

Life & Work

Number 103 Spring 2010

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1980 Deacon Ruth Hinch
1984 Mr R K Lolley
1986 Mrs P Goacher
1991 Mrs E Waller
1994 Ms J Aitchison

Worship Leaders

Mrs Ann Bailey
Miss Hannah Goacher

Proposals for the Reorganisation of the Leeds Circuits

The Leeds Methodist District is currently considering seven possible scenarios for the reorganisation of the circuits in the Leeds Metropolitan area. Scenario 1 is the present situation. In the other six scenarios Oxford Place becomes part of a larger circuit covering a particular sector of the city:

- with the south of the city (9 churches)
- with all churches in the Leeds Council area (68 churches)
- with the northern half of Leeds (37 churches)
- with the western part of the city (30 churches)
- with the northern-eastern area (19 churches)
- forming a central Leeds circuit (41 churches)

It should be emphasised that these are only proposals, and there is much discussion to be had. Fuller details are to be found on the Leeds Methodist District web site. [<http://www.leedsmethodist.org.uk/>]

It is hoped to provide an opportunity for the discussion of these proposals at Oxford Place on Sunday 18th April.

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OXFORD PLACE METHODIST CHURCH CENTRE

1835 – 2010

*175 Years of Worship Work
and Witness*

AN INVITATION TO OUR

OPEN DAY

Thursday 29th April
10.00. am – 3.00. pm

Come and see just what is
behind the Doors
Meet some of the people who
work in the building
Visit the Lounge Cafe and find
out about the
organisations that are based at
Oxford Place.

For more information please contact
Ruth Hinch on 0113 242 5254
Or visit our web site
www.oxfordplace.org.uk

Dear Friends



There is a saying which I believe goes 'Time flies when you are enjoying yourself' and I guess that on the whole that is true. Certainly as I look back over the past four and a half years I can't believe how quickly the time has passed. It only feels like a few months since I arrived as the 'new' deacon and in a few months time I shall be the 'old' deacon, or rather the former deacon, though on reflection the former is probably more correct.

I can still remember my first morning on Person-to-Person duty, sitting waiting with mixed emotions for the first visitor to arrive. Part of me hoping that the door bell would ring, yet at the same time the other part hoping that it would not. As it happened I don't think anyone did come that morning. Eventually people did ring the bell and I quickly learnt how to deal with the variety of people who pass through week by week. Some I have got to know quite well over the four and a half years, as they come regularly for help and support. Others I have met only once as they have come and told their story or shared a deep secret, and then gone on their way. I have learnt a lot about human nature and about the Benefits system. I have also learnt how frustrating life can be for some as they are passed from one department or organisation to another, and of the feelings of hopelessness and worthlessness this can engender.

Then of course there is the chaplaincy work both at the House of Fraser and going out with the Street Chaplains on a Friday night. Someone I was talking to recently started telling me about 'Church without walls' and I guess that this is what chaplaincy work is all about. Going as a representative of the gospel to places outside the safety of the church walls and talking to people who wouldn't dream of crossing the church threshold. I have not always found the retail chaplaincy an easy or comfortable place but then Jesus never promised his followers that sharing the gospel would be easy and it is often in these uncomfortable places that we meet God and grow in faith. Going out on a Friday evening is something else that I don't find easy but for different reasons. It's not so much the going out but the staying out until the early hours of the following morning that is my problem. It gets harder as I become older though it is true that there are even older people than me who do it without trouble or complaint. It is I believe a very worthwhile and useful thing to do. Though I did find myself wondering as I handed a bottle of water over to a young woman slumped in a doorway who clearly had drunk too much alcohol and was feeling decidedly unwell, is this what Jesus really had in

mind when he said 'And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple,..., he will certainly not lose his reward.' Well maybe he did, he certainly called his followers to go out in his name to the lonely the lost and the hurting. For although many of these young people do go out to have a good time, for some getting drunk is their way of dealing with the pain or emptiness in their lives.

