

The Link Magazine

Revd Dr Daniel Mwaillu

Tel: 0113 2681757

dkm308@aol.com

sbpearson@gmail.com

March 2018

Editor: Stan Pearson

Tel: 0113 2736463

OUR CALLING - 1 Samuel 3: 1-10, John 1: 35-51

To remind you of the story of Samuel, he was born to Hannah in answer to prayer and Hannah then gives him back to God's service, which is how he came to be in the temple under the guardianship of the priest, Eli. Samuel, sleeping next to the Ark of the Covenant, hears a voice calling and, thinking it to be Eli, goes to him. Three times this happens until Eli, realising that it is the voice of God calling tells Samuel how to respond. We are told that in those days the voice of the Lord was rarely heard and there was no outpouring of vision, the implication being that the nation had drifted away from God. So that is perhaps the first thing that is worth thinking about. There seem to be times when we are less receptive to God, both as individuals and as a society. This is something that seems to recur, with periods of religious stagnation followed by religious revival. It happened to ancient Israel and it has also been a feature of the Church's history. And it seems we are going through such a period at the moment, at least as far as formal religion is concerned.

So, we have those two thoughts, that we seem to be drifting away from God as individuals and as a society but we have also the message that God doesn't give up calling us and the solutions don't always come in the way we might expect them. The boy Samuel was an unlikely agent for the renewal of the nation.

The passage from John is telling us about the call of four of the disciples of Jesus. The future disciples are intrigued by Jesus, but when Jesus asks them what they want they don't seem to know. All they can think to say is to ask him where he is staying. Jesus in reply says alright, if you want to know more about me come and see.

So perhaps this is a question we can ask. What is it that we want as a Church and do we really know the answer or should we be trying to spend more time getting to know what it is that God wants of us. We have a sense that the Church is failing in its mission and one thing that is always uppermost in our minds is our falling congregations and what we should be doing about that. How can we get people to come and worship in our churches, especially young people? This seems to be what we want, but is it the right question, is it the right objective?

Is the aim to get people to come in and sit in our church on a Sunday morning or is it to persuade them to model their lives on the example Jesus gave? Do

the two have to go together? Certainly, I would suggest that we want them to become part of a community of people who follow the way of Jesus, which is a way of love and justice, but for many people with no church background, our traditional services and the language we use can seem very strange and many people outside the church seem to be put off. So perhaps what God wants may not be the same as us. Perhaps we should not be asking ourselves what it is that we should be doing but asking the community around what it is that they need from the church, which might be very different.

One thing, however, does seem to be clear from our reading in John and that is that contact with believing Christians is important for Simon comes to Jesus through Andrew and Nathaniel through Philip. People are most likely to want to know more about Jesus if they see something in the life of the church and the lives of professing Christians that they find attractive. It is through areas of outreach and service to our community that we can make contact with people in this sort of way.

However, it is also important for us to recognise that we do not do things for our community simply because we want people to become church members. We should do them for their own sake and as an act of service because there is a need. If as a result of this people come to know Christ then that is a matter for rejoicing, but it is something that is in the hands of God.

Of course, this lays a big responsibility on us as a church and as individual Christians because it is the quality of our lives that will win people to the way of living we see in Jesus, that will persuade people that there is something there worth getting to know more about. We have to put our own house in order. People at large are not impressed when they see Christians who seem to care more about their own institution and its rules than they do about the evils and injustice in the world.

Although we may seem to be going through a time when society is losing touch with religion, we believe in a God whose will and purpose will prevail. A God who is constant in his love and persistent in his call. Furthermore, the working out of God's plan may come in unexpected ways. Secondly, God's purpose is worked out through those who believe in God. We are his agents and we have a responsibility to show to those around us something of the love of God in the way we live. Our agency is one of service to others and as we look at the role of our church in society this should be our focus. It is a matter of what our community needs of the church rather than what we think we need as an institution. However, if we are able to have this focus then I have no doubt that the church will, in fact, see the growth it so much wants.

