



ANGLICAN RENEWAL MINISTRIES WALES

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Be Holybecause I AM Holy.....

In the last two issues we have questioned the nature of the 21st century church. We continue to be a prophetic voice calling on the churches in Wales to become what God wants for today.

The Church in Wales is examining itself and has issued a video "Smouldering Wick - Shining Light?" to all clergy, challenging them to look for radical solutions to prevent our death! Bob Pitcher has responded on page 10 and Marian Barge has reported on the church which is striking new ground at Wyllye on Page 5.

At this time there are many prayer initiatives, to see Revival in Wales, much prayer being raised overseas as well as here and we might question why the land hasn't yet turned to God. I praise the Lord for Christians like Marian who are listening to both God and the cries of the people. For people use words that we do not easily recognise because they do not know what is on offer and they do not notice that we have Good News that is for all the world.

But why do they not notice Christ on earth today? We know His presence don't we? For we, the Church are His body, we are called to live in Christ and we must take this seriously for "Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did" (1 John 2:6) This is a call for holiness so we must respond. Revival cannot come in a vacuum, nor would it be sustained in a lukewarm church, it has to start with us and so we are right to examine our churches and ourselves. God has already waited 2000 years for us, how much longer will He wait?

God led me to pray for a Holy Church some years ago now and I soon realised that I could not pray this unless I was prepared to have Him change me. As a result I've read much about holiness and see a number of different attitudes to it, but no matter whether the writer is anglo-catholic or evangelical there is the same certainty of the need for us to take this matter seriously.

In the mid eighties I discovered a new printing of a classic book "Holiness" by Bishop J.C.Ryle first published in 1877. The foreword amazed me because it indicated that little had been written on this subject since this great work. This sparked an interest for me as I realised that it was such a neglected subject. Ryle's prose was excellent and I was not deterred by the Victorian writing, the book left an impression on me. Ryle wrote his book to counteract the ideas of the "Holiness Movement" which was imported from America following the publication of a book called "Holiness Through Faith" by an American Quaker Robert Pearsall Smith

Ryle wrote his book on Holiness because he was afraid that the personal holiness teaching was seriously defective on sin, and would lead to an untenable doctrine of sinless perfection. He was a brilliant theologian and loving pastor, his starting point was always the Bible and he was concerned that his flock received the best teaching.

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More recently, 1992, I found a new book J.I. Packer's "A Passion for Holiness" and I just had to buy it. He starts by describing how he sees Holiness speaking of the "loss of a precious past" He teaches that "holiness, like prayer must be learned through experience, commitments have to be made, habits formed and battles fought. The process of learning can be thought of as a school but it is God's school under His sovereign providence and in that school our Lord Jesus Christ is with us. It is a controlling relationship of master and servant, leader and follower, teacher and student". He stresses that it is crucially important to appreciate this for progress in the school has nothing to do with intelligence but on the quality of one's relationship with Jesus. He also quotes J.C.Ryle's book which enumerates a twelve-point profile of a holy "man" - for man also read "woman", Ryle used inclusive language and was incidentally an advocate of women serving in the church.

It is starting to sound hard and when we look at the conservative evangelical churches we see how it often became a set of moral rules rather than a loving obedient relationship with Jesus, but don't give up on the evangelical teaching for it will produce a Biblical understanding of Holiness. Nevertheless Packer wrote his book to stress the importance of Holiness and starts by quoting Hebrews 12:14: Make every effort to live in peace with all men and be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.

Notice the word effort, Jesus never promised us an easy life and the closer we come to God the more we are aware of temptation and sin. It is as I have looked at different types of prayer that I have also read books with a Catholic origin. Much can be learned from the mystics of the past, St.Teresa of Avila, St.John of the Cross, Mother Julian to name but three. We can get ourselves very confused if we read too much beyond the state we are in but slowly we learn that Jesus is our guide - (Packer just said that). I found that I was attracted to the various forms of silent prayer. God was gracious and I received great blessing from it but I had to learn to trust Him in this for it sometimes seemed like "Day-dreaming" or "wasting time". I didn't understand "The Cloud of Unknowing" by an unknown 14th century monk but I realised that here was a special relationship if I was willing to pursue it. I was so grateful to Joyce Huggett for her book "Listening to God", here was an evangelical willing to embrace Catholic methods in order to draw closer to God.

