

NEWSLETTER, NO. 8,

SEPTEMBER, 1981.

On Celebrating The Lord's Supper

One of the exciting things which is happening today is the way Baptists are rediscovering the sense of celebration that belongs to worship. How much of this rediscovery is due to the Call to Commitment and how much of it is due to the general charismatic emphasis on worship, is difficult to assess. But whatever the origin, the result is most encouraging. In the North West, for instance, we held a Festival of Praise on Spring Bank Holiday Monday: we expected the usual three hundred faithful to turn up, but to our surprise over eight hundred came together to celebrate the faith. Needless to say, another Festival of Praise is planned for next Spring Bank Holiday Monday.

But what about the Lord's Supper? How do we go about celebrating this great redemptive feast? We can be grateful to the liturgical movement of the 60s for causing most Baptist churches now to incorporate the Lord's Supper into the main service - rather than simply tagging it on as an optional extra. And yet for all that, in most churches it still seems just to be tagged on. What's more, the atmosphere around the Table resembles more a morgue than a celebration.

With respect to the liturgical triumvirate of Gilmore, Smalley and Walker, I find that Praise God has nothing to offer here. Nor for that matter has Stephen Winward's Celebration and Order. Let me therefore lay my head on the block and share with you a typical order of service that I have taken to using. Correction: let me share with you next Sunday evening's order, prepared without a thought to writing an article for MAINSTREAM:-

Songs of worship.

Scripture Sentence: Psalm 66: 1, 2.

HYMN 24: Praise the Lord ye heavens adore Him.

Prayer of praise and confession.

Offering.

Notices (alas!).

Scripture: Luke 7: 11-17.

Youth Choir: Jesus the Life Giver (this follows on the raising of the widow's son in The Witness).

Testimonies.

HYMN 440: I've found a friend.

Scripture: Numbers 21: 4-9.

John 3: 14, 15.

Sermon: Life found at the Cross.

Prayer of response.

SONG: At the cross of Jesus.

Scripture sentences.

Prayer of thanksgiving.

Bread and Wine.

Prayers of praise.

Songs of worship: e.g. This is the feast of victory.

Prayers for the fellowship.

HYMN 154: Christ the Lord is risen today!

The Grace.

Notice the six "items" that follow the Bread & Wine:-

- 1) prayers of praise: at this stage the congregation are invited to articulate their response in terms of short prayers of praise and thanksgiving
- 2) songs of worship: normally led on a guitar we sing several Scripture songs or choruses: e.g. Father we adore you, Jesus take me as I am, Abba Father let me be At this stage the note of celebration is struck in a muted thoughtful way
- 3) prayers for the fellowship: we remember not just individual members of the fellowship needing prayer, but also the wider fellowship: e.g. local churches, missionaries..... Here the horizontal aspect of the Lord's Supper is expressed. Sometimes we also greet one another - albeit normally before the Bread and Wine (compared to the formal 'Peace' of Series III our greetings are somewhat riotous, but, dare I say it, more real)
- 4) the final hymn: here the service comes to a tremendous climax. Always a hymn of triumph (e.g. resurrection or ascension) is chosen. We worship not a dead Saviour but a Risen Lord!

- 5) the grace: as a symbol of our oneness in Christ we often link hands at this point. For me this is always a moving experience.

I recognize that for many churches there is nothing new in the above. However, for us it has been a liberating experience to break from the 'normal' pattern. One difficulty, however has been encountered: lack of time. With an order of this sort, the worship service will last good hour and a half - and could easily last much longer. For the sake of the Sunday School - and also for some of the older folk who prefer the status quo - we have a shorter more formal and hence less invigorating order for the morning communion. For those who have been wanting to experience greater freedom in worship, we have also been experimenting with an informal early morning celebration of the Lord's Supper 'in the round'. This service is followed by breakfast (cereals and bread rolls) before we go on to the main morning service.

Well, enough of what "I" tend to do. Over to you. This article has only been written in the hope of stimulating you, dear readers, to react and contribute to subsequent editions of this newsletter!

PAUL BEASLEY-MURRAY.

Any Answers Please?

Graham More of West Wickham, Kent, writes:-

"Thank you for the latest Newsletter (No. 7). I would wholeheartedly agree with Peter Hetherington's basic plea for a Scriptural balance in matters of worship. However, one question I believe to be relevant, although I do not profess to know the answer, is in respect of the timing of the balance. Are both "liturgical" and "charismatic" forms to be experienced simultaneously in any one church, or is the balance achieved successively, as in a pendulum, according to the present needs of the Church and as directed by the Holy Spirit."

Correspondence is welcomed!

An Open Letter - Written From a Soap-Box

My dear Theophilus,

Since many have undertaken to inform you, so that you should know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed, it seemed good to me also, having checked my facts from the beginning, to write to you, about another matter which may well be regarded as scandalous. No Sir, I am not referring to sex, nor to any of those egocentric sins of character which endear so many of us to our congregations who apparently regard such blatant sinfulness as our endearing little ways, - 'He's such a character you know'!

No, I am referring to the ministerially unmentionable subject of money.

(Pause for sharp intake of breath)

I repeat the word, 'money'. This is the stuff which many fine people still believe to be the root of all evil and from which evil so many Churches superbly deliver their servants lest they be actually tempted by having too much of the filthy lucre on their persons.

