating itself. John's primary purpose is to enable us to be faithful followers of Christ, ready to face the worst that comes our way.

Moving on through Revelation we meet the Two Witnesses whom Langham identifies as the Christian Church and the remnant of believing Israel. Their demise indicates that in the very last days, organised Christianity will be crushed. This symbolism is continued in the next section where the Woman and her child also represent God's people, who are always under attack by Satan, in the form of the Dragon, who tries to devour them.

Then we come to the Beast from the Sea, which was a fearful and chaotic place to the Hebrews. The beast itself has, over the years, been identified with Rome, Napoleon, Hitler, you name it. Langham picks up on three characteristics of the beast. It is invincible, as evinced by its surviving a fatal wound. It is popular among the masses, and it is totalitarian. It is world government personified. It is another cycle of the tyrannical, one party state that we have seen in the past and still see today, in some countries. The second beast from the land, which makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, is the new, godless, state religion. It may be humanism, capitalism or communism; whatever way, political ideology is the modern successor to the emperor worship of Rome.

In chapters 17-18 the woman Babylon represents the godless culture of the world in which we live. This Babylon is characterised by its global influence, its arrogant moral corruption and anti-Christian attitude, but this Babylon is also doomed. When God's people are called to come out of Babylon, it is a call to reject the greedy, materialistic life of the world around us; and Langham describes how we can do this in practice.

The next two chapters describe the end of human history on earth. Christ appears in glory as the rider on the white horse, eyes ablaze, at the head of a heavenly host. The one thing we can be sure of now is that we are in for total war and all the forces of evil that are described in this book will be defeated. This is followed by the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy, (65:17), with the creation of a new heaven and a new earth. And Langham is quite certain that we shall be living in the city of the new Jerusalem and not on some heavenly cloud.

Finally we have two appendices, one on the rapture debate, in which he nails the fallacious concept behind the Left Behind series of novels, where Jesus returns secretly and suddenly to



whisk believers away from the earth, before the great tribulation. This is a very comforting theory, the more so because it is claimed by its adherents to be biblical. But Langham shows that it is completely untrue, there can be no secret rapture. When Jesus said: 'In this world you will have trouble' (John 16:33), he wasn't joking.

Secondly the author gives a sober account of the Millennium controversy and plumps for the pre-millennial view. He is firm in his opinion but not dogmatic, believing that whichever cause we espouse, it is no reason for falling out with our fellow Christians. The important thing to bear in mind is that Christ is coming back and no one knows when it will be. All we can do about it is to watch and pray. Watch for the signs of the times and pray that you will not be found wanting. As an added bonus, the author provides a prayer, at the end of each chapter, that links the teaching to its practical application.

Brian Newsom.

45 Minutes in China by Rowland Evans.

Terra Nova Publications 2005 ISBN 1 90194 939 7

This short book contains far more than its title suggests. It is the distillation of the author's thirty years' experience of missionary work in China. The Introduction and first fifteen minutes, in a modern development zone, presents the acceptable, public face of China: with high-tech buildings, tastefully landscaped campuses, efficient, modern transport, and consumerism.

The second fifteen minutes, in the shadow of the moon is, as the title suggests, very much darker. It depicts the old part of the city of Taipei, normally unseen by foreigners. Here in ghastly, single-room dwellings off claustrophobic alleys are gathered the dregs of Chinese society, unwanted by the state and unloved by the bulk of the populace. Often there is no income, there is no social security, no medical care, no lighting, no heating, no clothes and no food, save for that earned by scavenging from waste bins. And these are inner China's better off.

Even worse off are the abandoned children, victims of China's one-child family policy, who take shelter in drains and tunnels. Only the likes of Rowland Evans and his Christian friends are willing to minister to these outcasts, bringing food and medical expertise and vital drugs, but above all, the love of Christ.

The final fifteen minutes - a total eclipse, introduces us to the Chinese underground church. Its members operate in great secrecy, pastored by a fearless body of young Christians for whom the meaning of the word faith, spelled R I S K, is lived out in a way unknown in the West. The



most we have to fear is abuse or embarrassment, in China the penalty is imprisonment or even death. But faith and the hunger for the word of God is so strong that these fears are overcome.

The author ends with a personal invitation to readers to take up the challenge of missionary work in China. There is so much to do, so many lost souls hungry for the Word of God. If you read this book you may feel compelled to join them. Rowland Evans can be contacted at: Nations Trust, International Centre, Glanmore Road, Llanelli. SA15 2LU.

Brian Newsom.

The Anointing to Heal by Randolph Vickers

Terra Nova Publications 2005 ISBN 1 901949 38 9

This is the best book on healing that I have only half read! Half read because it is in competition with books that I have to read not because I don't want to read it. I find that it affirms so much of the way I look at healing as well as relating many incidents of healing.

In the chapter on Teaching the Basics Randolph points to the necessity of knowing our authority in Jesus.

'... if we are to continue in his ministry of healing, we have to know that we truly are believers. It is not only a matter of believing in God and who Jesus is.' and '..... not just believe who Jesus is; not just believe in Jesus but actually believe him and his word.'

These words echo John 6:29 for me. 'The work of God is to believe in the one whom he has sent.'

How many times have I reflected on how much we really believe and I rejoice in the way that Randolph has expressed it. And again he says,

'...we need the confidence of our sonship.....this will be evident in the way we minister, for: In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him.

(1 John 4:17).'

This book will be an encouragement to us all.

Mary Newsom

P.S. I later read the rest of the book and found that it came up to my expectations.

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