It was at this time that I came into Renewal and realised that books I was reading seldom mentioned churchmanship, they were so full of the Holy Spirit that differences came to be seen as a wonderful diversity of Christians who knew that God loved them and wanted to celebrate His presence. Some of the early Renewal meetings I went to were run jointly by the St.Albans Diocesan Renewal Group and the Hertfordshire Charismatic Union which was a Roman Catholic Group! God was clearly saying, "You've all got some of it right and I love you all"

So please be willing to learn from any source that God puts in front of you.

Although my background is mainly evangelical I believe that we should recover something of the Catholic traditions of prayer. On the matters of holiness and the Spirit, the Catholic - Reformation divide was not so great, we see that in ARM (Wales) for we are a mixture of

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anglo-catholics and evangelicals. We all recognise that we have the Holy Spirit within, but are we really aware of His presence? The classic book "The Interior Castle" by Teresa of Avila is only one that describes the search but we need to journey into self not only to find God but to discover our true selves. This is in fact prayer.

True prayer and holiness grow together, as we sit silently in the presence of God we give ourselves a chance to hear Him and learn to love Him. For how can we love Him unless we know Him and how can we really obey Him unless we love Him? (John 14:15, 30) Loving God, like being Holy is a command, but it is an act of will or do we need to feel something in order to really make a response? The love which leads to obedience and surrender can only come by spending a lot of time in God's presence. As our hearts are given to God in love He writes His law on them (Jer. 31:33) - then this law becomes love in us and we become what we really are - His children. This is scriptural and some will say just believe the scriptures, but it is not easy for most of us and it is necessary to meditate on the scriptures for love takes time to mature and we have to see our hidden sins in order to repent of them and confess them .

God has made all the necessary provision for us to become holy but we have to acknowledge our responsibility for our sins. We must first realise the need to become Holy and start to question how? Remember that Jesus is our guide. We don't need to struggle to follow a rule book but we do have a part to play in our sanctification, we have to be willing to give up sins - even what we think are little ones! For the real reason we must give up on sin is that it hurts Jesus , the One we love.

I urge you therefore to consider what it means to be a Christian, we need to meditate on suitable texts (some are suggested on page 9) and let God speak into our hearts. It is not easy, suffering is to be expected for we are asked to become like Jesus and walk the Way of the Cross. We will be regularly tested but never more than we can bear (1 Cor.10:13)

Do we want to see God? Note what Phil says in his letter and pray expectantly remembering that "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God" (Matt.5:8) and

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled (Matt 5:6)

What a promise!

Mary Newsom



THE STORY OF WYLLIE - MISSION IN ACTION. by Marian Barge.

(Marian is now Parish Deacon in Mynyddislwyn Rectorial Benefice.)

Wyllie is a community of houses built especially for the workers at the Wyllie Pit located at the end of a no-through road, just south of Pontllanfraith. It consists today of about 150 houses with 1 pub and a Post office that opens for a few hours each weekday. When the community was built in 1925 there was a small Methodist chapel, but this sadly was pulled down in the early 1970's. The parish of Ynsddu for a number of years organised regular Sunday services in the Miners Institute (now the pub!) but the last service was in the early 1970's. Since then this little part of what is now the benefice of Mynyddislwyn has been sadly neglected and for over 25 years has had no church or chapel of its own.

In 2000, I was ordained to the Diaconate to serve in the Benefice of Mynyddislwyn. Part of my remit has been to evangelise and church plant on the Wyllie. This seemed from the first to be a daunting task, so along with my husband Brian and another Christian friend John Wigley we started to pray. First of all, we went to the mountain top overlooking Wyllie and claimed the ground for our Lord Jesus Christ.

During the autumn of 2000, we walked the streets of the village; just walking along asking God what we should do. At first nothing seemed to happen and I became very frustrated as I could not see a way forward; it was like nobody wanted to know. I felt quite deserted. But we (the small team) decided to plod on, although we had not yet been able to make any fruitful contact with anyone living in Wyllie.

Early in 2000, The Revd. Tudor Griffiths, our Diocesan Missioner, heard of the situation at Wyllie and wrote to me offering to help. Tudor and I met several times to see how we could take the mission in Wyllie forward. As a result of this, in November 2000, I went to the pub (the old institute where the Anglican services used to be held) and asked if it would be possible to hold a Carol Service there. I was over the moon when the proprietors Mr and Mrs Moffat said yes we could use their restaurant for the service. With this in mind we set about targeting every house in the village with a letter telling them of the planned Carol Service in the pub. The letter also outlined who I was and that if I could be of help to them in any way that I would be happy to visit them.