To be accurate, it is one aspect of a money-game otherwise known as a con-trick which is unconsciously, we imagine, practised by Churches and completely undenounced by its Ministers.

It's time I came clean! I am describing the dishonest practice of many Churches, and even Associations and Districts, of demanding that their visiting Ministers serving them should actually pay them for the privilege! Please understand me, most excellent theophilus, I am not attempting to cover the ground so capably mapped out by R. T. Kendall in his article about money, in Mainstream's last issue. You will remember that he referred to 'the disgraceful way in which Ministers are paid in Britain' which when he discovered it, 'nearly broke his heart'. He also addressed himself to Ministers who do not preach tithing, either because they don't believe it or do not wish their motives to be misunderstood. Here I have to confess, that although I have always practised tithing, even when my wife and I were the poorest members of a very poor community, nevertheless I have always sensed a stiffening reaction in British congregations when tithing was expounded, let alone the idea of the freewill offering being over and above the tithe.

But this is not the disgrace I am attempting to spotlight. I am on my soap-box about what is laughingly referred to in Church circles as 'the honorarium plus expenses'.

I mean, Theo, if you forgive my familiarity, what do you say when you have spent half a day getting there, preached one or two of your best 'travellers' (!), expect to travel half the night to get back, when someone slides up to you at the door and says 'How much do we owe you?' or even worse, 'Do we owe you anything?'

Boy, would there be a collapse of stout party if we dared to tell them what the visit had genuinely cost! Yes, I know, we invariably chicken out at this point, and leave it to them.

On one occasion four years ago, I travelled on a round-trip journey of over 120 miles, giving up the whole of a Saturday and arriving back very late at night. The day involved, besides much nervous energy, the use of my car, the petrol and the parking fee, two tunnel-toll fees. The meeting gathered under the umbrella of one of our Associations at the close of which I was asked in a crowded porch (much to the embarrassment of the Minister of that Church who overheard it all) by the Treasurer of the organisation concerned, 'Well, thanks for coming, do we owe you anything?' The only reply I could think of at the time, for I can always think of much better replies two hours later, 'Well, if you don't know, mate, I'm sure I don't!' One week later I received a cheque for the sum of £2 which I had intended to have framed and kept on the study wall, but I relented and paid it in. If this were an isolated case it would simply be a good story for the Fraternal, but sadly every Minister I've ever met could relate such an experience. When a man is in the Pastorate it is assumed that the Pastorate pays his wages and expenses (this is an assumption which in all too many cases will not bear too close an investigation). When, however, a man is out of the Pastorate, the assumption is still made by so many inviting Churches that their visiting speaker called into their midst to serve them, should not only provide this service free of charge but should also pay towards the cost of his own travelling expenses.

If we were in the really important business of selling advertising to glossy magazines or toilet soap to chemist shops, it would be expected that we be paid realistic expenses. It is presumably that what we do is so unimportant that we should be glad that anyone is around to listen to us 'hawking our wares'.

Recently I spent an entire week-end involving one meeting and three services and a journey of over 500 miles round-trip. For the entire week-end I was paid well below one second-class railway fare for only part of the journey. The layman who helps provide me with my soap-boxes was so moved by this that he wrote to that Church explaining that we did not mind providing Frank's services free of charge, but would they please remember that when calling professional men from a distance that they ought at least to pay their travelling expenses. Unfortunately, we all know what the impression will be at the other end when they receive the letter; "It's as we thought, they are only interested in money!"

Now, please, let me put the record completely straight. At our recent Ministers' Wives' Conference held here in Purley, we did not hear one single moaning complaint from any Minister's home about money. We did have one or two people, out loud, praising the Lord that they should be allowed to serve Him. This spirit of thankful praise included one or two on the Home Mission Fund who testified that they have never been without anything they really needed.

I know what you are thinking, most excellent Theophilus, it is true that many times, we who live in the West are chastened when we look at the standard of living in the Third World and you know how heartily ashamed we are even of mentioning how wealthy we are, even the poorest of us, in the face of such world need. For the sake of accuracy also, I must say that I have known so many of God's people who were generous to a fault using their money and resources lovingly and sacrificially, causing all who know them to be filled with gratitude for the grace of God. Now you see the risk I'm taking in writing this letter to you, despite the fact, that believe it or not, I cannot this time be accused of having an axe to grind. For I receive my travelling expenses on a monthly basis from the small non-profit-making charity which now employs me. Our revered friend, Dr. Paul Beasley-Murray, asked me if I had any bee in my bonnet which I was prepared to let loose among the readership of 'Mainstream' and he added that the stronger I felt about it the better! You will understand that I have far more bees in my bonnet than this particular one and many of them capable of gathering much more honey than this one, but possibly lacking a much sharper sting, nevertheless, I thought I would let this one loose to see how quickly it would be swotted!

What's to be done about it, if anything? Should the Baptist Union guide-lines on the matter be publicised more fully? I refer, of course, to the 'so-much-per-mile' expenses for those who use their own cars on official business. Speaking for myself, I am happy to be in a position where, if necessary, to be able to offer my services completely free of charge. Yet from what I gather from amongst some of the Ministers, they would not only be happy to do this if realistic travelling expenses were paid, but would find that their 'earnings' had increased dramatically!

Keep up the excellent work which your name describes, and if you see him, give my regards to Henry Root!

