

The Messenger

and Mayflower Hall News

Billericay United Reformed Church

Joint Pastorate with Brentwood and Ingatestone URCs

MEMBER OF CHURCHES TOGETHER IN BILLERICAY



The District Tapestry:

Souvenir of the Southend Churches working together

April 2008

A Final Look at Climate Change – for the time being!

A Prize-winning short story

Billericay becomes a Fairtrade Town

Picture of the Month

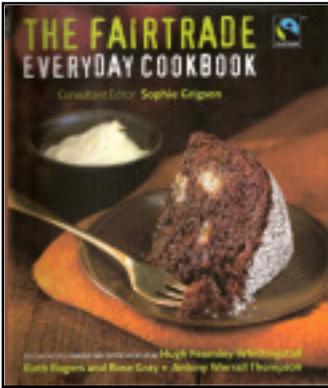


On Mothering Sunday the ARK members showed us that families need the support of God

Billericay a Fairtrade Town

On Saturday 8 March in St Mary's in the High Street the Fairtrade Foundation Certificate was presented to the Chairman of Billericay Town Council, Beverley Beale. This was the culmination of 2 years work by a small Fairtrade committee with the backing of the Billericay District Residents Association.

In the Church that Saturday morning was a Traidcraft Stall, Waitrose giving tasters of some Fairtrade goods they sell. Then a table full of homemade goodies – biscuits and cakes, have you tried chocolate and beetroot cake?! Excellent, enjoyed by us all, the recipes come from a new Fairtrade Cookbook*. Then 4 small 'Christmas Cakes' (Traidcraft) used as a celebration cake for all to share. Tea and coffee was available and many people came in to taste and try and celebrate the Town's new status.



At 10.30 when the presentation was made the Press came and many photos were taken of which four appeared in the Gazette. It was a happy occasion and very enjoyable. **The Fairtrade Everyday Cookbook, containing over 150 recipes from Fairtrade supporters plus high profile chefs and celebrities, is now available from Storyteller Bookshop in the High Street, and from Waitrose.*

Congratulations to all who helped to work to give Billericay its new status as a Fairtrade Town (see elsewhere in the magazine). We particularly thank Ann Mynott who has worked in such a dedicated way for many years to promote fairtrade.



Christian Aid Week

Christian Aid Week is from 11th – 18th May 2008, and our 'House to House' collection (about 2,000 houses!) must be covered by **VOLUNTEERS** from our congregation.

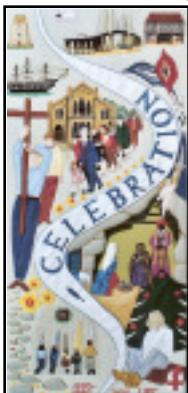
The need to raise money is greater than ever this year. 'Christian Aid' are strongly advertising the effect of 'Global Warming' because this particularly affects poor countries like Bangladesh, Indonesia etc.

We need more **VOLUNTEERS** this year since some our 'Stalwarts' have moved on so please give your name to **Roy Kent** and also encourage anybody sitting next to you in the congregation to help you. Roy would be very pleased if you volunteered rather than he having to use '*Press Gang Method*'. From all involved thank you for volunteering – '*Many hands make light work*' – *and this is God's work!*'

Roy



The Southend District is no more – so now for the Partnership



If you are not one of those who devote much time to inter-church affairs, you may not have been very familiar with the life of the Southend District to which this church has belonged since 1973, when the URC came into being. One thing many of us did take part in was the annual District Supper, when one of the churches would put on a very nice meal, and then we were addressed by the Assembly Moderator for that year. But behind the scenes there was much more than that going on, and a few of us – usually including our minister – played a big part in it. Through it we got to

know the members of other URC churches stretching down to the other end of the borough of Southend.

Well, the URC has decided that 'Districts' should be abolished, because in spite of the good that they did, they generated a layer of bureaucratic procedures which took up too much of the churches resources, or so it was said. That was the drawback, but when the members of the Southend District churches met on 2 March to celebrate what the District had done *right* in its 35 years history, Ken Woods, Rev Victor Ridgewell and Clive Goodhew found plenty of positive things to talk about.