We had set about praying and walking the village some 5 months before this letter went to every household but still nothing seemed to be happening. Once again I began to feel completely alone. My cry was that nobody cared, nobody wanted to know and anyone who would listen heard this sob story of mine. And then on top of this, the pub phoned to say that they had forgotten that they had a dinner party booked in for that night so the room would not now be available. See.... nobody did care or so I thought ! What a fool I was for, of course, our God cares.

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In the middle of November Brian, John and myself went to the Swansea and Brecon Diocesan Renewal Day in Brecon Cathedral and there we truly saw God in action. I met a lady called Clarice whom I had known before and I poured out to her that well worn sob story, in the course of our sharing together. she mentioned that she had been to Wyllie that very morning! I could not believe what I was hearing. "Oh yes", she said, "a friend of mine has just moved there ... would you like to meet her?.... she is just down the front". Would I like to meet her ... boy I flew down the aisle of the Cathedral. When I met Heather, I could not speak, I could only stand there in amazement and cry did I cry! In the end both Heather and Clarice were also crying, though they did not know why. Heather was keen to help, so I arranged to go and meet her at her home in Wyllie, where she had just moved with her daughter and son-in-law. She had recently moved from Rorkes Drift in South Africa to live in Wyllie. Who says God does not answer prayers?

I went back to the pub to try and sort out a new date for the Carol Service, which they did and we seemed to be back on course. In early December the music group I had hoped to book fell through. Again I felt deflated but God had it all in hand for in my prayer time he had given me the name of another friend, Chris Daniel in Swansea. I contacted him and booked him for the Carol Service.

We had our first Carol Service on December 11th 2000 in the pub at Wyllie. About 30 people were there including lots of friends and also 8 who came from the village. The first service for over 25 years was a success.

During 2001 we had 5 services at the pub as well as a Palm Sunday walk of witness, a Good Friday "Stations of the Cross" walk around the village and a Barbecue in conjunction with our friends at the pub. And by the time we came to the 2001 Carol Service, 18 people from the village attended and 3 of them read lessons. In that year we also targeted the homes in the village 3 times with letters and conducted a survey of what the local people wanted from the church under the guidance of Tudor Griffiths. We hope that as time goes by the local Church will be able to implement some of the requests we received from local people.

We now have a team of 5 leading and praying for the mission to Wyllie, John, Brian, Grace, Heather and myself. We also have a music group led by the Revd. Nick Hawkins from the Diocesan Mission Team that comes regularly to lead worship at our services in the pub. In October 2001 we started a Bible Study and Prayer Group that meets regularly in Heather's home. In February this year we plan to use a portable sign outside Heather's family home declaring our presence there in the community. We have a program set out for 2002 with services in the Islwyn Inn (by kind permission of Mr and Mrs Moffat), one of them being an Easter Tuesday Songs of Praise with Rowan Williams our Archbishop.

So you can see that to plant a church in an unchurched area is not an easy task and at times I have felt that it would never happen. But our God had it all in hand. What I had forgotten was that my timing was not necessarily God's timing.



We would ask you to continue to pray for all aspects of the mission work in the community of Wyllie: for our local mission team of 5; for our prayer group in Heather's house; for our friends at the Islwyn inn and for Tudor and Nick and other members of the Diocesan Mission Team, who come to help and work alongside us. And if maybe you are praying about the possibility of doing something similar in your area maybe you could think about inviting the Diocesan Mission Team to work alongside you and your parish.

Your Servant in Christ

Marian

Smouldering Wick - Shining light? By Bob Pitcher.

In the last few weeks every incumbent in Wales has been sent a video called ' Smouldering Wick-Shining Light'. Many of you will have seen it. It comes from the new Council for Mission and Ministry and it has been provoked by the huge crisis the Church in Wales faces. It basically says that our denomination unchanged has about fifteen to twenty years before its structures completely 'melt down' and we cease to exist as a denomination. So it encourages us to think radically about Patterns of Ministry, modes of mission and 'ways of being the Church' because, as Bishop Barry said recently, ' The Status Quo is not an option.'

