



Ultimate Questions

From Palm Sunday, through to Good Friday and on to Easter Day, Moravians will follow events from 2,000 years ago in Jerusalem as we read the scriptural accounts in the devotional publication, 'Passionweek and Eastertide'.

The triumphal entry of Jesus into the city of Jerusalem; the wild cheering and adulation of the crowds, the growing jealousy and hatred of the authorities, represented by the Scribes and Pharisees. The political and social situation of the period meant that the people were seeking a Messiah, and here in Jesus they saw someone who would set them free from the rule of the occupying Roman Empire.

But Jesus was not the Messiah that the people expected, and they soon became fickle in their support. They were easily swayed by the scheming of the Scribes and Pharisees, and within five days the people who had been hailing Jesus as their Saviour were calling for him to be

crucified. They were an easily manipulated mob.

It's a remarkable plot; many twists and turns, many significant characters appearing at key moments, such as Barabbas, Peter, Judas, the Scribes and Pharisees, Herod, and the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate.

Pontius Pilate - what do we make of this man, the only person, apart from Jesus and Mary his mother, who is mentioned in the great creeds of the Christian Church? Throughout the centuries, he has been condemned for his cowardice and readiness to let self-interest override his plain duty to release an obviously innocent man. We discover much about him from the questions he asked in those last few days before the crucifixion; questions reflecting those which arise in the minds of people in every age, including our own.

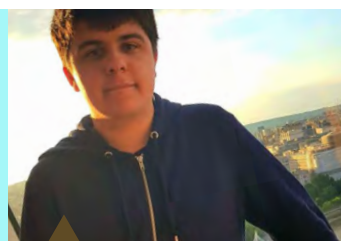
His first question was put directly to Jesus, with overtones of scornful amusement.

'Are you King of the Jews?' You, a mere Galilean carpenter! Jesus replied: 'My kingdom is not of this world ... everyone that is of the truth hears and obeys my voice.'

The Kingship of Jesus is crucial for Christianity. We have to ask ourselves if we believe, or indeed if we behave, as though Jesus is the Lord of all life, risen and with us today and always. This exchange seems to have made Pilate realise that Christ's power was of an utterly different character from that which he usually associated with kingship.

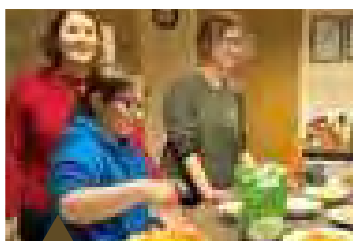
Pilate then seized upon the word 'truth' as used by Jesus. In the manner of one sceptical of the claims of religious and political leaders, he asked the rhetorical question, 'What is truth?' The world today is sceptical about truth, subject as we are to the pressure of media advertising, to political spin and propaganda, to claims of 'Fake News'. People today are tempted to conclude

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Editorial

Writing now is like looking through a glass, darkly:¹ now I know in part, but what will be next Sunday or in a fortnight or a month's time, I cannot see or know. Covid 19 is breaking into totally unknown territory in its effect, and although the computer modelling on its spread is sophisticated, we as a population have not lived through something like this since 1918. So, there is fear of the disease and uncertainty about the measures to be taken and the epidemic's length of activity.

In the midst of this we are trying to mark Palm Sunday, walk through Holy Week and then come to Easter Sunday with joy in our hearts. However, I wonder whether, in all the concerns and restrictions that are on us if we are not much nearer the New Testament experience than have been in other years. There was tension in the air in first century Jerusalem: it was not safe to be seen in the wrong company, and by the middle of that last week, the die had been set. Jesus would have to be crucified to calm the people and satisfy the authorities both secular and religious. I cannot begin to imagine how that must have felt for Jesus or his disciples, family and friends as they felt the darkness, literal and metaphorical, descend. Then the horror and cruelty of the crucifixion, watching the suffering and death, feeling the grief and fear. There is a numbness the day after his burial and only the devotion of the women discovers what appears to be a grave robbery. The resurrection is an extraordinary event but to the disciples almost unbelievable and the joy seems to be on hold until 40 days later with the ascension of Jesus.

1) 1 Corinthians 13:12 (King James Version)

Sometimes we are in danger of making our faith sound like a comfort blanket or using it as a glib answer to deep and profound questions and challenges about human suffering. We can say we have no easy answers to what we face only that we chose to face it holding on to our faith. The book of Job in the Old Testament is a challenging read that turns on its head some of the conventional ideas of comfort, religion and understanding of what God's will is. Chapter 19 is the high point of the book in which it outlines Job's grief and humiliation, his pain and his feeling of being completely hemmed in: 'he has walled up my way so that I cannot pass ... he has put my family far from me ... my bones cling to my skin and to my flesh ... for the hand of God has touched me!' In the middle of this lament Job reaches out in faith, with words that speak across centuries of human desperation: 'I know that my Redeemer lives, and that at the last he will stand upon the earth; and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then in my flesh I shall see God'.

That, in the end, is the Easter message, not that faith physically saves us from what is around us but that in the midst of turmoil and fear we cling on to the fact that we believe our Redeemer lives and that we will see God. May we choose to hold on to this faith in spite and despite this current epidemic and its aftermath

With every prayer for you, your families, friends and congregations this Easter.

Sr Sarah Groves
Editorial Team



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Letter to the Editorial Team

When I was at school there was a trick that could turn black into white simply by using a dictionary. It took about eight moves, looking up the more obscure definitions in turn until the final reference was 'white'. It seemed quite funny at the time yet something similar appears to be happening in the recent series in the Messenger on human sexuality.

For over six thousand years the Old Testament people of God, followed by the New Testament Church have been crystal clear in their condemnation of homosexual practices, with even the liberal theologians in recent centuries closely adhering to the traditional teaching on this. However, ideas which would have been anathema in my youth are now considered to be normal and instead of a call to repentance and holy living the western church seeks the world's approval through its endorsement of existing standards. Yet the way of the world is ultimately the way of death.