For one thing there was the mutual support for each other. Churches without a minister received ministerial support from the minister (usually it was a minister) of another church. People appointed by the Pastoral Oversight committee of the District would visit other churches and offer advice and guidance on what they were doing well (or might be able to do better) There was guidance on the maintenance and development of buildings and support for major new projects which enabled the churches to meet the needs of their community, to renew their worship and achieve better outreach. The

Southend Night Shelter, which we support, was an initiative of one of our churches which realised that the problem of homelessness existed locally, while other denied that it did, and which drew other churches in for support. Finally there was a learning process – the District organised meetings, courses and discussions, using resources which one church on its own did not have. On one occasion it challenged a local MP Teddy Taylor on his views on social intervention. The District had also a lay preaching commissioner, who trained, organised and encouraged its much needed lay preachers.

All that has gone, or will have to be reinvented. In its place the churches of the former District are being grouped into two 'Partnerships', and we in Billericay are being linked with the six churches geographically nearest to us. There won't be the same degree of structure about these Partnerships, but their purposes remain: mutual support, learning together and outreach.

A tent, not a temple

When major changes take place we sometimes lament that we are destroying a system which has lasted 'for ever', so we should not seek to alter anything. In her sermon at the celebration, Rev Elizabeth Caswell challenged this perspective.

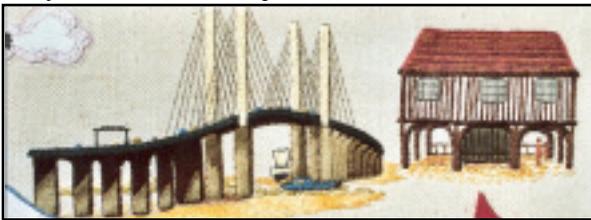


She recalled that the Israelites were a journeying people, following God's call. She explored the image of a tent, which is at the same time a home, but movable, so not a temple, sufficiently impermanent to enable us to respond to God, who is always ahead of us. We are a tent people and not a temple people. So when Peter on the Mount of Transfiguration wanted to build tabernacles for Jesus, Moses and Elijah, this did not happen. They returned back down into the valley to meet human needs.



God keeps moving us on in every generation. We must make creative use of our new opportunities. Was it starry-eyed or visionary of Elizabeth to suggest that our new partnerships should meet 'without an agenda' – just talking to each other, telling the stories of what we have been doing, what has happened to us and how we can help one another? We have the chance to cast off the constraints of embedded structures.

This is scary as well as liberating. We have two years to decide whether we can make something of the new mini-structures we've created, or if they need further adjustment before we can run with them.



A memorial to the District exists in the form of the District Tapestry, created by a talented minister, Rev Angela Cotton, which

was standing at one side of the church during the service. (We borrowed it for an event at this church some time ago) It's a striking depiction of the work of the churches in this District, with panels showing the work and the appearance of the locality, and the place of the church in it. You can even spot our own church on it, and it is claimed that the wedding is of the daughter of one of our own members! Details of it are shown with this article.

So as the District becomes part of the history of how God has led his church in the past, the new Partnership begins, and we ask for God's blessing on the churches which belong to it, as we seek to share the future together.



"I want a traditional church wedding but Sam prefers something trendy. Can we compromise and do it bunji-jumping from the steeple?"

A Vision for the Future of Churches Together in Billericay

The 'United' part of Billericay United Reformed Church surely gives us a special interest in the future of Churches Together in our town. Over the last 12 months or so the CTB chairman – Andrew Dyckhoff from Most Holy Redeemer – has encouraged the CTB to widen its aspirations.

This has reminded me of a visit to the URC's Southend District Council many years ago by the Revd Hugh Cross, then Ecumenical Moderator of Milton Keynes Ecumenical Area. Hugh explained the five stages of ecumenical development. Of these, my recollection is that the last three stages are cooperation to commitment to community (or communion).