This is really a very exciting and amazing opportunity. Our Province, in the shape of the Council for Ministry and Mission, is actually asking us to feed them with radical ideas .

PATTERNS OF MINISTRY

In terms of ministry it seems that we really can't be more radical than the New Testament. In Ephesians, Paul lays out the fivefold ministries of Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers.

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up. (Ephesians 4:11-12 N.I.V.)

Sadly, in the Church in Wales, ministry has been largely pastoral. In England, as well, selection boards have been discouraged from selecting candidates to the ministry who are, for instance, evangelistic. Often our Bishops are seen just as sorts of 'over-shepherds'. As a result the Evangelistic and Prophetic thrust of the Church is stifled; if not killed off. We lack direction and a cutting edge. Also the teaching of the church has been diluted, if not poisoned, by a diet of liberal theology in our training institutions. So our teachers (clergy and readers) have often failed to give nourishing food, or even worse, have given faith destroying teaching,

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to those under their care. Those engaged in renewal, however, are expecting the Spirit of God to bring restoration and life and we should expect not only the restoration of Spiritual Gifts to the Church but also Spiritual Ministries. It is after all, by the Spirit of God that men and women are called and equipped to serve the church. But how will these ministries emerge? Too often we have seen spiritual ministry as the reserve of those in the ordained ministry and of readers. It is of vital importance that we find ways of letting other ministry emerge and function. It is after all the function of the fivefold ministry to equip God's People for the work of ministry, not to do the work for them. Clericalism has been a tourniquet to the life blood of ministry within the church. There have of course been many wonderful men of God over the years who have served and pastored their flocks selflessly to the Glory of God but the tragic misunderstanding of 'one parish one man', has made a huge contribution to the present paralysis of the church.

Naturally we can't just release any old person who comes along claiming to be an evangelist, teacher or more particularly a prophet and ways must be found of identifying, and giving authenticity to emerging gifting. We must find ways then of nurturing, training and commissioning such men and women. I imagine the video will produce a multitude of 'Good Ideas'. It seems important to me, however, in the light of the scriptures, that we pray for and promote what God has already shown us in these matters.

MISSION

Uganda doesn't export apples, because it doesn't grow them. It does export coffee, because it does grow coffee beans. In exactly the same way we can't export the life of Christ if we don't grow the life of Christ. People are understandably not interested in our religion. If they were people would be going to church. People are, however, interested in Jesus. His Love, Forgiveness, and fullness of life naturally attract them. All the mission initiatives in the world will come to nothing if Christ is not to be found in his people. It is simply not good enough for us to proclaim the good news, we have to be the good news as well. This is another good reason for taking good notice of the fivefold ministries for it is they who:

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 N.I.V.)

God is not just after lively churches, relevant churches, doctrinally pure churches or socially active or even charismatic churches. Although all of these things are good they all miss the mark. No, His aim is that His Son should be seen in us. That we might truly be incarnational and be The Body of Christ. Paul speaks here of us attaining the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. How can this be? Well, through the work of the Spirit. The Fruit of the Spirit is the character of Jesus, isn't it? The gifts of the Spirit are the power of Jesus and the ministries of the Spirit are the authority of Jesus. It is as we, God's people, allow the Spirit of God to abide in us and have His way in us that Jesus emerges in us in character, power and authority, as the corporate expression of who we are. It is as we become more and more like Him through that

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work of the Spirit in us, guided and facilitated through the fivefold ministries, that we will become more and more attractive to those who are seeking life and we will actually be his hands and feet in every area of life where we make contact. This is true mission and true renewal.

We live at a moment of great possibility. A door of opportunity has opened up for us. It reminds me of the time when the Babylonian captives were encouraged under Cyrus to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple. Many did not want to return, but for those pioneers who took up the challenge to repossess their possessions in God, despite the hardships, they saw the 'Glory of the latter house which was even greater than the Glory of the former'. May we see that in our day too.

GIFTS OF MINISTRY Part 7- Mercy by Brian Favell

(see Romans 12: 4-8)

..... THE MOTIVATION TO IDENTIFY WITH AND COMFORT THOSE IN DISTRESS - to show sympathy with, to have pity on, to show mercy.