Another image or model of sharing the gospel that Jesus used was in terms of sowing seeds. This seems to me a good image of not only my ministry but of the ministry we offer at Oxford Place. Sometimes it appears that not very much is happening or we don't seem to see much for all our efforts but it's surprising how often I come across people who have great respect or affection for the church because of something that was said to them by a minister or member or because of some event that they attended at Oxford Place. In its history of one hundred and seventy five years many seeds will have been sown and many will not have even germinated but other have and seeds planted years ago have been loved and nurtured are and now bearing fruit.

I am only sorry that I shall not be with you to celebrate the Anniversary in October. I would like to think that when you come to celebrate your two hundredth Anniversary I might get an invitation – that is if I am still in this world and not the next. Though by then I shall be a very old deacon and probably not up to travelling very far. So I wish you well for the future and thank you for at least the past four and a half years.

May God bless you all

Ruth

From Life and Work No 10 (Winter 1987)

Why the back pews?

"Come early and get a back seat." These words recently appeared on a church notice board. Why is it that most of us have a liking for the back pew? It could be that we would rather look at others than they at us - albeit from behind! Is it that being too near the front brings us too close to the preacher and it is not as easy to nod off? Or does it mean we are just shy or don't like being conspicuous?

Whatever the reason, can we remember two things. Firstly, it is a great help to those conducting worship to feel close to the congregation and not separated from them by rows of unoccupied seats. Secondly, should not the back pews be left empty for visitors or strangers who come among us? If we feel shy, how much more must they be as they make their way round to the front pews.

RICHARD DAVISON

Our Church Family and Friends

We congratulate

- Eun-Joo Koh from South Korea on gainer her PhD in Engineering Science

We thank

- Mavis Freeman who has retired as a Pastoral Leader after very many years of devoted service

We remember

- Leslie Hodson who died on 1st March
- Paul Austick and Michael Hopkinson who have both died – their families had a long association with Oxford Place

175th ANNIVERSARY

OPEN DAY

THURSDAY 29th APRIL 10.00am-3.00pm

An excellent opportunity to see Oxford Place and hear about the weekday life of the church and the many agencies working from our premises. Watch the video presentation and browse the exhibition to learn the story of the last 175 years. See what the church is doing to-day and visit the displays where staff from the agencies will be able to explain the ways in which they are providing support for people with varying needs.

ANNIVERSARY SERVICE

We look ahead to the anniversary weekend of the 9th & 10th October, and especially to the service of thanksgiving and celebration on Sunday 10th October at 3.00pm, when the preacher will be the Revd David Gamble. There are likely to be many former members of staff, members and friends of the church who will be interested, so do contact them and invite them to share the celebration. To help with numbers, please let the church office know of those likely to come.

Marjorie Cossey

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Visiting Preachers and Worship Leaders



Deacon Liz Day was our Lay Worker from 1996 until 2005. She is now working in Nottingham.

Joan Oliver was our first Lay Worker, starting in 1986, until she retired in 1996. She now lives in York.



The **Revd David Weeks** was superintendent minister from 1989 until 2000. He now lives in Bristol where, until recently he was Warden of the 'New Room' – John

Wesley's Chapel in Bristol.

The **Revd Nick Baker** was universities chaplain from 2001 until 2008 he is now a circuit minister in the Guiseley circuit.



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LET EVERYTHING THAT HAS BREATH PRAISE GOD



On Friday 5th March over three million people gathered in churches all over the world to pray and worship together during an annual day of prayer, using a service prepared by Christian women in Cameroon.

Emma Wilcock, president of the National Committee of the Women's World Day of Prayer Movement, said:

'This is always an exciting day as a great wave of prayer sweeps the world, beginning when the first service is held in the Queen Salote Girls' School in Tonga and continuing around the world until the final service takes place, some 35 hours later, in neighbouring Western Samoa. By then the day will have been celebrated in over 170 countries and over 5,000 services will have been held in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.'

The Republic of Cameroon is said to be 'Africa in miniature'. It is a country of great cultural diversity with more than 240 ethnic groups and languages. The constitution promotes equality between men and women but traditional rights and attitudes discriminate against women in many areas of life. However giant steps have been taken towards assuring women's rights and women are involved in the struggle for peace, justice and integrity.