Every blessing,
Yours sincerely,
FRANK COOKE.
(Minister: Purley Christian Trust)

Manifesto for Urban Mission



Jesus Is Lord

He calls us, his people, to proclaim and work for his kingdom and rule 'on earth as in heaven' according to his purpose as set out in the Bible. The Church's response to this call in urban and industrial mission has been weak, therefore:

We Affirm That

God lays total claim upon the lives of us all. We cannot isolate our Christian lives from our social, economic and political situation.

We strive to strengthen, or bring into being, Christian communities based on commitment to Christ as crucified and risen Saviour and Lord and to demonstrate his life through mutual love and worship and in service and witness to the world.

Superiority of one culture to another is a concept foreign to the gospel. In

areas of working-class culture we must work for churches true to their own culture in leadership and life-style.

We must actively express God's demands for love, justice and reconciliation throughout society and for liberation of all people from every form of oppression, poverty and discrimination.

We have a duty to pray for the leaders of the nations, and to challenge them to establish justice, liberty and peace and to guarantee freedom of thought and conscience as part of God's will for all mankind.

We challenge the materialism of our society and the unjust distribution of wealth and resources. We call upon individual Christians to renounce status and adopt a simple life-style and solidarity with the urban poor.

Among current specific issues to which the proclamation of Christian wholeness applies are education, housing, pollution, racism, and unemployment.

So We Commit Ourselves

To Penetrate

all parts of urban and industrial society to foster a Christian presence there

To Identify And Challenge

in Christ's name, the oppressive and demonic in individuals, communities and institutions

To Join Hands

with all who own Jesus as Lord in making real among urban people the new community of righteousness, peace and joy to which the Holy Spirit is calling us all.

This manifesto is issued by the Evangelical Coalition for Urban Mission. For additional copies apply to: Scripture Union House 130 City Road London EC1V 2NJ



The Day The Volcano Erupted

The day the volcano erupted in Brixton, a new coalition of Christian forces was launched in Birmingham. Over 250 people packed the hall of St. Martin's in the Bullring to celebrate the formation of the Evangelical Coalition for Urban Mission. 75 others expressed support although unable to attend.

Colin Marchant, the Baptist Warden of Lawrence Hall in London's East End surveyed 'signs of hope' in the urban scene. ECUM's symbol, an ancient Egyptian sign of the city is also the Iona Cross. International congresses in 1980 had focussed the liberation of the unreaded urban poor. In our own country seeds sown in the '60s became shoots in the 70s were now in the 80s putting down roots. He noted that churches in urban industrial areas experienced either death or resurrection. Both make for change! New forms of Christian presence were being forged. By the turn of the century 70% of the world's population would be classed as urban poor. Colin Marchant, together with Neville Black, went on to outline the beginnings of an experiment to give form a shape to "a new urban order". Small groups of people in the urban scene, structured in a new way, to be "dominated by working class people" in a ratio of 4 indigeneous local Christians to 2 incomers and 1 outsider. These little groups are to learn together, share and act to make visible and audible the Gospel in ways which fit the urban culture and which gives power to the poor and powerless in the inner city areas and housing estates of our land.

The Evangelical Coalition for Urban Mission is a partnership between Christians in Industrial Areas, Evangelical Urban Training Project, the Inner City Group of the Shaftesbury Project, Frontier Youth Trust and the Evangelical Race Relations Group. It was formed to do together things which the member bodies cannot do on their own. Each retains its own distinctive function which it exercises on behalf of the whole. Further information can be obtained from:

Scripture Union House, 130 City Road, London EC1V 2NJ (Telephone: 01 250 1966).

He Saw...Had Compassion...Acted

Two questions require an urgent answer.

First why is it that our congregations are numerically stronger in well-to-do areas and become progressively weaker the further one ventures into the inner city, the industrial areas and council estates, whereas the gospel narrative shows the greatest response to the mission of Jesus as coming from the common people, the lower social strata, among whom Jesus was most often to be found, the higher orders being shown as for the most part in opposition to Him?

Secondly, why is this failure of performance to match promise, which in the commercial world would result in bankruptcy or prosecution, accepted so complacently? Why is the Church at large so comfortably satisfied with a proclamation which does not strike a response from those very sectors of the population which Scripture leads us to expect would respond most readily?

Again we ask, why? What is the reader's own answer?

All kinds of practical reasons (and excuses) are offered, but behind these a much more fundamental explanation can be seen.

Let us go back to the simple Bible teaching of our Sunday School days, when we were taught the uniform pattern of the ministry of Jesus - He saw, He had compassion, He acted. In feeding the crowd, raising the widow's son, giving sight to the blind or healing a leprosy sufferer the formula is always the same - perceiving, having compassion, taking the appropriate action.

Not only is Jesus like this Himself, He taught that His and our Father is like this. The core phrase of the parable of the Prodigal Son is - he saw him and had compassion and ran, towards him. Our thought is carried back to the Exodus deliverance - I have seen their affliction, I know their suffering, I have come down to deliver them. (Ex. 3: 7, 8).

But Jesus also taught that we are ourselves to follow the same pattern. The core phrase of the parable of the Good Samaritan is just the same - he saw him, he had compassion on him, he went to him. This is to be our standard attitude to our neighbour. The perceptive look prompts the caring response which compels the effective more towards the situation of need.