How many times does God have to say something is wrong before we think he really means it? 'Woe to them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!' [Is.5:20] The city of Sodom [Genesis 19] was destroyed because of this sin which gave us the word sodomy.

The forbidding of homosexual practices in Leviticus 18:22: and Leviticus 20:13: where it is called 'an abomination' is not a part of the civil law in the Old Testament which ended with the Jewish nation. Nor is it a section of the priestly law which finished with Christ's death. It is part of the moral law which is based on the character of God and can therefore never change. It is in the section which also forbids incest and sex with animals.

Homosexuality is a sin to be repented of and not a sacrament to be sanctified and celebrated. Yet we are not pointing the finger in judgement and saying that we are better than others. We are all sinners in need of forgiveness. We all have a fallen nature which needs to be justified and sanctified. The condemnation of homosexuality in 1 Corinthians 6 ends with these wonderful words in verse 11: 'And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God'.

What authority can the Church ever have to bless it?

Br Richard Ingham
Fairfield

My experience at the URC Youth Assembly 2020

In January, I attended the URC Youth Assembly 2020, which took place at Whitemoor Lakes Activity Centre in Staffordshire. In my experience, the weekend was full of both highs and lows, and it taught me a number of lessons about the different ways other churches value worship and the community.

The theme this year was 'Common Ground,' and the weekend revolved around a number of workshops based on the application of faith to three issues: politics, sexual relationships, and war and peace. I had chosen three workshops (one for each issue), and before each one took place, we had a large discussion about the topic in general, lead each time by a panel of people from the URC church. Their diversity in age, race, and gender made each discussion interesting to watch, as they all expanded on their individual experiences, and how their faith may have helped them overcome certain boundaries in ways I hadn't previously thought about. After each panel discussion, we were all invited to discuss these topics on our tables before feeding our ideas back to the whole assembly. The workshops themselves I thought were good, although I had reservations about the way they were led.

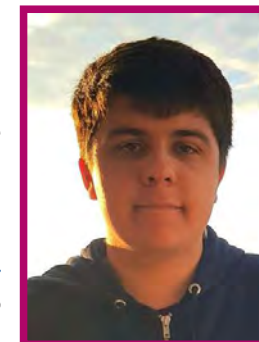
Another major part of the weekend was the passing of many resolutions by the URC Youth. These ranged from small projects such as a 50th anniversary celebration for the URC, to more ambitious ones, such as appointing 'Green Apostles' to ensure the church is doing all it can to help tackle our climate emergency. It was delightful to see that the youth were getting their voices heard. I enjoyed the rule that no one over a certain age is allowed to cast a vote, as it is usually the other way around in most other situations! While it was fun to have a say in these decisions, I also felt that the outcome of the vast majority of these resolutions did not have an effect on me. Some of the German people there on an exchange program even abstained from voting for this reason. However, it did give me insight into how complicated a voting process for one simple resolution can

be and has definitely given me experience for whenever I may go to the Moravian Synod in future.

Aside from the main business of the assembly, we also had worship. I had signed up to be part of the worship band, and it was fun to play hymns on the clarinet with fellow musicians. However, standing at the front of the hall and seeing everyone having a good time singing and dancing to the hymns made me feel somewhat strange, as I didn't feel like I was connecting to God and everyone else in the same way that they were, and as I do in Moravian services. It may just have been because I was tired, as bedtime was scheduled for 1.00am on both nights. Or it may have been my introverted personality. There were some very nice people I talked to throughout the weekend, but I feel like the URC could have done a lot more in making sure the ecumenical guests felt properly welcome. There were social events scheduled late in the night, but the packed schedule every day meant I was far too tired to go to any of them. All of these factors contributed to me having a state of mind that was not ideal for worshipping God and feeling at one with the wider Christian community - it made me struggle to feel like God was with me in those moments.

Despite the challenges I faced, I'm glad I was asked to go to the Youth Assembly. It widened my view on the type of forms of worship can take, and the huge role of young people within a large church like the URC. It makes me glad that the Moravian Youth Forum has recently been established, so the role of children and youth within the Moravian church can become increasingly more important.

Br Louis Enright
Lower Wyke



PYCC Challenge 2020

Following the success of the campers article about Summer Camp in the September Messenger, PYCC are challenging every congregation to send an article produced by a child or young person to the Messenger (editorialteam@moravian.org.uk) in 2020. This is an opportunity for the wider church to hear what the younger members think about the church and society. The article can be words or

pictures, about anything. Suggestions are views about baptism, weddings or funerals, events at Easter, Christmas or other festivals, communion, all age services, Sunday School, youth groups, outings, reflections on wider issues such as climate change, poverty in society, education, housing etc. The experience of children and young people on their faith journey is also of interest.

Please encourage involvement in this. PYCC would love to see what our children and young people think. Articles can be sent to the Messenger editors but please also copy Joy Raynor in (youth@moravian.org.uk) so she can share with other PYCC members.

PS This is not an exercise in grammar or spelling, these can easily be corrected if need be.

Ultimate Questions continued

that there is no such thing as truth. Pilate could not recognise that the real truth about the meaning and purpose of life stood before him, not as a set of abstract propositions, but as a way of life embodied in the person of Jesus.

We can sense that Pilate was instinctively aware of the integrity and innocence of Jesus. So, he addressed his next question to the mob. 'Who will you have me set free; Jesus or Barabbas?' He was banking on the common sense of the people to get him off the hook. Surely, they would not choose the convicted murderer and rioter, Barabbas?

How wrong could he be? The mob chose Barabbas. Pilate floundered. Instead of using his authority to make a decision, he demanded a further answer from the crowd. 'What then shall I do with this Jesus?' The response came back as of one voice: 'Crucify him!' That further shook and confounded him. So, he tried again with another question to the crowd, 'Why, what evil has he done?' The answer was an even louder shout for the death penalty. Pilate gave in. In a feeble and cowardly act to clear himself of blame, he washed his hands openly before the crowd.