Cameroon faces many challenges as its people seek to move forward into a modern age without losing their distinctive characteristics. But at all times, in all circumstances, Cameroonians are able to praise God with joy and exuberance and the service reflects this. [Adapted from the Women's World Day of Prayer press release]

□



At one of the services held in Leeds the leader and the committee wore red, yellow and green, the colours of the Cameroon flag. We shook our percussion instruments, banged the drum and marched

around the church singing 'We are marching in the Light of God'. It was an encouraging service and we now look forward to the 2011 event prepared by the women of Chile.

Mavis Freeman

OXFORD PLACE CHARITIES 2010

My thoughts for this article are to do with child detention while awaiting deportation. Around 1000 children each year pass through a detention centre and are there for an average of two weeks as part of the immigration process. Three of the Royal medical colleges wrote to the Home Office asking for this practice to be terminated. I wrote to my MP for his views, and he wrote to the Home Office. The Home Office is traditionally slow to reply, and has they have not yet done so, unfortunately I cannot share the expected reply as was my intention.

Distressing and harmful

Recently the BBC highlighted a report from the Children's Commissioner for England, that detention at an immigration centre is distressing and harmful for children. The use of caged vans has now ceased, but this had led to parents and children been separated during transportation. Independent social workers and specialist medical staff can now intervene where they feel the best interests of the detainees are not been met. But there is still the attitude that detention is the fault of the families who have not voluntarily left the country on completion and failure of their appeal process. We hope and pray that these reports and petitions will be acted upon and that the independent professionals know that their findings are listened to by those with the authority. If you want to read the full article please let me know.

LASSN and PAFRAS

This time we think about the LASSN staff Peter, Archana, Cherry, Fraz, Gerard, Katrina, Maserat, Pauline, Richie and Zerabrak.

We continue to support PAFRAS with the food parcels which are very much appreciated, letters of thanks are on the notice board, please remember Sally and Christine and the PAFRAS team also. I would also encourage you to read the Leeds Lent Prayer Diary to find other organisations working for refugees and asylum seekers including Manuel Bravo Project, Feel Good Homes, Abigail Housing, Meeting point, Jesus Army.

Many thanks to all those who have contributed to our current total of over £1000 through the Harwood Concerts, bookstalls, lunches, plants, mugs of money, and other giving.

LASSN have recently issued their 2009 annual review and a winter 2010 newsletter which are available on the foyer stand if anyone wishes to read a copy.

Paul Berry

I was asked at a party whether I believe that Jesus is the son of God and the problem of how to answer has stayed with me. It seems to me to be about the question, 'what kind of truth is theological truth?' It can't simply be 'literal truth' because God's bigger than words! Here's a story that expresses my thoughts! What does it make you think about?

"Harmony is in immortal souls"

A long time ago, when poetry was still allowed and artists celebrated beauty with beautiful works, a group of friends used to meet and share their love of words.

They told each other stories that no one had ever written down, and found themselves lost in the wonder of other lives, of people who did extraordinary things and they felt their deepest feelings.

They sang each other songs of older days and times, of simpler choices and grander schemes. Such beauty they sang, such unutterable beauty that words alone failed them, and music and rhythm carried the greater meaning, and held the more lofty passions.

They recalled the journey of their people and wept again at their sadness, felt again their shame, rejoiced again at new beginnings, of hope and of expectation. They found themselves living in the story, shaped by it, living for it, choosing their future as they remembered their past.

And most of all they spoke out loud the words of power that are poems.

Delicate words that could cut through diamond.

Gentle words that would destroy nations.

Powerful words that with a feather like touch could raise the dead and bring into being that which is not yet.



Starry Starry Night by Vincent van Gogh

They would gaze, as friends do after a long day of work, into the night sky untroubled by extra lights so that the ancient shine of primeval stars haunted their present with its tales of the past.

And they said out loud

*Look, how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patines¹ of bright gold;
There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
But in his motion like an angel sings ...
Such harmony is in immortal souls².*

And so their sleeping was held by their dreaming, dreaming not only of what has been, but what still might be. The friends sharing the harmony of immortal souls.