Let us note well, therefore, that in the attitude of the contemporary Church to the run-down areas, all three limbs of the uniform pattern are lacking.

1. The look of Jesus, of the prodigal's father, of the Samaritan, was enquiring and perceptive; not just a casual glance, but searching and discerning. The comfortable Christian prefers not to look at areas of deprivation, not to be reminded of them, not to think about them. Those who were once in such areas do not want to look back, those who have never been there do not want to look in. With time and practice passing by on the other side can become habitual; so we find ourselves saying, "There are no poor nowadays", "they should help themselves, like we do", or "we have done enough for them already".

2. But if a look cannot be avoided, it is unlikely to be one of compassion, but more likely of distaste, revulsion, judgmental criticism (mixed with apprehension). "That lot!", said the minister, when asked how evangelism was progressing on the local council estate, "Don't talk to me about them". Even conceding that he was caught off guard at an awkward moment, what had become of the discerning look and the compassionate response? Three times in discussions among Baptist elders on how to bring in the uncommitted I have heard the warning, "We must be careful we do not attract the wrong sort of people". This is the language of the world of class distinction and discrimination, not of the New Testament.

The lobby steward described in James 2: 3, 4 is still alive and well; I have seen him in action, using the same phrases as those in James. In evangelism the caring heart is important as well as the correct words and there will be no effective evangelism or enduring growth in run-down areas and disdain for those areas and those who live in them.

3. But supposing we risk an enquiring look and allow room to the promptings of compassionate concern, to what action will we find ourselves impelled? And will we take it? For the father it was a kiss for his unwashed, unshaven son, for the Samaritan it was the binding of messy wounds, for Jesus it was the ritual uncleanness (and consequent hostility) of touching infection and death. In each case the move was towards the need and down to the level of the one in need. In each case touch, physical contact, was involved.

In place of the move towards we have witnessed the move away. The essence of suburbanisation is distancing oneself from the sight, sound and smell of what we find distasteful - those who move out of run-down areas tend to tell us what they are moving away from more than what they are moving to. The motivation is to insulate oneself from the deprivations and oppressions which we should be challenging with the Good News. In the mass retreat of Christians from areas of need it is the world's pattern (away from) not the Gospel pattern (towards) which has been followed.

The deprivations of deprived areas are, by definition, caused not by those inside, but by those outside or by those who were once inside and have withdrawn and so 'deprive' such areas of the resources they could be contributing. The godless state of our run-down areas can fairly be attributed to the indifference of the absentee Church which has abdicated from its responsibility.

We hold back from the move 'towards' because we fear the 'touch', the defiling contact with the socially unacceptable prodigal, wounded and leprous. "But surely," said the lady church worker after a talk about inner city need, "people like us are not expected to work in places like that." This says it all. By such negative responses we ensure that the Gospel is only heard in the 'nice' parts of our land.

A materialistic and aspiring society like our own will inexorably push up and away those who, for Christ's sake, try to remain alongside the poor and oppressed - social norms, legitimate aspirations, cultural assumptions, well meaning friends and relations, inflexible structures, all conspire to lift the Christian away from, out of reach of, the common people, the publicans and sinners. Only a firm stance of solidarity with them and indifference to irrelevant social conventions and the adoption of a simple life style will enable the Church to make its voice heard among them.

A three-legged stool will stand firmly on any reasonably level surface, but if one leg is missing it will fall. For the Church, growth by evangelism is an essential leg, spirituality by continuing renewal is another. But in the long term the stool will fall if the third leg is missing - a presence among the oppressed and the poor, sounding the note of Biblical justice and concern. A Gospel which does not express the kind of solidarity with the poor and oppressed which Jesus showed, perceiving, caring and touching, will not be audible, (James 2: 15, 16) credible or acceptable among those large sections of our population who daily feel the hurts of injustice and deprivation.

At the beginning we asked two urgent questions. If the reader does not see these notes as contributing to an acceptable answer, will he please write out his own responses.

ROGER DOWLEY,

(Member of Brandon Baptist Church, Camberwell -
Council member of the Evangelical Urban Training
Project)

Redcar Baptist Church

Redcar is known to most people for two things mainly, for it is the home of the famous racecourse, and the infamous British Steel complex, the largest of its kind in Europe. However, these apart, it is a town situated on the North Yorkshire coast with several miles of pleasant, but windy beach, and within a few moments ride of the North Yorkshire Moors. Its population of 27,000 is mainly working and middle class, and the heart of its economic life revolves around the two giant complexes of British Steel and I.C.I. (In fact, one of our present problems is to come to terms with high unemployment and redundancy).

Spiritually the area has not been strong and the Baptist Church in Redcar has had a chequered career. Founded in 1927, the church developed in fits and starts strongly supported by the Home Mission Fund until the mid 1960's, when by dint of a large bazaar and many coffee mornings, the church freed itself from the fund. However, by the early 1970's, the church had moved some steps backwards and congregations were often down to a mere handful. After 1972 there was no minister, and the witness was maintained by a few very faithful folk.

In the mid '70's other Christians came into the church, two families in particular, and in 1975, with a visiting American team of evangelists a new outlook began to develop. The Americans kindly offered some financial help if the church were to call a minister, their commitment being for some 3 years. And so in 1976 the church called myself, Lynda and our daughter Rebecca to ministry in Redcar.