This was not the first nor the last time in history when the mob has preferred evil to good, when it is made to feel insecure by tyrants and dictators appealing to the emotions under the guise of appealing to reason. Truth and justice are swept aside. We have to ask what witness we would be prepared to give in a situation where we honestly believed that the majority opinion was wrong on some vitally important question of ethics or political or social action.

As the day of crucifixion drew to its end, Pilate asked his last question when friends of Jesus came seeking permission to remove and bury the body of their Lord. In Mark's Gospel, we read that Pilate asked, 'is he dead?' He required word from the centurion in charge of the crucifixion; he wanted to be sure that the whole affair was over. Little did he know, it had only just begun!!

Pilate's last question, 'is he dead?', is the most important one for the Church and for the world. Posed on the first Good Friday in relation to the crucifixion, the same question has been asked throughout the subsequent two thousand years by the world in relation to the empty tomb. Did the resurrection really take place, or is Jesus dead?

As the apostle Paul puts it, '... if Christ has not been raised from death, then we have nothing to preach and you have nothing to believe ...' (1 Corinthians 15:14).

Easter is at the centre of the life of the Church. There is nothing more important to the Christian than the sacrificial death and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Without these historical events, the Christian faith is worthless. The events of that first Easter weekend continue to be the power, hope, joy and peace of the Christian life.

His way is life; the world's way is death. We can now stand before the world's false realities and securities, free to deny them, denounce them, and remove ourselves from them. We stand before the reality of the resurrection and confess with the first disciples that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

Paul knew from experience that the most vital proof of the Resurrection is not so much the empty tomb, but the transformed lives of those who experience the Risen Lord. And it is still so. The Church is and must continue to be the Church of the Resurrection in order to give the world the true answer to its ultimate questions about death and about life.

On Easter Sunday, we hear the cry: 'The Lord is risen!' And we must continue to respond in faith and with conviction, 'He is risen indeed!'

Br David Newman
Diaspora



Irish District Youth Weekend 2019



© Sr Sarah Groves

Once again the annual Irish District Youth Weekend was hosted at the end of October in Gracehill and the theme centred around One World Week encouraging our young people to look after our world and all those in it.

Friday night consisted of 'getting to know you' games and snacks and a few rounds of werewolf provided by Gracehill's own Owen Johnston. When it was dark

everyone played outdoor games.

Saturday started off with a walk to Galgorm to raid the local shop for tuck and then play football on the playing fields. When back at Gracehill the group got stuck into a fair-trade game. This game revolves around families making trainers and is designed to help young people experience what it is like to make a product in an unfair world. In the afternoon there was a Bible Study led by Br Peter Dunn. This focused on the theme for the weekend.

Later Sr Debby Armstrong had everyone making homemade baubles and decorating wooden spoons and Sr Hannah Carmichael got folk doing some baking. After dinner Br Stuart Walker from Kilwarlin joined the group and brought renewed energy to the evenings' games around the village.

Sunday morning included Morning Worship. The young people took part in the first section of the service with a modern day twist on the Genesis 1 creation account noting that climate change affects everything, a power point recalled the best bits from the weekend and also included some prayers written by the young people. It was lovely to share the service with the Gracehill congregation. After the morning worship the young people joined together for burgers and chips. The youth weekend was a great success and thanks go to all the young people who attended and to everyone who came to help out or provided support.

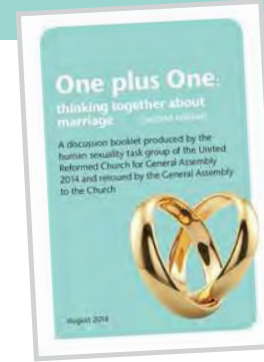
Sr Debby Armstrong
Gracehill



One Plus One

(A United Reformed Church Publication)

The fourth article on understanding marriage in 21st Century:



'What is marriage?'

One Plus One contains a whole section devoted to looking at marriage from a historical perspective. This can help inform our understanding as we seek to answer this question.

One Plus One points out that marriage is virtually a universal phenomenon, present throughout the ages and in almost every culture. Marriage has, however, developed differently in different cultures and continues to change over time. Marriages are sometimes monogamous and sometimes polygamous. Sometimes, though rarely, they can be polyandrous. In the Bible, the first example of polygamy is in Genesis 4, where Lamech, a descendant of Cain, takes two wives (Genesis 4:19). Jacob having two wives and two maids or concubines is treated as unexceptional (Genesis 32:22). King David had multiple wives and concubines (2 Samuel 5:13). Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines (1 Kings 11:3). However, in his teaching on divorce, Jesus, drawing on the creation story in Genesis 1 and the story of Adam and Eve, certainly appears to speak of marriage as a monogamous relationship between a man and woman (Mark 10:2-12; Matt 19.1-9; Luke 16.18).

The Bible contains very little information about marriage ceremonies. The information we do find is incidental to the main point of the passage, e.g. the story of the wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11) and some of Jesus' parables.

One Plus One points out that the early Christian church adopted the marriage ceremonies of the prevailing Jewish culture in which it was set, but as the number of Gentile believers grew it adopted many of the practices of the Roman empire, e.g. a wedding cake, floral bouquets and the white wedding dress.

One Plus One then goes on to point out that there is no known Christian liturgy for marriage before the 4th Century and that Christian marriage does not seem to have been regarded as different from a non-Christian marriage before this period. It is interesting to note that in the Moravian Church today, along with many other Christian churches, we accept a non-religious civil wedding as valid and do not require the couple to undergo any additional religious ceremony or blessing.

For the Celts and Anglo-Saxons marriage was primarily concerned with forging alliances between families and tribes. Women were seen largely as commodities in the transaction. As mentioned in a previous article in this series, thinking of women as property is a concept we also find in the Old Testament (see the March 2020 edition of the Moravian Messenger).

