

The Messenger

and Mayflower Hall News

Billericay United Reformed Church

Joint Pastorate with Brentwood and Ingatestone URCS

MEMBER OF CHURCHES TOGETHER IN BILLERICAY



*Intense work for Ken and
Joyce at Barleylands.*

Over the two days

1800 free cups of

Tea/coffee were served.

October 2008

**An interview with Stan Portch of the
Evangelical Church.**

The fifth Mark of Mission and the plastic bottles

A rather special Auction for HHI

The remarkable true story of a Chinese Christian

Barleylands in Pictures

Pictures of the Month

Welcome to Kate Hackett, who will be working in the three churches of the joint pastorate as part of her ministerial training.



“That's a nice coat you're wearing. Mind if I try it? To see what happened next, go to page 11

NOTES FROM THE CHURCH SECRETARY

This month I would like to reflect on a few financial topics that are relevant to our church life.

Free gifts and services have great value to many charities - according to a suggestion by the Charity Commission, we could estimate the value and show it in our accounts as a gift under income, and the same total value under appropriate categories of expenditure.

Fortunately this is not compulsory! No doubt the general view would be that this is bureaucracy gone mad, with a lot of calculating effort and debate for no benefit. I support this view.

Nonetheless, they have a point - in theory. Not a lot of imagination is required to realise that we save a lot of money through the work of the Fabric group, including the recent working parties for painting the Mayflower Hall. Similarly, the working parties for the church graveyard.

And I could go on – the annual list of office bearers is not just a list; it represents countless hours of time freely given. We owe a great deal to the voluntary workers within the church, acknowledging it without putting a £££ sign on it.

Ian Miller talked to the September Elders' meeting about M&M Contributions – the amounts that churches are asked to give towards Ministry and Central Mission costs. These contributions tend to be the largest single expenditure item in churches' budgets. Ian is known as 'M&M Advocate', and represents the churches of the two URC Area Partnerships in south Essex.

Ian explained to the Elders that there is no change to the underlying philosophy in the URC's central 'Plan for Partnership', i.e. that churches should give according to their ability to pay, rather than the actual ministry received. Under the Plan, Billericay has been a net beneficiary over many years – our M&M contribution was less than the full cost of one minister plus our share of central mission costs. Now that we share a minister, we have become net donors.

So, no change in philosophy, but in future there will be only one calculation formula for M&M contributions across the whole Synod,

rather than the six different methods used by each of the old Districts. The new Synod-wide method of allocating M&M costs will be based 70% on income and 30% on average adult attendance at worship. It seems unlikely that Billericay will be asked to pay a larger proportion of the 'pot' than under the old system. But don't expect big changes!

A proposal for a Pioneer Fund was announced in the Synod newsletter *Eastwords*. Ron Wade, the Synod Treasurer, will be asking Synod to approve a new financial policy that seeks to create such a fund. Out of it would be made significant grants (£250,000+) for new mission projects within the Synod's churches.

The present Synod policy has seen a build-up of capital funds from sale of redundant church buildings, with grants to churches out of the interest income. A frustration from this is that Synod's giving to projects is restricted by the size of the investment income, whilst ever-increasing levels of capital sit in the Balance Sheet.

In future it is proposed that the proceeds from the sale of redundant properties be placed in a Pioneer Fund, from which substantial contributions to special projects may be made.

Sounds like an exciting idea! Tell Simon Mynott, Billericay's Synod representative, what you think.

Ken Woods

We have a vacancy ..

Valerie Forde has been our church's representative for the *Women's World Day of Prayer* (WWDP) for 11 years, and is now standing down.

This post involves attendance at Billericay's annual planning meeting for the March WWDP. It is not our church's turn to host the event for a few years yet. When it is, our representative will book the use of our church with Dianne, and most likely approach a potential speaker and organist.

If you would like to do the task, please advise Ken Woods, or talk to Valerie if you need more information.

Traidcraft: If you are ordering from the Traidcraft catalogue for Christmas, please let me have your orders before the end of October. This will ensure, hopefully, that you will get all the things which you have ordered.

Many thanks *Ann Mynott*

**Church Bazaar – The Musical,
Saturday 8 November:**

Just another reminder of the date, and to give you time to make preparations . There will be further information in the November Messenger about final arrangements and hall opening times. It is not too late to contact me to have a stall at the bazaar!