In many respects this gift is the absolute opposite of Prophecy. And yet on the face of it there are one or two similarities. Both have the capacity to look inside other people; but where a Prophet sees a person's character and motives, a Mercy person will see and feel the joy or pain that is in them. Where a Prophet has to rebuke and correct, a Mercy person weeps inside for the trouble, the pain, the burdens, the problems that lie behind a sin or a failure. Where a Prophet is concerned with the challenge of the Good News and expects a positive response, an obvious commitment, the Mercy person is concerned to express the overwhelming love of Christ and to share his healing. To see an example of Mercy at work, read John 8 verses 3 to 11; the story of Jesus dealing with the woman who has been caught in the act of adultery.

Now for the marks of Mercy (remembering, as I warned before, that not all these characteristics will be equally present in any one person). And first comes this sensitivity, this ability to FEEL, the joy or pain or distress in another person, or in a group, and particularly to be attracted by distress. In a person with the gift of Mercy it will work like a D.F. Loop - the wartime system of getting a bearing from a radio beacon. From the middle of a crowd he will feel distress signals coming, and home right in on the one person in that crowd who is in real trouble; and his overwhelming desire will be to give help, to minister to that need. And time and time again he DOES minister: his own heart, flooded with the hurt that the other is feeling, becomes an open channel for Christ's love and grace to flow through - and someone is healed.



A Mercy person can be aware of physical distress as well as mental, but it is the latter that floods into his own being and brings the strongest response. He is particularly sensitive to hurts inflicted by what others say and do: the thoughtless or callous word is apt to strike him at least as hard as the one at whom it is aimed. And because of that sensitivity he is very reluctant to say or do anything himself that could hurt, even when it is for someone's good. So there will be times when he ought to be firm but is very reluctant about it; others will simply think he is being soft. For these reasons Mercy people and Prophets don't mix; the Mercy people are apt to be slaughtered deep inside out of sympathy with those to whom a Prophet ministers. And in their turn, Prophets especially are liable to think a Mercy person is soft-peddalling the challenges of God.

Mercy recognises and responds to sincerity in others; conversely if someone is being insincere or insensitive he tends to switch off. He enjoys fellowship with, and feels at one with, those who have the same gifts and sensitivity as himself.

Of course a Mercy person gets misunderstood: his avoidance of hard-line attitudes and black-and-white judgments looks like weakness and shilly-shallying. Indeed this is a grave danger for him: he will find it very difficult ever to be firm with others, and may kid himself he can always avoid it. He can't!

This thing called sensitivity - this awareness that somehow picks up other people's internal agonies and floods his heart with them - may look as if he is just being emotional. But although he feels what others are feeling (and feeling might be called emotion) yet the feeling is in his heart and not his mind. In his mind his intelligence is in control, laying the pain and turmoil before Christ and opening the way for Christ's healing to pour back into the hurt person. This sensitivity is also a danger both to him and to the person to whom he ministers. It dissolves barriers and brings the two people into very close communion - a sharing of thoughts and feelings. If minister and ministered to are of opposite sexes there can be trouble, however innocent the intention. Indeed it would take two strong wills and clear minds - and/or the very firm hand of God on both - to avoid problems. So it is wiser wherever possible to minister man-to-man and woman-to-woman - which demands the presence of Mercy persons of both sexes in any Christian body. And if we don't have them we'd better start praying for them!

That having been said there are two other points to bear in mind. First, with all the present propaganda for and emphasis on homosexual relations, nowadays ministry man-to-man or woman-to-woman may itself have a potential for making as much trouble as cross-sexual ministry (though this is not to approve or condone the principle of homosexual relationships). And second, although in ministry we should try to follow the safest pattern there are times and circumstances when we have to accept whatever risks there are and go ahead and minister. And in these cases we must simply make sure we are acting in obedience to our Lord, trust that he himself has allowed the situation and ask him to keep us all safe in it.

A third point on sensitivity: a Mercy person's reaction to hurtful words or actions directed at someone else may look like siding with the hurt person against the other. But the thing is that



on such an occasion BOTH feel equally hurt, and of the two the Mercy person is the more likely to speak up and say so!

Last among possible misunderstandings, the Mercy person's ability to detect insincere motives - plus the 'switching off' that tends to follow will lead some to think he is hard to get close to or has favourites. You know the sort of thing: "He's all over so-and-so, but if I try and get near him he just freezes up!"

In a sentence, the God-given gift of Mercy means laughing with those who are joyful and weeping with those who weep; and bringing back both tears and laughter to lay them at Christ's feet, carrying back in exchange his grace and his love.