Prior to 1140 marriage was considered to be a private matter, arranged by families. Then in 1140 the Benedictine monk Gratian published his canon law textbook, *Decretum Gratiani*, which required couples to give their verbal consent and consummate the marriage to forge a marital bond. No longer was a bride or groom's presence at a ceremony enough to signify their assent. The book formed the foundation for the Church's marriage policies from the 12th Century onwards.

The Council of Trent in 1563 defined marriage as a sacrament, requiring the presence of a priest and witnesses, and reaffirmed its indissolubility. This was in contrast to leaders of the Reformation, such as Martin Luther and John Calvin, who did not believe marriage to be a sacrament. They also believed that the civil authorities should legislate on this matter and allowed for the possibility of divorce.

While in Scotland, from 1573, divorce was permitted on the grounds of adultery or desertion, in England and Wales there was no such legislation. The break with Rome made papal dispensation and therefore divorce impossible, except by seeking a private act of parliament, which was extremely expensive. The only option open to most people was desertion and bigamy. This meant many people entered into informal marriages rather than legal ones. It was the emergence of the middle class that led to a rise in legally recognised marriages. In 1857 it became legal in England for a man to divorce his wife on the grounds of adultery. It was not until 1923 that the same law applied to women; before this date women had to prove that they had been cruelly treated in addition to their husband having been adulterous.

The 1753 Marriage Act, in England and Wales, said that for a marriage to be legal it must be solemnised by an Anglican clergyman in a parish church, the exception to this being Quaker and Jewish marriage ceremonies. Any other form of marriage was prohibited.

The Marriage Act 1836 allowed marriages to take place in legally registered buildings belonging to other religious groups as long as a registrar and two witnesses were present. Non-religious civil marriages were also permitted. Then in 1898 registered 'Authorised Persons' were permitted to register marriages instead of a registrar.

In 1969 the Divorce Reform Act was passed and came into force in 1971. In 1994 marriages were allowed in approved premises other than places of worship and register offices. In 2005 the Civil Partnership Act was passed and the Same Sex Marriage Act in 2013.

The answer to the question, 'What is marriage?' will vary in different cultures. Understandings of marriage have also changed over time. All this is true not just of society generally, but also of the church. How would you answer the question?

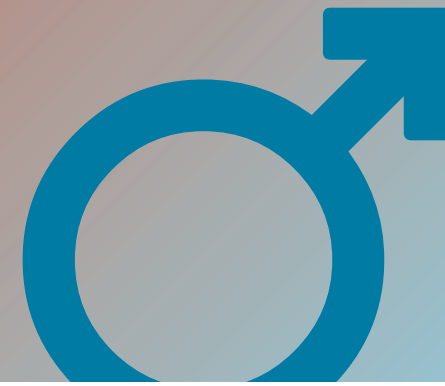
Brn Martin Smith & Philip Cooper

Ministers at Royton, Salem and Fairfield Congregations



Male and female He created them

GEN. 1:27; 2:1-13



2019 has been a year about women for me, from the anniversary of the Suffragettes to the 'me too' movement which has allowed women to speak out against abuse by powerful men (mostly) when they were younger. This follows the long drawn out exposures of historical abuse of boys.

The passage from Gen. 2 that I have chosen as my heading always amuses me. It is so vivid and true to life. When God challenges their disobedience, Adam points the finger at Eve and she in turn blames the snake. Yet it is far from amusing in the consequences for them, humankind, and the use that has been made of the story in church tradition. For Eve has been blamed for the world's woes. She has also been treated as an afterthought, there for Adam's convenience, yet as the last created she could be regarded as the pinnacle of God's creation.

To understand this, we have to realise that both the Old Testament and the New were written in a patriarchal society, threatened and challenged from outside. So, they became defensive. Worship of female deities like Asherah, common in the lands they lived in, was condemned. Women had no rights and were punished more harshly than men when adulterers, as we hear in John 8.

Indeed, in Hosea, Jeremiah and Ezekiel especially, there are graphic accounts of violence against adulterous women. To understand this, we have to look at metaphor in the Bible. As you know, metaphor compares like people or objects without using the word 'like'. We often hear the comparison of God as husband and Israel as spouse; also Jesus as bridegroom and the church as his bride. It's a beautiful image, but what happens when the relationship breaks down? These three prophets take the comparison to its fullest extent, although they also speak of God's mercy for Israel. It is a gloomy picture of what life was like for a Hebrew woman if such violence could even be contemplated, let alone ascribed to God.

The penalty for a woman adulterer was still stoning to death in New Testament times, as we see in John 8. When those throwing the stones melted away, it implies that they too were guilty, possible also of adultery. Note that Jesus does not condone her sin. This is just one of many instances where Jesus spoke and acted in what we would consider an enlightened way, against the Jewish tradition. Even Paul, whom many consider a misogynist, included women in his ministry. We have to look at his context as a Pharisee.

It is therefore a mistake to take the image of an avenging husband too far, especially in justifying violence. After all, other metaphors are also used, for instance, eagle, dove, hen and vine

for the Trinity and we don't take them literally. There is even some thinking of God as a woman, although we have to search for them. Certainly, God as a parent shows a gentle side normally associated with women.

The world is changing, however slowly. I think of the influences on my life as a woman. My grandmothers both had careers, one as a teacher, the other as an artist, yet they both followed their husbands from the UK to South Africa and joined in their ministries, bearing children and losing one each. My mother reluctantly followed my father to South Rhodesia, where she continued to teach. I also had careers, yet followed where my husband led, because he was the breadwinner. I know my mother was determined that we girls would have university degrees which she had been denied because there was only money for her brothers to go. In Zimbabwe, Africans would normally educate their sons before daughters, in spite of the fact that we were told in teacher training that in educating a girl one educates a whole family, which is not always true of boys.