Thank you *Margaret Dunn*

The House Group at Lee Mount will meet on Wednesday 8 October from 2.30-4.30pm. The subject will be “And did those feet...?” All welcome.

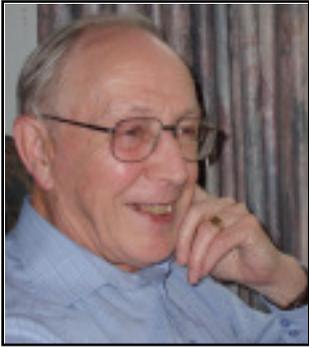
Peter Brierley

Seamstress Wanted!!

ARK would love to revamp their Nativity Wardrobe, could you help?, if so please contact Tessa 633316.

For Curry Aficionados: Schools Ministry is holding a Curry Night on 21 October. A sumptuous meal at £15 at the Indian Ruchi, High Street. See poster. For tickets call 829889

'At that moment I just knew that I believed'



Pastor Stan Portch of the Evangelical Church talks about his life and his faith

Stan became a Christian when he was 14 at a Crusaders Camp. Camping was the reward for attendance on ten consecutive Sundays, and in fact this was one of the reasons why he joined the Crusaders. His tent officer's name was Mr Batty, who during the two weeks of the camp led bible readings, and prayers at bedtime. 'He told us that the names of everyone who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ were written in the Lamb's Book of Life, and asked if our names were written there. Suddenly I found myself saying "my name is written in that book". At that moment I just knew that I believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and I was saved.'

Stan had not been born into a Christian home. His father was a boot repairer who had lost a leg on the Somme in the First World War, serving in the Canadian army. He had left his fiancée and emigrated to Canada as a young man because there was little work for him at home. Before his fiancée's father would allow her to follow him to Canada, he required a letter certifying his good conduct from his Canadian landlady, which was duly written, and they were married on the day of her arrival in Canada. The family, which Stan says was 'filled with love, and better than some Christian homes', later returned to Edmonton and his father set up in business. It was when his mother fell ill and spent eight weeks in hospital that she came into contact with Christianity. A Methodist minister visited her and when she was better she attended his church, to see what it was like. She complained to him that the congregation ignored her and was unfriendly, and the minister set about making changes to ensure that strangers were never treated like that again.

Stan's connection with the Methodists was not a long one, because of the attraction of the Crusaders, which led him to the local Brethren church. Although strict, this church was more 'open' than some Brethren churches. There was no pastor or formal leader, and the members met round the Communion table every Sunday. Whoever was led by the Spirit would speak impromptu referring to scripture, or propose a hymn

or pray. The women were not expected to speak, though they were often in a majority. (Sometimes they did speak, when the men who were strict about this rule were absent!)

Meanwhile Stan had gained a place at a grammar school (Latymer School, Edmonton), but his father expected him, together with his two elder brothers, to join him in the business, and therefore to leave school at 14 without any academic qualification. At this point a Jewish leather salesman who did business with his father took him to task about this, 'virtually kicked him all round the shop'. Jewish people are very ambitious for their children. So Stan stayed on long enough to gain his matriculation, with special interest in maths and science, and then applied to work in a plastics factory. His letter however to this day has never been answered, and so as a second best he took his mathematics skills to a bank in Great Portland Street. Banking was to prove his career and he finished as a manager in Lloyds Foreign Exchange department, from which he retired.

With his family he moved out to Billericay, and looked for a church which offered the style of worship he was used to, and finally joined the Evangelical Church; although this was not very similar, it had a pastor, who preached from the front. This was Rev John Eaton, a Baptist minister, and a very good bible teacher to whom Stan says he owes a lot. The Elders are a self-perpetuating group, usually about four in number, who replenish their number by inviting a member to join them. Mr Eaton left the church to pursue other mission interests in about 1990, and was succeeded by John Davis. When he left, the Elders turned to one of their number, Stan, to become their pastor. He was initially reluctant, as he did not like all the attendance at meetings which this entailed, but pressure on him mounted and he finally accepted. He does not have to shoulder all the pastoral work, as Elders and others are very alert to the need for pastoral visits as they arise.