Stan Pearson

WORSHIP IN MARCH**LIDGETT PARK**

The 8.00 am Communion Services in March will be held at St Edmund's Church

4th March	10.30 am	Mrs Patricia Davies	
11th March	10.30 am	Revd John Mason	
18th March	10.30 am	Revd Dr Madeleine Andrews	
	4.00 pm	<i>Christ Church</i>	<i>United Service</i>
25th March	10.30 am	Revd Joyce Nicholson	<i>Holy Communion</i>
29th March (Maundy Thursday)			
	7.30 pm	Revd Trevor Bates	<i>Holy Communion</i>
30th March (Good Friday)			
	10.30 am	Revd Norma Davey	<i>Holy Communion</i>

THORNER

4th March	9.30 am	Revd Joyce Nicholson	<i>Holy Communion</i>
11th March	9.30 am	Mr John Spencer	
18th March	9.30 am	Mrs Patricia Davies	
	4.00 pm	<i>Christ Church</i>	<i>United Service</i>
25th March	9.30 am	Dr Stanley Pearson	
30th March (Good Friday)	2.00 pm	Local arrangement	<i>Ecumenical Service</i>

PRAYER FOR CHANGE

Published also in the magazines of our partner churches, St Andrew's and St Edmund's.

The world has been created for everyone's use, but you few rich are trying to keep it for yourselves. For not merely the possession of the earth, but the very sky, the air, and the sea are claimed for the use of the rich few. ... The earth belongs to all, not just to the rich.

St. Ambrose of Milan (340-397)

Spirit of the Living God

At the beginning you moved over the face of the waters.

You brought life into being, the teeming life
that finds its way through earth and sea and air,
that makes its home around us, everywhere.

You know how living things flourish and grow
How they co-exist; how they feed and breed and change.

Help us to understand those delicate relationships,
value them and keep them from destruction. **Amen**



THORNER NEWSLETTER

Thorne Methodist Church's next fund raising event will take place on Saturday March 17th from 10am to 12 noon and will be a coffee morning in aid of the Martin House children's hospice; we hope to see you there!! We'll have our usual cake and bric-a-brac stalls and we'll be serving our famous Bacon Butties, so do support us if you can! Thanks to all for your past support, we do appreciate it and look forward to seeing you all on March 17th !!

Our Lent course begins on Monday February 19th for five Mondays ending on Monday March 19th. All are welcome!! They begin at 10:15am but refreshments will be served from 10am. We aim to finish around noon, so please do join us if you can. Once again we are studying a 'York Course'. This year's is entitled, 'On the Third Day'. Be assured it is a very good course and it's not too late to join us so do come along to the Methodist Church Social Centre, the entrance is opposite the delicatessen. You'll receive a booklet so you can reprise any of the sessions that you may have missed and also help you prepare for the following week's session.

May God bless us all as we enter this period of Lenten reflection and when Easter arrives, may we feel we've benefited greatly from our Lenten journey.

Ann Johnson

Thorne Methodists' Senior Steward

Tel: 2893532 Mob: 07949809375

Email: vanceann@btinternet.com

WOMEN'S WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

Hard to believe that it's nearly a year since the last Womens' World Day of Prayer, but it's almost upon us again. We at Lidgett are hosts this year and the service is prepared by Christian women of Surinam. Despite the title, men and children are warmly welcome to join us. Friday, March 2nd at 7pm.

See you then,

Reports for the General Church Meeting in May should be submitted by 15th April for publication in the May issue of The Link.

BOOK REVIEWS

DO NO HARM by Henry Marsh

Henry Marsh has been one of the UK's foremost neurosurgeons for thirty years. He has been the subject of two major documentary films "Your Life in their Hands" and "The English Surgeon", which won an Emmy. He was made a CBE in 2010.

This book was given to me by a friend and I approached it with some misgivings as each chapter bore titles and explanations such as PINEOCYTOMA, GLIOBLASTOMA and ANAESTHESIA DOLOROSA, words I am unable to pronounce, let alone understand. However Henry Marsh writes for the lay person with great candour and compassion. He tells of the intricacies of brain surgery and his feelings of joy when successful and his sadness and self condemnation when things went wrong which can so easily happen with such delicate and complicated operations.

Each of the twenty six chapters deals with the specific symptom and the surgical procedure entailed, plus the outcome.

"Do No Harm" reveals Henry Marsh as a very humble man as he speaks about feelings of inadequacy when faced with having to talk to patients and families when things go wrong and his gentleness and kindness towards his patients and his medical team. However he is not afraid of revealing his anger at the NHS's culture of managerialism. I recommend this book to you.