My father was a nurturing parent and this had considerable influence on my concept of God. He was very protective of his womenfolk, but this meant that I was not allowed to play with 'dangerous' tools as in carpentry. My husband also tended to think that there were certain areas of life like computers which I was not fitted for. Yet he never held me back in my singing career or my ministry although he had to make certain sacrifices for these.

I was ordained in the Congregational Church. I believe the first woman to be ordained was also Congregational, a black woman in the USA in the 19th century. There was only one in South Africa when I was called. By the time I was ordained a tenth of the Congregational ministers were women, but I noticed that they were all single, or married to ministers, which I was not. Later on, some of them shared that they had been discriminated against because of pregnancy, but I never felt anything but a certain patronising tendency. Indeed, the Presbyterian Church elected me their Moderator, amidst much rejoicing amongst the women of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches where I was a member of the executive. I am not sure that they listened to my opinions, however, bearing in mind that I was also in a racial minority.

My own children seem to follow their spouses around the world by agreement between them. They have careers and share tasks by and large. My granddaughters, still young, stand up for themselves and deny that boys are any better than them!

What of Zimbabwe? I was indignant when I was paid less than my male colleagues as a teacher, but that has been corrected

since. African women are penalised mainly by the marriage laws there. Traditional marriage, i.e. polygamous, is still legal. The prospective husband has to pay his bride's parents 'lobola', or bride price, the opposite of a dowry. This may have worked in the past when village life was a closed community, but colonisation has led to men living in towns to work, where they acquire mistresses who are more savvy than the wives in the rural areas and demand a civil marriage, which protects them better. This has led to the spread of AIDS and other suffering. Women lawyers and others have formed a group to address these and other issues.

There are differences between men and women. Most women have less muscular strength, hence the separation in sports. They also bear the children, which is enormously significant. This is behind the demand that women are faithful to their men, because only then can they be assured which their offspring are. It also means that women can be disadvantaged if they have careers, because they have to take maternity leave. We no longer expect that wives stay at home to look after the children, but I have observed that considerable strain is put on both parents when both work.

Officially, gender discrimination is against the law. Yet although girls do better than boys in education, on average women are paid less than men. Women are more likely to be in low paid jobs, including the caring professions, and men are more likely to be given the top jobs. Is this, and violence inevitable? I hope not. I am not a militant feminist but live and work towards equality between men and women as I believe God intends.

Sr Dilys Howard
Leominster



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Preaching like a Woman: Susan Durber

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Love Your Archives

An occasional series about the archives that congregations hold. We would love to hear about news from the archives in other congregations

Sr Violet Best has, for many years, been the first port of call for those researching history at Ballinderry and people who want to know more about their family history. She has in the past written a clear and very readable history of the Ballinderry Moravian Church and Congregation that is now its third edition. However, the real work of the many years has been her incredible collation of all the information held in the baptism, wedding and burial ground records of Ballinderry. Violet realised that much of the information people needed was in the very frail early records of the congregation and other records were held in the rolls of other congregations. So, she painstakingly transcribed all the details from the early records and started to put them together with later records, both alphabetically and in date order. Where it was not clear what had happened to people, she scoured the records of other congregations and even local newspapers. We are not the only restless generation: early Moravians in Ireland moved or were moved from congregation to congregation e.g. when the single sisters at Ballinderry were moved to Gracefield, crossing the mighty Lough Neagh in a boat.

Sr Best's work means that people looking for information about their family means that the relevant people can be found very quickly and all the information is in one place. This not only means that enquiries can be swiftly answered with more information than would have been available previously but that the precious original records are not disturbed.

The congregation were so impressed with Sr Best's work that they arranged to have three sets of the records bound, two sets were beautifully bound with one of these going to the archives and another set for Sr Best in recognition of all her work. The third copy had an ordinary binding and will be used as the working copy held in the archives to be added too as necessary. Along with this, two bound copies of the Ballinderry Newsletter were also presented, one to the archives as a permanent record of recent life in Ballinderry and the other to Sr Violet who has so faithfully printed, and oft-times produced the Newsletter. These bound books were presented to Sr Best and the congregation at a special service in 2019.

Sr Sarah Groves
Gracehill and Editorial Team



*Br Henry Wilson and
Sr Violet Best with the
newly bound books*

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Wheler Street Moravian Church Communion Cup

When Wheler Street Moravian Church, Manchester closed in 2010 a lot of the members transferred to Fairfield and some of the furniture was sent to Church House for safekeeping and archiving.

Recently a burglary took place at University Road Moravian Church in Belfast where the church was ransacked, windows broken, the communion table over-turned, and the church bible thrown down the church aisle. The thieves stole amongst other things, the silver communion chalice which had been in the church since 1915. At a recent PEC meeting when the physical archives were being discussed the Wheler Street communion chalice which was hidden away in Church House was mentioned



and an idea for legacy building came forward. It was agreed by the PEC that the Wheler Street communion chalice should go to University Road on permanent loan. Br David Howarth, a childhood member of Wheler Street was delighted to hand over to Br Livingstone Thompson, minister at University Road, the chalice to ensure that the legacy of Wheler Street lives on.

Mark Kernohan
PEC

Book Review

Rachel Brain is the artist behind the 'Tea Consent' short video which should give you some idea of the quality of this book. Suitable for all ages with cartoon drawings and some text. For the little ones you could read it together, for older children they could read it either on their own or with a trusted adult, for teenagers it could be a book to reassure them that it is ok to say no and encourage them to take control of who and how they are touched and for adults it is a reminder that you should ask before touching children, even if they are family members. I think this is a great addition to any family bookshelf. The clear messages given in a humorous way, but never flippant, can reinforce all the teaching children get about consent, boundaries and autonomy.