In the last year, Andrew Dyckhoff has pioneered a revision to the constitution document to which the Billericay churches sign up. This new document clearly seeks to signal that we have moved from cooperation to commitment. And a present test of this commitment has arisen from the 5th March CTB meeting. The Baptist Church has asked whether an idea they have for building relations with the international community in Billericay could be brought under the CTB umbrella. This idea has been referred back to the churches for possible acceptance.

So, how does Billericay get to the final step of community? Even 20 years ago, the churches of Milton Keynes thought of themselves this way. When their ecumenical area met together as a council of the Church, the URC regarded the meeting as a District Council meeting, the Methodists as a Circuit meeting, Anglicans as a Deanery meeting, etc. This acted to avoid many of the denominational distractions for local work, although the individual churches still related to their respective Synod, etc. at the wider Church level.

What is our vision for Billericay churches?

Ken Woods

“It's my Money, I can spend it how I want!” ***our final session on Climate Change***

A session of *Who wants to be a Millionaire?* started our final meeting (strictly authentic, except that the prize pot stayed at zero, however correct the answers). So, was it 1, 3, 7 or 10 million Bangladeshis who live less than one metre above sea level? (answer 7 million), and 'how much international aid was donated in 2007 to helping the world's poorest to adapt to climate change?' Choose from:

1. The same as is spent on UK flood defences in three days?
2. As much as children receive from the tooth fairy
3. as much as is spent by Coca Cola on advertising in 6 months
4. as much as was spent by the Westbury Hotel,. London, in redecorating in 2007.

(This turned out to be a trick question, as all four are equally correct!)

And so to the parable of the rich man who built barns to hold all the grain he had harvested. (Luke 12: 13-21). He intended to take life easy and enjoy his wealth, but had no time to do so, because he died at once. He had accumulated for its own sake, with no regard for the stewardship of what we have the good fortune to have. In a less extreme form we are all prone to take this attitude. The more we settle into a secure life, with a monthly salary, a pension to look forward to, and our own home (once we have paid off the mortgage), the less we are inclined to take risks or relax our hold on what we possess. It is after all our own money, to spend as we wish.

We made a list of things we might spend our money on from foreign holidays, large cars, a second home or excessive eating and drinking. All of these impact on other people, usually for ill, though sometimes there are beneficial effects to the less fortunate. Holiday flights contribute to climate change, though they provide a living for people who look after us at our destination. Buying food which has come halfway across the globe is also environmentally harmful, but provides a living for third world growers.

Terence Gandy, town councillor was with us, so we were able to test out some of our thoughts on things that happen in the town which could be

done better. Inevitably our over reliance on cars figured, with mutterings about the school run (though hardly any of us had children at school), the beneficial effect of buying locally produced food, for example from the Farmers Market, and the importance of recycling waste, including green waste (next morning our green wheelibin was delivered to our door – was this coincidence, or divine intervention??)

A grandparent present quoted his grandchild, who had said of the man



with the overflowing barns “He should have shared it”. Perhaps the word 'stewardship' sums up our obligation to caring for our possessions, and leaving them in a better state, instead of exploiting, consuming and destroying them. If we were always to remember this, we

would be some way down the road to saving our planet.

...and a message about Climate Change from the United States

Climate Change – the Lord spoke to me

Global warming is an increasingly divisive issue for evangelicals in the United States. In mid- March, 40 leading Southern Baptists denounced the denomination's stance as 'too timid', warning that its cautious response to the environment is seen around the world as 'uncaring, reckless and ill-informed'. One young man from North Carolina who supported the declaration on this said: “The Lord spoke to me through my theology professor, who said we receive revelation from God not only through His word, the Bible, *but also through His creation, nature. When we destroy His creation, it is no different to tearing a page from the Bible.*”

For those of us who took part in our study sessions, the question is: what is the Lord saying to each one of us even if we don't express it to ourselves as dramatically as the young man from North Carolina?