The Billericay Evangelical Free Church had come into being around 1901, but the greatest influence on its development was Dr Shackleton who took it over later. When he left in 1942 he bequeathed to it a trust deed in which the church premises were to be used for 'the worship of God and for the purposes of the observance of the Lord's Table in remembrance of His death on the first and third Lord's Day in every

month or oftener, for the preaching and expounding of the word of God....And also that nothing in the nature of theatrical performances scenic or other entertainments (other than the magic lantern or cinematograph or similar entertainments upon Biblical or Missionary or instructive subjects approved by the Trustees) bazaar, sales of work, card playing or dancing shall at any time be held carried on or permitted upon the said premises...'

The members have seen to it that these instructions have been faithfully carried out. As well as Sunday services they hold a Meeting for prayer and bible study every Wednesday. At present they are following the Lifestyle Bible Course, which was originally created for African pastors. Members can prepare their answers to questions which they see in advance of the meetings. They also have visiting speakers and are concerned about mission both overseas and at home. There are, says Stan perhaps two streams in the church, the charismatic, and those who look for revival in traditional ways. Open Air Meetings and leafleting he feels are no longer effective (he recalls meetings they have held in the past outside the Rising Sun pub), but a conversation by one member with a member of staff in one of the pubs in the town, led to her now becoming a regular member of the church. Does this show the way forward for outreach?

The church also gives very practical support to mission, having monthly missionary prayer meetings and make monthly donations to Valeria Zingale a young Italian missionary with the Jesus Revolutionary Army which travels round European countries.

It has been a joy for our church in recent years to get to know Stan and the members of his church better. Time was when the two congregations as they left their respective churches on Sunday mornings would scarcely speak to each other. As Stan says of his fellowship as they meet and discuss together 'we have different opinions and we express them. Different opinions are a good thing. We can't know everything perfectly – well not yet!' In this spirit we can be sure that the friendship between our two churches will continue.



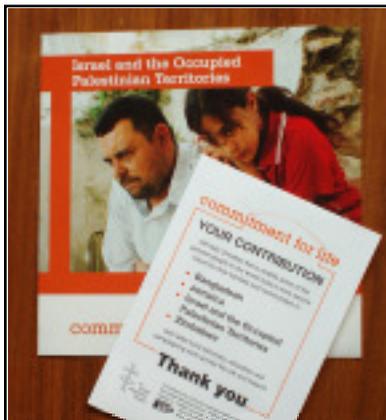
Church Meeting, Wednesday 15 October

Please come to hear Emma Grant of Christian Aid
speak on

India, Riches and Poverty in a new Era

Our speaker has recently returned from India, and will give a visual presentation of the work of Christian Aid in that country. Friends of Christian Aid from other churches have also been invited, and you are welcome to bring your own friends.

The Meeting begins at 7.30pm in our church.
Light refreshments



*Please support the Harvest Appeal
for Commitment for Life's partner
in the Occupied Territories,
returning your envelope by
Remembrance Sunday. Thank
you!*

An Auction with a difference ..!

*Organised by the young people of ARK and their leaders at the Harvest Supper, it raised £300 for their chosen charity, **Health Help International**, which ARK have been supporting over the past year. Very well done!*



Sim on as auctioneer ruthlessly drove up the bids



Lucy and ARK members paraded the lots



Luke closed the bidding with his gavel



Alma proudly showed off her purchase

In the big Churches Together Tent at Barleylands



Peter tries the Town Cryer's coat for size...and weight!



Ann waits at the door for customers at her Traidcraft stall.



Harvey Bradley shows off one of the many colourful pictures he painted (He'll be painting more at our 'October Fest').

The Fifth Mark of Mission: A case study

“To safeguard Creation, and sustain and renew the Earth”

Have you any plastic bottles of water in your home? If so please look at the bottom, or on the label, and you will probably see a small triangle with the number '1' stamped in it. If you have any of the flimsy supermarket bags, you may find the same symbol with the number '2', and the more substantial plastic bags 'for life' have the number '4'. The numbers simply refer to the chemical composition of the plastic used.



Although the triangle has arrows round it does *not* denote that it could be recycled. '1' stands for polyethylene terephthalate (PET), '2' is high density polyethylene, and...need I go on...?

There are 7 classifications in all, covering all the various types of plastic used for... well, just look round in your home and see how many pieces of equipment and even furnishings use plastic. Plastic is every where.