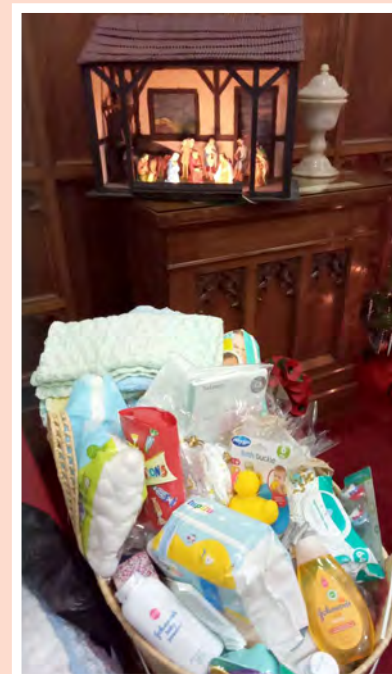
Published by Wren and Rook ISBN 978-1-5263-6221-6 Hardback £7.99

Horton

We had a joyous and blessed Advent and Christmas period. Br David was called to serve the board full time in London for six weeks, but he was back with us for Christmas. During November we held a lunch and bring and buy. We continue to support various charities prayerfully and financially. The Nick Smith Foundation, which is helping to fund research into MND and child bereavement.

The Gianna Baby Bank Plus, is a support service for women who find themselves unexpectedly pregnant. Gianna bring along a Moses basket for us to fill with donations for babies up to 12 months and also gifts for new mums who often have no possessions. This year our Ladies Fellowship Group donated gifts instead of buying Christmas presents for each other.

The Bradford Food Bank, and Sr Hollindrake continue to deliver our donations.



© Sr Linda Haggis

We were grateful that God sent us a number of preachers to help during Br David's call to serve Church House. We welcomed Br Hopcroft to lead our Lovefeast and Communion services.

We are always grateful to all our visiting preachers including retired Church of England vicar Rev Ian Slater who was truly awakened with the Hosanna Anthem on the first Sunday in Advent. Also well received at Horton was Br Nick Battelle from Ockbrook, he gave a good and interesting talk on journeys of life. Thanks also go to local lay preachers, Br Ian Haggas, Br Trevor Kernohan, Br Graham Mallinson and our own Sr Liz Wood who took this year's Carol Service.

We were blessed that the attendance at the Christingle service was increased this year. Our Christmas Day offertory and donations in lieu of Christmas cards was sent to the Alzheimer's Society. Many in our congregation are either affected themselves or have family and friends affected by this cruel disease.

Members of our congregation joined Branches of the Vine (Churches together in BD5 area) carol singing at a local supermarket and on the wards at St Luke's Hospital. Br Owen Gooden was welcomed into membership in January. Owen has been worshipping with us for some time now and we welcomed him with the gift of a hymn book, he enjoys singing and has joined the Yorkshire District choir.

During the BD5 pulpit interchange the curate from All Saints and St Oswald's, Derek Jones, came to Horton to lead our service. It was a good opportunity for the congregation to get to know Derek and for him to meet us.

We continue to worship in Little Horton even though we are small in number we are big in faith and we are looking forward to the year ahead.

Br Jamie Spencer



Thy Kingdom Come

A Suggestion from the Mission and Society Committee

There is a beautiful prayer that comes from the Iona Community Worship book 1988. It reads:

*Let us hold before God in confidence:
The ones who feed our minds and our bodies
And the ones with whom we share faith and break bread.
The ones who reveal in themselves what is hidden
And the ones who treat as precious all we confide in them.
The ones who, this day, we want to pray for
And the ones who, unasked, this day will pray for us. AMEN.*

It is such a privilege to pray for others, to come before the mercy seat of God and raise brothers and sisters before God in prayer - to ask God to meet their needs, heal their hurts and strengthen them. It is then such a joy when we discover that others have been doing the same for us.

But somehow many of us find prayer so difficult, well not so much prayer itself but finding the time to pray. That is why the Mission and Society Committee is encouraging individuals, families and Churches to sign up for the 'Thy Kingdom Come' Prayer Movement from 21st-31st May 2020. This Prayer initiative starts on Ascension Day and ends on Pentecost and is now in its fourth year and a global event in 178 countries across the world.

During the 11 days of 'Thy Kingdom Come', it is hoped that everyone who takes part will:

- **Deepen their own relationship with Jesus Christ**
- **Pray for five friends or family to come to faith in Jesus**
- **Pray for the empowerment of the Spirit that we would be effective in our witness**

Mission and Society Committee hope that committing to pray for just 11 days will encourage those who sign up in their own prayer life, and that their prayers and be a blessing to those for whom they pray for. We have so much that needs prayer in our own lives, in the life of our Church, and in the life of our nation and world.

As a Church we were born and renewed in prayer and our wonderful missionary heritage was undergirded by prayer. But in our own day prayer does not seem to have the priority that it used to have and the not all our congregations have times of prayer. But distance need not be a problem - a congregation can agree to link for prayer using a Whatsapp Group or an email prayer letter if a regular meeting together for prayer is not possible.

So take the step and sign up for 'Thy Kingdom Come' on <https://www.thykingdomcome.global> and encourage each other in prayer for the 11 days of prayer remembering that the early Church devoted itself to prayer before the day of Pentecost.

Sr Sarah Groves
Mission and Society Committee

Fetter Lane

On the second Sunday of Lent some of us from Fetter Lane got together to follow a Lent course wrapped around 'I, Daniel Blake', the 2016 film by director Ken Loach. The film follows the experiences of Daniel, a 59-year-old who had to leave his job following a heart attack, as he and others work their way through a benefits system that has no time for individual circumstances or human error.



© Br Steve Maxwell

We watched two segments of the film's beginning and began to discuss what it's like to be on the wrong side of processes that follow an inflexible rule book. However, it wasn't all gloomy. We started our session with a nourishing lunch provided by Sr Claire and Br Steve Maxwell in the Manse at Fetter Lane. Fortified, we then watched some of the film and had a lively discussion about how our Christian faith might lead us to respond to hardship and unfairness. We ended the session with a reading of the Beatitudes and a prayer. Throughout Lent we'll continue to focus on the issues that the film flags up for us all.