We came straight from Spurgeon's College and began work here. Within a short while it became apparent that the recorded membership of 62 was almost double the actual attending member-

ship, which brought the strange situation that in one year we received into membership and baptized more christians than in any previous year since the church's foundation, whilst our membership remained static. However, the Lord continued to bless the church, and the small number of faithful christians worked enthusiastically, and saw the church grow.

However, new growth brought new problems, especially as some of the most gifted christians were moved away from Redcar, and increasingly we found ourselves with a growing congregation and little time to get to know the new people before more new folks arrived. This situation is still by no means solved, but with an increased committed membership and some small changes in organisation it is being combatted.

We look back over the past 5 years in thankfulness to God, in that time we have seen congregations grow from a very small number, to a regular full house (about 140) in a morning, and an evening congregation of about 60 or 70. In the past 5 years the church has completely renovated its buildings and built on 2 extra rooms, as well as completing the building of a new manse.

In the last year, Sunday School and morning worship have begun to follow the same themes, which we ourselves develop and produce in monthly packages. Once a month we join all our month's themes into a family service. After a visit in 1980 from a group of Americans, the church has begun an evangelistic choir, that sings in the town centre, and a children's choir. A visit from Rev. Steve Flashman, which resulted in some 30 young people 'coming forward', has opened up an evangelistic youth club in the church.

For the future, who can tell, but the Lord. But for 1981 the church has planned a leaflet campaign and a more steady door to door visitation campaign, a children's holiday club and a youth mission, as well as special evangelistic pushes at each major church festival in the christian year. Perhaps we could ask for your prayers.

DAVID SHAW.

Bunyan Baptist Church, Stevenage, Hertfordshire.

At the turn of the century, a Baptist Church was established in the little Hertfordshire town of Stevenage, situated on the main road to Scotland. Soon after the conclusion of the second world war, the building of a new town commenced, causing concern to the inhabitants as to whether they would lose their identity. However, today much of the character and neighbourliness has remained intact. The A1 no longer passes through the High Street, but has long since been diverted to the west, yet a new and more glorious highway is being constructed for the Kingdom of God, as Bunyan Church comes alive.

But for the faithful few during a long and difficult interregnum, the church would have closed its doors and sold the premises. At low ebb, the church could only muster a mere handful for Sunday worship, contributing a weekly offering in single figures. When towards the end of 1972 the prospective minister was asked by the deacons as to the future prospects, he replied, "There is only one way to go and that is upwards with the Lord". Now after 8 years we can truly testify to this upward trend, as the Lord has led His People into a new experience of Himself, and has rebuilt the spiritual fabric of His Church in Stevenage.

The story begins in 1973 with a "One Step Forward" Campaign, which broke down the isolationism within the church and sowed the seed of real christian love. Today that seed has blossomed and multiplied creating a loving/caring fellowship that is so often commented upon by visitors entering the Sanctuary. In more deeper ways, that love has been put to the test, as we have been challenged within the fellowship, yet on every occasion we praise Our God for the way we have come through, all the stronger and more firmly established in the love of Christ.

We look back now in amazement at the way God has rebuilt His Church. He saw fit to send into the fellowship those who for business reasons had moved into Stevenage, thus giving to the little company, the needed workers, among whom were School Teachers, who immediately accepted the challenge and took on the work among children. Now today we are happy with a developing childrens work and a youth fellowship that never existed before, where young people are coming to know the Lord.

These 8 years have been full of surprises as the Lord has led His people into new pastures and experiences. Today we cherish a truly spiritual 7 man diaconate, holding separate meetings, one for business, the other for purely pastoral matters, each month. The unity among us is something of tremendous significance. Just recently, following months of prayerful consideration, two deacons have been chosen to share with the Pastor in the ministry of the Word and pastoral oversight of the fellowship (known as the Pastoral Group). The ministry is mainly of a teaching nature, often taking a whole book of the Bible for studies at either morning or evening worship. Expository preaching we believe has deepened the spiritual life of the church, and with its practical application has caused our horizons to be widened as we have contributed to the needs of others. Services have become less formal and more meaningful, with the opportunity for others to share in worship and "pew ministry".

We have set ourselves the task of visiting the 1600 homes in our immediate neighbourhood, the visits being preceded by a letter from the Pastor, and on each occasion we offer a copy of the Gospel in modern English. To date no known results have been attributed to this evangelistic endeavour, although it has come to our notice that locals are becoming aware of a loving concern at Bunyan as the church comes alive.

Our more recent innovation, after a pilot scheme, has been the setting up of 4 house groups, following an initial training period of the prospective group leaders. We are greatly encouraged by the results so far, and it may well mean that one housegroup will have to be divided into two before long. We praise God for the conversions and baptisms and for the growing church which numerically hovers around 100 members, and which spiritually has grown in a greater awareness of the claims and teachings of Jesus Christ. We have seen too, our income rising to £9,000 p.a.

Many of the lessons learned by others and reported in previous issues of "Mainstream" have been ours to learn. Growth brings pain and problems, yet each situation is unique with no set answer to any one problem other than looking to the Lord for His guidance. In one sense the situation at Bunyan is uncommon in that there are no paid workers - not even the Pastor. This has made the fellowship come to recognise, perhaps more forcibly than others, that there is no separation between Pastor and People - we are all one - and therefore all share in the work as members of His Body, functioning as a whole. This aspect has brought the people together and united their endeavours in a practical manner.