But to return to bottled water. It doesn't make much sense, either environmentally or economically! Making plastic bottles uses an enormous amount of fossil fuel. Transporting it to the shops creates greenhouse gases, and in spite of what manufacturers claim, only 3 billion of the 13 billion bottles sold in the UK are recycled.

- It takes 7 litres of water to manufacture one litre bottle, creating 100g of CO₂ emissions.
- It's estimated that a quarter of all bottled water crosses international frontiers before being drunk.
- If the bottles are then recycled about 40-50% of them are shipped to developing countries, usually China, with the ships releasing more greenhouse gases on the way.

What are the benefits of bottled water? In this country, none. Tap water is just as pure, sometimes purer than bottled. Bottled water is often marketed as 'coming from mountain springs', but then tap water also comes from natural sources, where else? And it's tested for purity more often and more rigorously than bottled. Oh, and of course bottled water can cost 100 times more than tap water.

Case made! Perhaps this suggests to you one way you can help to “safeguard creation”

... well if he's going to be an Olympic swimming champion he needs to start training as soon as possible



A Book for you to read

The Heavenly Man - *the remarkable true story of Chinese Christian Brother Yun*

At the height of the Cultural Revolution in China, a very young Chinese man Liu Zhenying felt called to be a follower of the Lord Jesus. His Christian friends call him Brother Yun, but he gained a new name 'the heavenly man' when he refused to answer with his own name or reveal to the authorities the names of his Christian colleagues.

This is a story of imprisonment, of beatings, of starvation and of great hardship and danger, but Yun found opportunities in this time of relentless persecution to witness to the love of God, to the freedoms offered through the gospel – all at a time of state intimidation and repression. Yun was not an educated man (his mother who inspired him to believe was an illiterate peasant woman). But Yun taught himself to read and then memorised verses and chapters and books of the Bible.

Yun and his wife Deling believe that at every stage God will guide them, through the visions that come in answer to their constant prayers and through the words of scripture. One of the great challenges they faced in China came from the Three-Self Patriotic Christian Church fostered and recognised by the Chinese Government; Yun denounced it as an organisation that compromised the word of God that he believed in.

Yun and fellow Christians from the growing house church movement were in constant danger. Deling, lonely and in danger herself when Yun was in prison, brought up their two children, Isaac and his sister, Yilin, mostly on her own. She drew deeply on her own faith in times of great despair. Yun found spiritual inspiration from the writings and experiences of the early disciples of Jesus, including Paul. 'Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.' *Philippians 1.14*.

When Yun and Deling finally reach the west and travel about there, his comments on western churches are not favourable. He had already criticised some western missionaries for importing their sectarian divisions into China. He found that western churches were 'spiritually asleep... Many meetings are cold and lack the fire and presence of God that we have in China... They have silver and gold, but they don't rise up and walk in Jesus' name. (Acts 3.6). In an aside, he says that when western Christians have spoken for forty-five minutes, they have nothing more to say about their faith!

Miracles and visions and healings happen in China in a way they don't in the west. It is not the healings that matter, Yun writes, but the lives transformed by the Gospel. "You can never really know the Scriptures until you're willing to be changed by them."

This story of faith and perseverance is one to think about and meditate on, as we ourselves look at how we present our faith in our own local community. One aspect of the book, towards the end, I found difficult. That is the 'Back to Jerusalem' movement, where Yun outlines ideas for carrying the conversion to Christianity beyond China through the states in between (some Muslim, some Hindu) all the way back to Jerusalem.. For Yun, the whole world needs to be saved, by bringing the Gospel message to all people.

In spite of that reservation, the living out of the Christian faith described in this book is a heroic statement. It captures some of the excitement and joy in spreading the message of Jesus that the very early Christians must have felt. Yun has one fear for the vibrant Christian house churches

in China. "If persecution stops, I fear we'll become complacent and fall asleep."
Margaret Derbyshire

'The Heavenly Man' published by Monarch Books is now available in the Church Library.

Taking the Church to the Residential Homes

Grateful thanks to the Rev Colin Hunt who took Harvest services at Hillhouse Court and Mountnessing Court; a number of friends from the Church joined the residents on these two occasions.

Residents of Hillhouse Court pose for a group photo after their service



Margaret Dunn demonstrates a home-grown marrow to residents of Mountnessing Court during the service there.