Sr Cynthia Dize

Ockbrook



© Br Joachim Kreusel

Mother and daughter, Marie Wagg and Millie Shin were baptised by Br Joachim Kreusel on Sunday 23rd February at Ockbrook and were welcomed into the congregation. After the service we all celebrated with them over cake.

Sr Julie Hague

Brockweir

*When tempests lose their power
And dangers gather round;
In thee, in that dread hour,
May their defence be found...*

If you have ever stood on the bridge in Brockweir with one foot hovering in England and one in Wales, you will realise what a beautiful position the church is set amidst. The River Wye is tidal at this point and it meanders gently by with hills nestling around the church. It invites the visitor to wander into the grounds, sit on a bench and watch the world go by. Unfortunately, after weeks of constant rain and storms Ciara and Dennis, the scene we faced in mid-February was not so tranquil. Many people living by the river had to be rescued from their houses by the fire service, as the river raged through the valley. It was with a sense of helplessness that people watched the river rise. The congregation was fearful that the church and the manse would be flooded so it was with some trepidation we entered the buildings once the river receded. Imagine our relief, as we realised that despite surrounding the buildings the river had stopped short of entering. Our desire to do a celebratory conga around the church was tempered by the knowledge that some people are in quiet despair and will be



© Sr Sue Groves



out of their homes for months.

Lent begins soon and is normally a time for penitence and reflection and so it will be for us. Daffodils and wild primroses are beginning to bloom around the Sunday School and blossom is evident upon the trees. Spring is in the air and our spirits rise

once more at the beauty of God's creation.

Sr Judith Ashton

Ballinderry

It is with great sadness that I report the deaths of two much loved sisters of Ballinderry congregation. Sr Jean Stark was originally a Methodist but embraced Ballinderry Moravian Church wholeheartedly. Her kindness and generosity were legendary, and she always had a friendly smile for everyone. She had been in a nursing home for some years and passed away on 11th December 2019.

Sr Anne Wilson passed away on 28th January 2020. She fought a brave battle with illness and was more concerned with how her illness was affecting those around than herself. She was thoughtful and generous and worked for the church as a Sunday School Teacher, committee member and representative of the church at IDC. Both Anne and Jean will be greatly missed by all who knew them.

We were very grateful to Ballinderry Primary School for starting the Christmas season with such style when they came to the church in December. We always enjoy hearing the children sing and play their musical instruments.

Br Jared Stevens has introduced a Blue Christmas Service which encourages contemplation at this time when we all seem to be so busy with preparing for the festive season.

The Christingle Service was well attended and is always an enjoyable time, as was the service held on Christmas morning.

The film nights continue to be popular with the young (and not so young). The most recent presentation was very well attended, and everyone present enjoyed not only the film but the opportunity to socialise. We are also starting a 'Chocolate Chat and Chill' youth evening at the end of February.

Sr M Marshall

Gomersal

After 40 years' service, Sr Barbara Cooke and Sr Mary Horsfall have retired from the position of Chapel Servants. We would like to thank them both for all their hard work and dedication over the years. We also welcome Sr Shirley Holroyd to her new role as Chapel Servant.

All our usual activities have resumed after the Christmas break. In January we had a very good attendance for the first fundraiser of the year, a coffee morning and bring and buy sale, organised and run by Church Committee members.

Following the theft of the Yorkshire stone flags from the Church driveway three years ago it was decided to



© Sr Norma Machell

replace them with the less expensive Indian stone. Sadly, three weeks ago 24 of these were stolen. We are now in the process of having these replaced. We were hoping that these would have been relaid in time for the Yorkshire District Memorial Day Lovefeast and Communion Service that we were hosting. Unfortunately, this was not the case meaning that those attending had to use the side entrance to access Church. We had a wonderful service, enhanced by the singing of the Yorkshire District Choir and an address by the Rev Nick Shields, co-ordinator of West Yorkshire Churches Together. The service was well attended by members of all the District Congregations

Sr Norma Machell

**7th Bethlehem Conference
on Moravian History & Music**

THE WALTER VIVIAN MOSES LECTURE IN MORAVIAN STUDIES
Dr. Jon F. Sensbach
"Moravians in Georgia, Part Two: Rediscovering a Forgotten Mission"

MORAVIAN MUSIC FOUNDATION CONCERT
Beethoven in Bethlehem

MORAVIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL LECTURE
Dr. Jenna M. Gibbs
"Conversion and Conflict: Christian Latrobe visits South Africa, 1815-1816"

October 8th-10th, 2020
Moravian College, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania
moravianconferences.org | 610.866.3255

The conference is sponsored by the Moravian Archives, Moravian College, and the Center for Moravian Studies, in partnership with the Moravian Music Foundation, Moravian Historical Society, and Moravian Theological Seminary.

19th Baildon Beer Festival 2020

Friday 1st May, 4pm-11pm
Saturday 2nd May, noon-11pm
Moravian Church Hall
Westgate
Baildon BD17 5EL
Admission £2
CAMRA/SPBW Members - FREE ENTRY
on production of current Membership Card

20 Real Ales + 3 Real Ciders

Fulneck Moravian Museum

Fulneck Moravian Museum will be opening for the 2020 Summer season on 15th Wednesday April and then every Wednesday and Saturday afternoon until 12th September. The museum opens from 2.00pm to 4.00pm on those days. Contact numbers can be found on the Fulneck Church website: www.fulneck.org.uk Everyone is welcome.

Summer Camp 2020

Where: Dovedale House, Ilam, Derbyshire

When: 1st-8th August

Who: Young people in the Moravian Church or connected to it over the age of 10 and under 18 on August 31st 2020.

Cost: £330 - A deposit of £50 is required at booking, the balance to be paid by 14th June - this can be paid in instalments. Payment can be made by direct bank transfer or cheque. If there is an issue with the fee please approach your minister or Joy Raynor for support.

The programme will include a range of activities including worship, games, walks, outings etc.