We also had to learn that when God sends in workers to rebuild His church, it is fatal not to grasp the opportunity of determining their gifts and positioning them in their rightful place in the fellowship as part of the Body of Christ. This has to be done sometimes against the background of longstanding members who dislike the intrusion of others into positions of responsibility.

Another lesson relates to change. God is on the move in His church today, and much of the trappings of the past are proving meaningless. Yet change does not come easy to some of the older members who have become embedded in their more traditional ways. Only as love dominates the fellowship have such difficulties been overcome.

Again, and in this I am firmly convinced, it is the loving/caring attitude that is the secret of retaining a united fellowship. Bunyan has developed into a church of all ages, and the human desire in times of trial is "How to keep an even keel and not capsize the boat?". On each testing occasion, and the devil has seen fit to try and disrupt the work of Christ, we have found this love bond in Christ, the one redeeming factor.

Bunyan was a dying church that refused to die. It stands today as a testimony to the Living Lord who said "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it". There is nothing spectacular about the people at Bunyan - just a group of ordinary people who have come to experience the Life and Love of Their Lord and in studying the Scriptures have come into a deeper understanding of Christ and the Church - His Body - the fellowship of Christian Believers.

HENRY L. MORTON.

Cragg Hill Baptist Church, Horsforth, Leeds.

Cragg Hill Baptist Church is situated on the south side of the Ring Road, about five miles east of the LEEDS/BRADFORD Airport, on the edge of a small council house estate with several private houses. Built 180 years ago of Yorkshire sandstone and now blackened with age, it is not externally attractive - even less so now that huge steel sheets cover the windows on the side seen from the main road to prevent further vandalism. Inside it is warm, comfortable and clean, with a false ceiling to keep fuel costs as low as possible.

We moved into this area at the end of 1976 and I worshipped there one Sunday evening shortly afterwards. There were nine of us present. It was a depressing experience for there seemed to be no future for that fellowship. Shortly afterwards, I was invited to be their Moderator, - I declined. Having just retired after ten happy years in Leicester I was reluctant to 'perform the last offices for a dying cause'. But God over-ruled and a few months later I agreed to give leadership. Spiritually the folk were at a low ebb, but thank God for the few who refused to accept defeat. We formed a weekly house group which took the form of a Bible Study. For several weeks five of us met together; now the numbers have increased to twelve and barriers came down! For years there had been no opportunity for group participation in prayer and they all experienced difficulty in sharing; but gradually, one by one, they broke through and now most of the group participate.

We circularised the whole area with invitations, setting out our weekly activities catering for all age groups. Four hundred houses were contacted in that way...and there was no response. With the help of some young people from our sister church at Lister Hill a Youth Club was commenced and numbers grew quickly; there were professions of faith from some of the 14-17 year age group. We were so thrilled! For a few weeks they attended the Sunday morning services, but said they felt out of place in the company of a small number of aged and ageing people. Then one of the leaders married and moved away; the club all but collapsed. We were all disappointed - indeed, frustrated. After much heart searching and honest praying we began to understand what God was teaching us in all this. He challenged our lack of love for each other, and the almost total lack of loving care for those around us. A series of sermons on various aspects of commitment to Christ were given, but very few could find a slot in their minds where this idea would fit in. But the few who faced up to this matter were beginning to respond - and the thaw set in! The Holy Spirit moved in individuals; their attitude to each other and to God in the worship services changed; they listened eagerly to God's Word being read and explained; they even mumbled an 'Amen' at the close of the prayers! Then that rumble became distinct and hearty; they sang with understanding also! We were disappointed, however, that as the older members died no-one joined us to take their places either in the work or the pews.

How I prayed that the Faith would come alive and meaningful for each one of our small company! Some hardly knew what they believed or had any foundation for their faith. This really burdened me and I was led to commence a series of Discipleship classes, although at that time we had no candidates! Four attended the first one, after which one dropped out and the other three continued to the end of the series. Still no sign of any results or even signs of hope. Indeed, nothing more appeared to happen for almost a year, and then after an evening service one of the three, a middle aged man, applied for baptism. This man had attended the Church regularly for 20 years and was labelled 'staid'...but the Holy Spirit had been at work and brought him to Christ. There had only been one baptism in the preceding 20 years and within a year even that candidate had professed himself an agnostic. But this new move aroused interest; the baptism took place in a crowded Church and at the conclusion the caretaker and her husband expressed a desire to receive teaching, and they were actually converted at the second meeting in the new Discipleship classes. At the same time a 75 year old man and his wife, both of whom had attended Cragg Hill since childhood, accepted Christ

as Saviour and asked for membership. At the conclusion of the classes they also requested baptism. Both couples were baptised last November, when a young married couple in their late twenties responded to the invitation, committed themselves to Christ and were baptised in March of this year. This service resulted in a young lady of 22 and a lady of 56 expressing a desire to join a new series of classes.

At long last the congregation is increasing, one by one, and now we are all preparing for a door to door visitation of the area. Voluntary giving to both BMS and HMF has increased dramatically, as have the weekly Offerings.

This may not appear to be the usual success story, but in this Yorkshire village, Cragg Hill is back on the map; the Church is greatly encouraged, and Christ is exalted. We are thankful to Almighty God for His Grace and favour. Yes, and in addition, the Moderator and his wife are enjoying their busy retirement.