And yet a mischief came upon them. Quiet, mouse like, hardly a mischief at all. The friends, lost in the wonder of all that is, sought to uncover and discover, to understand and to categorise. They still sang their songs, and told their stories, and lost themselves in words so delicate they still might cut diamonds, but they demanded more of those words. Not just the gentleness of persuasion, but the cast iron certainty of conviction. Unhappy to describe only, they asked of words that they might define.

And the mischief was not in the definition. Nor was the mischief in the discovery. For such things they discovered! Heaven itself became yet more wonderful. Mighty engines caught up in power and energy, in reaction and destruction, in creation and formation. Hydrogen fusing into heavy and heavier elements until perhaps becoming the patines of bright Gold. The mischief was not in the new words, for here were words that did new things in new and wonderful ways, that brought yet more harmony. The mischief was in the pride of the new words. For some spoke and demanded that these New Words must replace the old words. These words, cannot live where the old ones still flourish. We now know what heaven is really made of!

And the friends divided.

Some said. "Of course this is the case." "How can heaven be made of paving stones of gold, when now in our wiser moments we discover that stars are no more that complex atomic reactions, of fission and fusion and diffusion of light?" "The old stories cannot be true, we have been hood-winked and tricked and our integrity is compromised" So they told the stories no more. Songs stopped being sung and the rhythm and the music that held meanings too deep for words fell silent on a world growing colder than even the sun could warm in all its nuclear fury.

But others said. "But how can our old stories be false they have been so true to us?" "They must mean things in the same way the New Words mean? We cannot accept that the sun is only Hydrogen. It must be gold! What we have found out is false, only what we have been told in the past must be true." "What the old words meant was meant in the New Words way." They too bowed before the pride of the New Words, and lost their love of how words used to be. So although they still told the stories, sang the songs, and tried to remember the poetic words gentle enough to cut through diamonds, they only said them in the New Words way, cool and careful, and argumentative, and definitive and with the cast iron certainty of conviction.

Such mischief that ended harmony and stopped the old songs from being sung, that silenced the stories that held community. But most of all, that blunted the gentle words of poetry so that diamonds stayed as an allotrope of carbon, too hard for words to cut.

Mark Wakelin

Originally published in Magnet 89 2010

*Reprinted by permission
with thanks to John Goacher for
bringing the article to our attention*

¹Paving stones

²The Merchant of Venice, Act V, Scene 1 (Wm Shakespeare)

The Women who Suffer



Nurit Peled-Elhanan in the European Parliament

Permission to use this photograph has been given by the European Peoples Party (EPP Group)

After the death of her 13-year-old daughter in a suicide bomb attack, **Nurit Peled-Elhanan** became an outspoken critic of the Israeli occupation. She said, 'My little girl, Smadar, was murdered because she was an Israeli. She was killed by a young man who was humiliated, oppressed and desperate to the point of suicide and murder, just because he was a Palestinian.'

Nurit, who works with an organisation supporting bereaved families, was receiving the Sakharov Prize from the European Parliament. Speaking in response to the award she told the parliament:

The Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought is intended to honour exceptional individuals who combat intolerance, fanaticism and oppression. Like Andrei Sakharov himself, all the winners of the prize have shown how much courage it takes to defend human rights and freedom of expression.

It is an honour and a pleasure to be here. However, you should have invited a Palestinian woman in my stead, because the women who suffer most from violence are the Palestinian women. I would like to dedicate my speech to Miriam R'aban and her husband, Kamal, from Bet Lahiya in the Gaza strip, whose five small children were killed by Israeli soldiers while picking strawberries in the family's strawberry field. No one will ever stand trial for this murder.

When I asked the people who invited me here why didn't they invite a Palestinian woman, the answer was that it would make the

As with all transliteration from languages which do not use the Roman alphabet there are a variety of spellings. We have used Nurit Peled-Elhanan but sometimes her name is rendered as Noritz Peeled-Elhanan.

discussion too localized. [...]

It is true, unfortunately, that the local violence inflicted on Palestinian women by the government of Israel and the Israeli army has expanded around the globe.

[...]