A Prize-winning story by Anne

Anne Poore is a great fan of **PAVIS**, the Foundation for Visually Impaired People, based in Basildon. It was set up in 1998 to promote the welfare of people with sight loss and assist them in maintaining independence and quality of life. She has sung their praises frequently for the help they have given her, and last month they gave her an extra boost, when she was invited to a reception in Chelmsford to receive second prize in their short story writing competition. She reports that she had a wonderful day, receiving her certificate, being congratulated and meeting dignitaries.

She's kindly allowed us to reprint her story here. It's slightly mysterious, so you'll want to read it more than once!



Me First

The rain had suddenly stopped as Jane and Chris got out of their car. They paused and looked at each other. 'What a beautiful place, just what we have been looking for'.

Chris rang the bell and the heavy wooden door was opened by a middle-aged lady. Jane and Chris introduced themselves; the lady told them they had been expected.

'Do come in, my name is Phil, and my husband will be in soon.' Jane and Chris were shown into a rather elegant room, recently decorated. They had glances around the room. 'This is lovely, and very spacious,' said Jane, 'I do like the décor'.

The sound of footsteps could be heard. The door opened and in came an elderly gentleman, with a rather wet companion at his side.

'Excuse me for a moment, I must get my little friend dry, as we do not want him to catch a cold'. Bill came back with a towel and began to wipe the little face.

The gentleman introduced himself as Bill, and his little friend was called Jerry, Bill chuckled and said, 'Springer, Jerry Springer!' No-one said anything as the sad little face gazed up at Jane and Chris.

Bill then told Jane and Chris to follow him, as they proceeded to discuss the matter in hand. They were shown to what was a room, adapted to an office.

Jane and Chris were impressed with the room and both commented on the way each room was decorated and furnished.

Bill then told them, if they were happy with all they had seen, they could discuss between themselves and he would visit them tomorrow to discuss their vested interest.

Jane and Chris made their way to the front door, passing a room which was full of toys, and sitting playing was Jerry, happy with his own company.

'What a lovely place', they both agreed. 'I cannot wait till tomorrow to tell Bill about our discussion.'

The following day was bright and sunny. Bill arrived, Jane and Chris showed him in. He was taken to a room, small but spacious enough to fit a settee and a table, displaying photos and gleaming trophies. The room was well carpeted and rather cosy..

Bill was impressed with the room, as his attention was drawn to the silverware.

The garden was the next area on Bill's agenda, to be seen. He followed the couple through the back door and onto the well-maintained lawn. Bill went across to the gate, ensuring the latch was fastened, securing the boundary.

Satisfied that this was the ideal home for him, Bill exited the garden to his waiting car. Jane and Chris waited in anticipation, had he made the decision that they were hoping for?

The gate opened and a voice commanded, 'Me first', as Bill appeared, followed immediately by a gorgeous, liver-coloured figure of a Springer Spaniel.

They bent down to receive him, 'Here Jerry' they called in unison, 'You're home now and you'll be as wonderful a show dog as your mother was – it'll be your trophies on the table before you know it!'

A Welcome and Thank You to Robert Little at our Organ

We've been delighted to welcome Robert not just to our organ, but also to our Sunday morning worshipping fellowship recently. Robert's home



congregation are not seeing him so often these days, as he has added playing for us about once a month to his round of playing for services at other local churches.

Robert, though born in Reading, is very much an Essex boy, brought up in Writtle and educated at

KEGS, from where he went straight to work for Essex County Council, retiring from there after 41 years service. Now, he says, I have even more time to spend on my love of music.

'My love of church music and the organ were first inspired by being a choirboy at All Saints, Writtle, and since then I have studied music to gain theoretical diplomas from the London School of Music, including their Fellowship in Composition. I had the pleasure of meeting the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Runcie, when I gained the Archbishop's Certificate in Church Music in 1986. I took the examination as a singer, gaining a prize for the highest marks for such a candidate that year. I have had many organ teachers over the years – and after much perseverance gained the Associateship of the Royal College of Organists in 2001.'

He says he is glad to be able to help by playing for us, 'and I always enjoy your warm fellowship', and we are appreciating his musicianship, and his willingness to help us maintain the musical standards in our worship.