WALTER H. MASON.

BOOK REVIEWS

MAKING KNOWN THE GOOD NEWS TO SENIOR CITIZENS - Oliver Wright Holmes (Compiler), N.I.E. 75p.

Five pages of notes on the discussion of this subject which took place at last years N.I.E. National Assembly, plus a questionnaire and brief bibliography. A modest publication containing little that is new. It's main value is to alert Christians to the opportunities of evangelism in this ever-growing section of our community. A reminder too, that the Good News of Jesus is best shared with them by their own peer group, described as "the great untapped resource for the Church's life".

TREVOR J. EDWORTHY,
(Minister, Lowestoft, Suffolk.)

"MAKING KNOWN THE GOOD NEWS TO THE URBAN POOR" - Compiled by Colin Marchant, Published by N.I.E., 16 pp. 75p.

We were once urged to sell shirts to buy books. You need only to sell shirt buttons to buy this pamphlet - and every Mainstreamer ought to buy ten! Colin Marchant has been immersed in London's East End for over 16 years. He has compressed into just sixteen pages the enormous challenge posed by the 30-40% of our UK population referred to as "the urban poor". In the Urban Poor Group message from the 1980 Nottingham N.I.E. Assembly, these millions of people are described as "pushed together in the inner cities or scattered throughout every urban area" and facing "a poverty which is more than financial" which includes a sense of powerlessness, limitation of choice, bleak living conditions and hopelessness.

The location, physical environment, social setting, composition, numbers and needs of these people are concisely defined. They have a "tenuous, weak and often unhealthy" relationship to Christianity and for the vast majority the Gospel "has not been heard...not understood...and not seen." In the inner cities the Christian church is numerically weak, established denominations are withering, and new congregations (many of them black) are emerging amid a diversity of races and modes of living.

Key issues such as the relationship of personal faith and social action, inappropriate approaches e.g. cultural imposition, and serious underlying theological principles are summarised. I'm specially grateful for this summary of the 'best kind' of approach - "begin with individuals, cluster in living cells, come together for lively worship, be concerned with wholeness, use variety, keep going, and 'make Jesus central'." Three appendices include a bibliography and some useful addresses.

This is a valuable publication for those of us already in the situation, and "for those looking in from outside who need to understand that the urban poor are part of the whole nation and that attitudes, decisions and initiatives influence the life-style and future of millions of people". It has guidance too for those wanting to get 'inside' the developing world of urban mission.

As I read these pages I kept thinking of the Lord Jesus Christ's response to John's disciples in Luke 7: 32 - "...and the Good News is preached to the poor". We have a "difficult, hurtful and unfinished agenda" which is the task of the whole church, but I'm glad we have a joyful Gospel to proclaim, I'm thrilled that 'Jesus is Lord' of the inner city, and I'm certain that in our day the Holy Spirit will yet make some of our inner city deserts to blossom and flourish.

Thank you Colin for another useful, encouraging contribution. And now send off for those ten copies (ten for a fiver) and give nine away!

PETER E. PURKISS,
(Minister: Brandon Baptist Church, Camberwell)

"CELEBRATION AND ORDER" - A guide to Worship and the Lectionary by Stephen Winward. Available from the Department of Ministry, Baptist Church House, 4 Southampton Row, London WC1B 4AB, 43 pp.

Price: £1 plus 20p. post + packing.

Congratulations to the Department of Ministry on seeking to promote the call to "worship and pray" in a thoughtful way. Unfortunately I am not convinced that this particular effort has much to offer to the present debate. Stephen Winward has, of course, contributed much to the life of our denomination - and beyond - in the field of worship. However, he is still very much representative of the liturgical movement of some twenty years ago. Thus with only a few exceptions (e.g. the reference to dance as a form of worship) there is no apparent awareness of the developments that are taking place in contemporary worship. If the truth be told, this is a dull treatment of an exciting subject.

As for the lectionary, I am not convinced of its value. For the congregation that really wants to get to grips with the Word of God, a 'series' is often far more satisfying than a fly-by-night nibble here, there and everywhere. This does not mean, of course, that we pay no attention to the liturgical year: we should indeed be aware of the great Christian festivals. But the lectionary as such is an ecclesiastical straight-jacket. Incidentally, this booklet can scarcely be called a guide to the lectionary, for apart from nine pages of the lectionary itself, there are only just over two sides of introduction.

PAUL BEASLEY MURRAY,

"DYNAMICS OF SPIRITUAL LIFE" - Richard F. Lovelace (Paternoster Press, £4.50)

The average Christian reader will need to work through Richard Lovelace's book several times before fully coming to grips with it. This book is like a quarry from which the patient hewer will extract good and priceless material with nearly every stroke. It is one of the most significant books to have appeared for some time.

Lovelace writes as both an historian and a theologian; he manages to combine scholarly perspective with a warm-hearted and devoted commitment to the renewal of the church. He was himself converted from atheism through the writings of the Catholic, Thomas Merton. He became an evangelical through reading the Bible and writes from a theologically Reformed position. So there is nothing narrow about this book - it is broad in its sympathies and is keen to recognise God at work within all Christian confessions. Lovelace adopts a positive attitude towards charismatic renewal and his critical remarks are of a constructive nature. His cool head allied to a warm heart have produced an edifying work of theology.