I have never experienced the suffering Palestinian women undergo every day, every hour, I don't know the kind of violence that turns a woman's life into constant hell. This daily physical and mental torture of women who are deprived of their basic human rights and [the] needs of privacy and dignity, women whose homes are broken into at any moment of day and night, who are ordered at gun-point to strip naked in front of strangers and their own children, whose houses are demolished, who are deprived of their livelihood and of any normal family life. This is not part of my personal ordeal. But I am a victim of violence against women insofar as violence against children is actually violence against mothers.

Living in the world I live in, in the state I live in, in the regime I live in, I don't dare to offer Muslim women any ideas how to change their lives. I don't want them to take off their scarves, or educate their children differently, and I will not urge them to constitute democracies in the image of Western democracies that despise them and their kind. I just want to ask them humbly to be my sisters, to express my admiration for their perseverance and for their courage to carry on, to have children and to maintain a dignified family life in spite of the impossible conditions my world is putting them in.

I want to tell them we are all bonded by the same pain; we are all the victims of the same sort of violence even though they suffer much more, for they are the ones who are mistreated by my government and its army, sponsored by my taxes.

Nurit Peled-Elhanan is an Israeli peace activist, a professor at the Hebrew University, and is among the founders of the Bereaved Families for Peace. She was awarded the Sakharov Prize in 2001. Her daughter, Smadar Elhanan, was the victim of a suicide bombing attack Ben Yehuda Street Bombing in Jerusalem on September 4, 1997. She states that she does not blame the group of suicide bombers for the incident, but rather the Israeli oppression of Palestinians as an indirect cause of her daughter's death.

This abridged version of her speech is based on that published in the Newsletter of the Friends of Sabeel (Spring 2010).

Liz Our District Chair writes...



Free to Vote

I am writing this on the 20th Anniversary of Nelson Mandela's release following 27 years of imprisonment in apartheid South Africa. I took a few moments earlier today to stand in the Millennium Square Peace Garden in the heart of Leeds and contemplate the symbolism of its sculptures, with such strong links to Mandela and his story. I was struck by two things.

The first was the water feature that echoes the prison bars, being 'dissolved' by the waters of freedom: a breeze was blowing the water away from the bars altogether: 'The Spirit blows where it will....' – God's Spirit that leads us into freedom and truth.

The second was the many ways in which hands are featured in the garden. There is the very prominent pair of bronze hands that mark this as a special place; there are hand prints of civic dignitaries from Leeds and from South Africa; there are hand and footprints in resin blocks in the garden. These are the hand and footprints of Leeds children, made in 2004. I wonder, six years on, where those children are, what their experience of growing up has been like, and whether they are will be old enough to vote in the coming general election. Will they bother to do so? Will you bother to do so?



Mandela's long walk to freedom is a reminder that we should never take for granted the right to vote, and the right to engage in democratic debate concerning the life of our communities. As Christians we should always regard this right - or privilege - as a means of exercising our discipleship. A general election gives us the opportunity to ask searching questions about the policies of competing parties, and to hear their responses not only for ourselves but on behalf of the most vulnerable and needy in our communities. It prompts us to ask questions about the wellbeing of our communities as places of welcome and hospitality, where younger and older people, of diverse backgrounds and experience, can flourish in freedom, with a true sense of belonging. Hands and feet - yours and mine: a cross on a ballot paper, let us exercise our freedom with wisdom and thankfulness. □

Every Person Matters

In the weeks leading up to a General Election, it is difficult to ignore the competing clamour of policies, promises and personalities in every news bulletin and newspaper.

The temptation to hibernate until it is all over may feel quite strong at times!

As Christians, however, we have a responsibility implicit in our discipleship, to seek the Christ-like way. In the political arena this often means asking ourselves whose voice is not being heard, or who is being left out of the picture. In the clamour of voices, who is speaking up for those who have no voice, or whose shouts and cries are unheard by those with power and position.

The Church Leaders of West Yorkshire issued a statement on Ash Wednesday entitled *Every Person Matters*.

The statement is a challenge to churches, to the wider community and to those who seek to be our political representatives.