For more information and a form ask your minister or email youth@moravian.org.uk

From Church House

Provincial Diary for April

10-13	Church House closed for Easter	
23-24	PEC and BMB	Fairfield
25	MWA 70th Anniversary	Fairfield
29	Estates Board	Wellhouse
30	Book Committee	Lower Wyke

5	Palm Sunday
9	First Day of Passover - Jewish
10	Good Friday
12	Easter Sunday
13	Easter Monday
16	Last day of Passover
19	Orthodox Easter - Orthodox
23	St George's Day
24	Ramadan begins - Muslim
28	International Workers' Memorial Day (http://28april.org/)

Dates to remember!

Congregational Register

Baptisms

26th January 2020	Zeke Charles Norton	Fairfield
16th February 2020	Casie Grantham	Dukinfield
16th February 2020	Emma Grantham	Dukinfield
16th February 2020	Maxwell Gregory Cain	Dukinfield
16th February 2020	Charlotte Eden Flynn	Gracehill
23rd February 2020	Bobby Geoffrey Barrett	Fairfield
23rd February 2020	Carter William Barrett	Fairfield
23rd February 2020	Marie Wagg	Ockbrook
23rd February 2020	Millie Shin	Ockbrook

Deaths

11th December 2019	Sarah Jane (Jean) Hill Stark	Ballinderry
28th January 2020	Anne Wilson	Ballinderry
19th February 2020	Edward (Eddie) Greer	Gracehill



Apology from the Editorial Team

In last month's edition of the Moravian Messenger the February 'From the Sanctuary' was reprinted again in error, instead of the March article. Therefore, we have published both March and April's together in this issue. We apologise for any confusion.

March

In my profession, there is an approach to psychotherapy known as 'psychosynthesis'. It embraces 'the spiritual' and encompasses a particular 'technique' (which I find useful) in which, after issues have been talked through and 'felt' at various levels, finally 'higher wisdom' is sought and is invited to 'speak' into the situation. The therapist may gently invite the client to choose a stone or object (from a range of objects) that represents the wiser part of their 'self'. After spending a few moments getting in touch with that part of 'self' and listening carefully to it (putting aside ego and injury), the client is invited to transcend their immediate difficulties and speak from that part of their 'wiser self' into the situation. It can be very powerful and cathartic to do as a client, and to witness happening as a therapist.

Sometimes, as a Church, we get bogged down in our grievances and disappointments, and we struggle to get past our sense of injury. It manifests itself when we hear ourselves say something like: 'It wasn't what I would have done!' or 'I don't like that/it' or 'I wasn't consulted, so I won't play ball'. We are all guilty of that at times. Entwined in that is some sense that 'I', and what 'I want' and 'like', are what the decision of the Church should have been about - rather than it being about God.

Although we are all important, it is wiser at times not to make too much of our own importance. In the context of the Church, I gain some sense of smallness and humility when I think of the bigger history and journey of our Church - and of all those journeys made before mine by 'the great cloud of witnesses by whom we are encompassed'. When considered with that lens, my opinions, likes and dislikes are utterly insignificant and truly unimportant. What does it matter what I (or you) like or don't like? What is important is in discerning what God would say or want to have happen.

As God is with us, what is S/He saying? How is the voice of that greater spiritual wisdom speaking into our situation? How does what we decide to do: further His/Her work; reflect His/Her values; help us to spread the Good News (Gospel); or better enable us to show love to the troubled and vulnerable around us? It really doesn't matter what I (or you) want, like or don't like? What is important, is God.

Br Peter Gubi
Dukinfield

From the Sanctuary

April

What a wonderful time of year this is! Spring is with us! In my garden, Spring started to demand my attention with the clumps of snowdrops ..., then the cyclamens and crocuses popped up in clusters to join them ..., and now the daffodils are beginning to show their majestic golden yellow heads and dark green, spear-like leaves - dancing in the breeze. What a beautiful sight! New life! Lambs are frolicking in the pastures. Soon there will be bluebells. In the earlier hours of the daybreak, rabbits hop around on the hillsides nibbling the grass, and bird song greets the break of the morn - an amazing sound to behold. There are leaves on some of the trees, and the rest are in bud. There is a resurrection taking place around us as nature safely emerges from the battering down of winter. Gone, hopefully, is the harshness of winter although some snow is still possible, as nature is caressed by the life-enabling shafts of warm sunlight. Yet it is still risky for new life, as night frost has the potential to end it with its icy sword. It isn't yet a time to plant out seedlings except under cover.

We have just celebrated this transition from 'death' to new life, which is inherent in nature and in our faith, by celebrating the resurrection of Christ at Easter. The winter of humanity that brought to an end a good and gracious life was recalled during the nightly readings of the 'Harmony of the Gospel' during 'Passion Week' (i.e. the week before Easter). It is a moving narrative that culminates in the events of Good Friday, which is a day of remembering when Christ was crucified - when we see the worst of humanity (that which we are all capable of) in action. Yet, even in that, we see God's presence in the grace of Christ as he faces his oppressors with humility and vulnerability. Then, three days later, we have the re-emergence of hope from despair, seen in the risen Christ on Easter Day. We take this to be a spiritual truth that there is life beyond death, and so we celebrate this with an early morning service. In many Moravian Churches, this takes place in God's Acre (our burial ground) on Easter Day - remembering those who have passed on to better things, but who have left an imprint on our lives, our souls and our community. It reminds us that even if we face the worst of the world, there is still hope. So we bring out the chocolate eggs and rabbits, and the little yellow fluffy chickens that the commercial world provided - all symbols of the new life which is to be celebrated and marvelled at - but actually, and more profoundly, which is already in the emerging world that is present around us. So, take a gentle stroll and enjoy the sight and symbolism that is Easter - but remember what happened to Christ as you journey, and be filled with hope. We Moravians haven't been called 'the Easter People' for nothing!

Br Peter Gubi
Dukinfield

The Moravian Messenger

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