Initially, Lovelace approaches the subject of renewal with an historical perspective, taking in briefly the Reformers, the Puritans, the Pietists and the Evangelical Awakenings. It is clear that his own thinking is substantially informed by the writings of Jonathan Edwards, able theologian and defender of the eighteenth century American awakening. In putting us into touch with Edwards again, Lovelace has done us a considerable service. He then moves on to survey two Biblical models of renewal - the cyclical pattern of renewal and decline of the Book of Joshua, and the model of continuous renewal presented in the N.T. which sees Christ progressively throwing back the powers of darkness. This model of continuous renewal under the Lordship of Christ, he argues, is the one we should adopt for the church age, and for continuous renewal to be achieved certain spiritual dynamics are involved. The rest of the first part of the book is devoted to understanding what those dynamics are.

Lovelace speaks of the Preconditions of renewal which he sees as an awareness of the holiness of God and an awareness of the depth of sin. Without these there can be no significant movement of God in renewal. He then moves onto the Primary Elements of Renewal which are justification, sanctification, the indwelling Spirit and authority in spiritual conflict. These he sees as the basic elements of the Gospel and in the course of discussing them has much to say of practical and pastoral relevance to the work of ministry today. The Secondary Elements of Renewal he sees as mission, prayer, community, disenculturation (being freed from cultural bonds) and theological integration. Without these elements the work of renewal will not be continuous and ongoing.

The second half of the book deals with practical issues building on the theological basis provided in the first half. Lovelace's discussion ranges helpfully through the renewal of the local congregation's life and structures, the need for progressive sanctification in the church, the reasons why revival goes wrong (an excellent chapter), maintaining live orthodoxy, the 'stay in or come out' issues, influencing the surrounding culture and Christian social concerns; on all of which issues he has helpful and incisive things to say. The final chapter is a discussion of the church's prospects and an evaluation of the various eschatologies, with Lovelace affirming the Puritan vision - "Our study of awakening movements only turns up what appear to be rehearsals for some final revelation of the full splendour of God's kingdom." "It is hard to believe that God will not grant the church some greater experience of wholeness and vitality than has yet appeared in the stumbling records of her history, in order, as Ezekiel says, that Israel and the nations may know that he is the Lord."

The present reviewer of this book is grateful for this work not least for the following reasons:-

- 1) Lovelace takes Christian experience seriously. It is heartening to note that this book is one among many that are now beginning to appear and which are concerned with true spirituality. Theological reflection on our actual experience is a vital necessity but all too often doctrine and experience are divorced leading either to doctrine which bears no immediate relation to what we actually experience, or to doctrine which is eccentric, shaped by an individual's or a group of individuals' particular experiences. Lovelace makes it clear that not all religious experience is Christian experience and gives us the parameters for recognising God truly at work in our experience.
- 2) Lovelace puts renewal in context. For those of us involved in charismatic renewal it is reassuring to see the same patterns and problems emerging in previous renewing and reviving works of the Spirit. It is salutary to have enumerated the reasons why revivals have gone wrong (pride, counterfeit experiences, bad theology, subjectivism etc.) and to see behind this (as Lovelace does) the devices of Satan seeking to bring God's work to nought. Not being ignorant of Satan's devices we are able to resist him.
- 3) Lovelace deals realistically and sympathetically with areas which are often neglected by the serious theologian and yet which are commonplace in many of our churches. Examples of this are his discussions of deliverance ministries and prophetic utterances.
- 4) The book is a reconciling book and not a divisive one. The person who reads it - charismatic or non-charismatic, catholic or evangelical, liberal or conservative, is helped to a better understanding of those with whom he may not agree. Lovelace is keen to affirm the validity of a man's experience of God whatever theological model he may construct to describe it. Equally, the book is broad in its concept of renewal embracing all the aspects of renewal - personal, congregational, institutional, theological, cultural and social.

5) The book is a book of hope. The writer actually believes that it is God's purpose to manifest his glory through the church and therefore whatever else the future may hold, it also holds the prospect of a renewed and powerful church reaching the nations for Christ. "We must agree with the new theologians of hope who say, like Edwards and Wesley and the leaders of the Second Awakening, that the good news is more than 'pie in the sky when you die', that it includes a significant demonstration of the righteousness of the Kingdom here on earth."

If this is the vision we have, this book will help us to grow into the theological and spiritual maturity that such a vision demands.

NIGEL WRIGHT,
(Minister: Ansdell, Lytham St. Annes).

"Here is the Question - And You Are the Answer!"

After the mainstream conference this year a specific request was made to the mainstream executive for a publication on drama in worship which would include a large section on resource material.

This then is my task - to find and collate as much drama material as possible that has been successfully used in churches throughout the country and could be usefully adapted and used by other churches.

Have you ever done drama in your church? Did you write the script? Was it successful? If your answer to these questions is YES, YES, YES - then I have one final question: Will you pass that script on for possible inclusion in the Mainstream Drama Booklet?

Please submit script ideas and comments to:-

Rev. Myra Blyth,
16 Eastleigh Close,
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
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Revd. Bernard Green - Caring for People.
Mr. Michael Eastman - Caring in the Community.
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Revd. Norman Wade - Bible Readings on the Sermon on the Mount.

Roy Pointer from the Bible Society will be doing a session on Gospel Distribution for Church Growth, and Derek Moon will be at the organ.

Details of booking are on the last page.

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