It advocates a new and more equal order of society where people feel:

- a concern for the well-being of others, which checks any pursuit of self-interest and personal wealth;
- a sense of community, rather than isolation, and a sense of mutual responsibility;
- a respect for other members of society, resisting racism and all that degrades another person.

It is a reminder to all of us that we can make a difference not only in using our vote wisely, but also in the ways we are willing to speak; to challenge and question those standing for election; and in our daily conversations and reflections with others - where we are perhaps called to rise above our 'grumpy old / cynical young person' comfort blankets!

Many of our churches will host public debates between parliamentary candidates. I pray that such events will be conducted with the utmost respect and care for all in our society. Materials have been prepared to assist churches to engage in these conversations. Please use them! [<http://www.churcheselection.org.uk>] □

The joint statement of the West Yorkshire Church Leaders, made on Ash Wednesday, can be found on the District web site [<http://www.leedsmethodist.org.uk/>]

Each month the Chair sends out a letter for publication in church magazines. As *Life and Work* appears quarterly, then it may be some time before the Chair's letters appear on this page. Occasionally we will omit a letter that, in the Editor's judgement, seems out of date.

Sundays

April

- 4 **Easter Day**
8.00 Holy Communion
The Revd Pat Creamer
10.30 Holy Communion
The Revd Caroline Ryder
- 11
10.30 Mrs Patricia Goacher
Deacon Ruth Hinch
6.30 *Reflective Worship*
Deacon Ruth Hinch
- 18 **175**
10.30 Deacon Liz Day
Deacon Ruth Hinch
6.30 *Time to Talk*
The Revd Liz Smith
- 25
10.30 Mr Rob Lolley
The Revd Caroline Ryder

May

- 2
10.30 Holy Communion
The Revd Philip Bee
- 9
10.30 Mrs Patricia Goacher
6.30 *Reflective Worship*
Deacon Ruth Hinch
- 16 **175**
10.30 Ms Joan Oliver
Deacon Ruth Hinch
6.30 *Time to Talk*
The Revd Liz Smith
- 23 **Pentecost**
10.30 The Revd Liz Smith
The Revd Caroline Ryder
Church General Meeting
- 31 **Trinity**
10.30 The Revd David Weeks
Mr Rob Lolley

June

- 6
10.30 Holy Communion
The Revd Philip Bee
- 13 **175**
10.30 The Revd Nick Baker
The Revd Caroline Ryder
6.30 *Reflective Service*
Deacon Ruth Hinch
- 20
10.30 Mrs Liz Waller
Mrs Ann Bailey
6.30 *Time to Talk*
The Revd Caroline Ryder
- 27
10.30 Mrs Pat Goacher
Deacon Ruth Hinch



The 10.30 Sunday Service is for all ages. Except during school holidays the Junior Church go to their own session for part of the time. Tea and Coffee are served after the service. *Time to Talk* is an informal worship service in the Lounge Café.

Weekdays

April

- 18 § Meeting about Circuit Reorganisation (see page 1)
19 7.30pm Oxford Place Management Committee
23 10.30am Bible Society Meeting
29 10.00am **Open Day** (till 3.00pm)

May

- 1 MRDF Conference
10 6.45pm Women's Network District Supper at Crossgates Methodist Church*
20 10.00am Women's Network Quiet Day at West Wakefield Methodist Church*
12.00nn District Leadership Team Meeting
23 Church General Meeting
30 Lounge Café and Church buildings closed

June

- 7 7.30pm Finance and Property Committee
12 2.30pm Women's Network Summer Festival at Ropewalk Methodist Church Knottingley

* For more information and/or tickets see Mavis Freeman or the noticeboard in the church foyer

§ Time for this event were not available at the time of printing.

Please let the Editor know of any dates that might usefully be included on this page.

Deadline for the Summer issue is

14th June

Easter

at Oxford Place

Maundy Thursday
Holy Communion
7.30pm 1st April

Good Friday
2.00pm 2nd April

Easter Day
Sunday, 4th April
10.30am Holy Communion

Additional services may be arranged nearer the time.

Weekday Worship at Oxford Place

Wednesday 12.30pm
Service of Holy Communion

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