What must he NOT do? First and foremost as always, he must not be proud of his abilities. They are not his own doing but are given to him by God. He must not resent the presence or activity of others who have not his gifts: they have their own gifts and their own place in God's work. And although he will be suspected of allowing emotion to rule in him, he must not allow it to actually happen.....

(Editor's note: Our thanks to Brian for these helpful articles, this is the last in the series)

THE LOCK OF GRACE by Mike Endicott

The canal is old – it was engineered by the Ancient of Days and opened for general use with an inaugural act on Calvary itself.

In truth there is a whole network of such canals around the world – waterways of many shapes, directions and sizes - and together they bear the name 'church'.

Very close is a working lock that allows the water level to rise and fall between the higher and lower levels, thus enabling boats that come from above to pass on down the canal to those who need their precious cargo.

The name of this canal is Grace. It begins its winding journey somewhere far away in the hills above the lock where is the city of heaven in the land of the future – Tomorrow Land. Below the lock and down in the valley lies the city of 'life' in the adjoining country of Today Land. Living here below the lock are millions in various states of desperation, all starving to death without the cargo gifts that are driven down to them. Driven? The engines of the boats are fired by the expectancy of the saints.

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The lock itself is the Christian heart. It has a set of two gates above and two below, between them being a well that fills and empties with the flow of Grace as they open and shut. The upper gates, those that allow the well to fill, are the twin gates of Humility and Obedience

And the lower set, those that allow Grace to flow out to the lower levels, are called The Gates of Compassion. The lock keeper, whose name is Conscience, has duties that he must perform - taking care of the lock so that it does not seize up with lack of use and prevent the flow of Grace and the gift boats along her course.

He must maintain the lock gates themselves and ensure that the well itself is saved from being silted up. To do this he uses a dredger that was supplied for his use on Inauguration Day. It is the dredger of repentance.

All four gate hinges and all the sluices must be kept in fine working order as well and all is achieved with the lubricant of spiritual and truthful worship.

When all is working smoothly, boats may pass with ease and with little delay between the upper and lower levels, winging on to those who need so much to unload them when they arrive.

When all at the lock is working smoothly the High King of Heaven is well pleased, His children who live in the city of life are graced and maintained through His rich abundance.

Conscience, the Lock Keeper, may, of course, exercise his own free will and sit down to rest. He may spend his days admiring his most beautiful lock and the gentle sweep of the canal as it flows down to him from the hills. This sight of all the canal barges moored up along the bank, waiting their turn, may be a pretty vision to him and he may block his ears to the hungry cries welling up from the city below, saying to himself, "What is that to do with me?"

But if he attends himself to working the gates at every opportunity, and to constant watchfulness over their working order, then he himself becomes a smooth-running cog in the flow of Grace and a beat in the heart of God.

We thank our friend Mike for his thought provoking contribution to our considerations of the church and take this opportunity to promote his new book. I understand that the sale of his books is now a valuable source of income for Jacob's Well.

The new book about Yates, Mike Endicott's Guide Dog is "Find the Way!" and tells of his adventures as a dog in ministry. It is now available from the Well Centre, tel. 01633 483660

Order forms for "Find the Way!" can be downloaded from the Jacob's Well Website

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Book Review

We did intend to write our review but it seems better to reproduce the foreword which is written by another good friend of ours Jennifer Rees-Larcombe, we can only endorse it.

FOREWORD to Find the Way!

Over the last few years, I have heard Mike telling lots of stories about the adventures he and Yates have had together. They are often very funny, and always fascinating, but they are also something more. As Mike explains the unique relationship of trust that exists between himself and Yates, he uses it to show us how God longs for a similar kind of relationship with us. It astounds me to discover just how many things Mike is able to do, and how many places he is able to visit, simply because of Yates, but all this is only possible because of the way they trust and rely on one another. And, of course, the trust and reliance only comes because they also respect and love one another deeply. Watching the way that Yates and Mike become one, as they stride off together through crowded streets, always gives me a kick.

Mike has told me of the closeness that exists between him and Yates: "When he's got his harness on, he thinks I'm actually part of his own body!" —and he speaks of the way he himself has to keep very close to the Lord, in order to minister effectively to the people he meets each day.

Yes, this is a profound book, but it is also great fun, easy to read, and a fascinating account of the complex, demanding and extremely responsible job of being a guide dog. I know you are going to enjoy it on many different levels, but to get the very best out of it, do let it speak to you on the deepest level of all.

Jennifer Rees Larcombe



Book Review Changing Churches - Building Bridges in Local Mission, by Jeanne Hinton.

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (2002). ISBN 085169-264-8.

Brian Newsom.

Changing Churches is a fascinating report on the Building Bridges of Hope (BBH) project which was set up by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland to discover what different ways of relating to local communities are most effective for mission. A summary of the aims, what has happened and been learned so far and the future plans are contained in an appendix by Simon Barrow, Secretary of the Churches' Commission on Mission, CCBI. This is written in a formidable socio-scientific jargon, for example: Focusing vision: The importance of local churches articulating their specific calling through integrated strategies for community engaging, mature spiritual life, enabling leadership and appropriate structure (p132). But don't let this put you off reading the bulk of the book which is about the various churches and communities that Jeanne Hinton studied in a frantic round of visits.

Here I have to declare an interest as I am a Reader in the Church in Wales at Llansantffraid-y-Mechain, close to the border of Powys and Shropshire, where Michael Bennett our Vice-Chairman is now Vicar, and which was one of the twenty-odd local Christian communities across England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, included in the study. And our story of the coming together of Anglicans, Welsh and English Presbyterians and Methodists, and Roman Catholics, from Llansantffraid and Llanfechain, is related in the book.

We normally think of changing churches as referring to those people who move from congregation to congregation looking for the perfect church, where they can feel happy and fulfilled. And of course they never find it. This book is about churches that are responding to changes in society and seeking to meet the needs of the people in their locality. This is amply demonstrated in the heart-warming story of the development of the ecumenical Forthspring Inter-Community Group (named after the local river Forth) in the strife-torn, Springfield Road area of West Belfast, where the Protestant and Catholic communities meet.

In Leyland, the Catholic church of St Mary's became the catalyst for a coming together of ten different churches from the Catholic, Anglican, Methodist and URC denominations. This has resulted in the town becoming more open to God, and a spreading pool of goodwill generally.

There are also stories of churches arising, phoenix-like, from the ashes of urban deprivation, like that of the Furnival pub in north east Sheffield which has become an ecumenical, multi-cultural, Christian community. Café 2000 is another, similar initiative which has blossomed in the wilderness of the Marsh Farm estate in Luton. Here a body of dedicated volunteers offer spiritual, practical and psychological help to people living on the edge of society.

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In Glasgow the Late Late Service is run by an ecumenical Christian community with strong links to the mainstream churches, to minister to young adults who find traditional forms of church service out-moded, or even incomprehensible. Whilst in Edinburgh they have a Club Church, which caters for that part of the population that is still in bed of a Sunday morning after a hard night's clubbing in the city. They too are dissatisfied with mainstream church worship, but they want something more than the club scene itself offers. Also they still have an interest in spirituality and a need to discuss matters of concern and faith in depth.

This book should be read by all Christians who have a concern for reaching out to the un-churched in their immediate vicinity; for there are examples of faith in action which will inspire you all.

We Need You by Chris Daniel

We need You.
Oh how we need You.
Lord we concede
We will go where You lead,
But we need You Lord.

We pray that
You'll speak and You'll say that
You always will stay,
Lead us now in Your way,
Oh, how we need You Lord

Lord we lift up our eyes unto Your throne
Lost in wonder at knowing we're not alone
As Your people now acknowledge
Their wilfulness and need
God of all power and mercy – You take the lead.

We know that (We need You, Lord)
Your Holy Spirit will show that (We need You Lord)
Grace and mercy will flow,
And revival will grow,
As we turn to You, Lord

Revive us. (Revive us, Lord)

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Father revive us. (Revive us, Lord)
How else can we survive?
In You we're truly alive.
We need You Lord.

Lord how we need you in these darkest of days.
Now as we turn away from disobedient ways.
O God of grace and mercy,
We turn to You and say
We need You like never before, hear Your people today.

I hear you.
Your Lord and Saviour is near you
This you must know,
I will never let go
I am with you always.

I love you.
My precious children I love you.
My grace I freely bestow,
And my presence you'll know,
If you walk in my ways.

(Repeat last verse)
.....Come walk in my ways

Chris Daniel 2001

(This is the song Chris has written for this year's Flames of Fire, let it inspire you to come and join our celebrations.)