Barbara Holmes

***DAYS OF AWE AND WONDER* by Marcus Borg**

Marcus Borg was an American New Testament scholar and theologian. For much of his academic career he taught at Oregon State University from where he retired as Professor of Religion and Culture in 2007. He died in January 2015 at the age of 72.

Marcus Borg wrote more than 20 books which have sold hundreds of thousands of copies throughout the world. Some of his more important books have included:- *Meeting Jesus For The First Time*; *The Heart Of Christianity*; *Jesus*; *The God We Never Knew*; *Reading The Bible Again For The First Time*. His last book *Convictions* was published just before his death. Marcus Borg also lectured widely around the world, and I was privileged to attend a Weekend Conference led by him in Sheffield a few years ago.

Days Of Awe And Wonder is a book of essays, lectures and sermons (published posthumously) which encapsulates Marcus Borg's lifelong objective of seeking to help others find and/or rethink key aspects of their faith, including topics such as the character of God, the nature of the Bible, and

prayer. But the central theme of the book, and this stands out in stark relief, is his desire to present the historical Jesus as an advocate for social justice and compassionate living.

The book is divided into 16 chapters. Space does not allow me to outline and discuss the content in detail. Instead I have selected the following chapter headings which I hope will give an indication of its coverage:- *Faith, a journey of trust; Jesus, our model for being spirit-filled; Taking Jesus seriously; Facing today's challenges; The heart and soul of Christianity; Listening to the voice of God.*

The book begins with a Foreword written by his widow Marianne, and I want to conclude this short review of this stimulating, thoughtful and challenging book with a paragraph from that Foreword.

“ Why be a Christian in the 21st century? Because it gives us a vision. And a hope. And a way. The language of the New Testament talks about the *Kingdom of God*. Which is **here, now**. Which is what this world would be like if God was king and Caesar was not. The vision of Christianity for a just, sane non-violent world is not Utopia. It is within our capacity. And such capacity requires that we take up the crucible of transformation. Transformation, individually and collectively, is the key ingredient.....With new eyes and, yes, a new heart, being a Christian in the 21st century can make the world a better place. “
This book will help us to meet that challenge! Time to start reading!

Marcus Borg. Days Of Awe And Wonder : How To Be A Christian In The 21st Century. SPCK. 2017. ISBN 978 028 107 8257.

Gerry Leake

CHERNOBYL CHILDREN'S PROJECT

Arranging holidays for children from Belarus takes time, trouble and effort. There is fund raising, recruiting host families, DBS checking, practical and logistical arrangements to be made as well as the work undertaken by host families in taking two unknown children into their homes for a fortnight. Is it worth it? In spite of the time that has elapsed since the Chernobyl disaster elevated radiation levels persist continuing to put health at risk. Some of the benefits are as follows

Benefits for the Belarusian children

- 1) Access to radiation free air, food and water for a month.
- 2) Interaction with a new community and opportunity for many new experiences.
- 3) A holiday.

- 4) Some access to dental care and opticians.
- 5) May learn a few English words and phrases.

Benefits for the Belarusian children's families

- 1) For those living in poverty they know that at least one of their children will have a good time for a month at no financial cost to themselves.
- 2) Many children return with new clothing which is of benefit to the family.

Benefits for the host families

- 1) Meeting and getting to know two young people from a different country and a different culture.
- 2) Learning a few words and phrases in Russian or Belarussian.
- 3) Fun of getting to know the other families hosting the children.
- 4) Participation in numerous joint activities, many of which are likely to be new experiences even for the host families.
- 5) Participation in the planning for the holidays and in various fund raising activities.

Benefits for the host community

- 1) The arrival of a group of foreign children, even for a few weeks, can enrich the life of the host community.
- 2) The Belarusian children affirm the aspirations of Leeds to be a city with international links.

Appeal for additional families

Each year Leeds invites between 12 and 20 children from the areas of Belarus affected by the Chernobyl explosion - 32 years ago this April. During the 4 weeks, the children are here you can see a significant difference in their health as they can eat fresh food, breath good fresh Yorkshire air and drink clean water.

A number of regular host families have had to drop out this year leaving us very short of enough host families to make a Leeds group viable in 2018. We need to have final numbers by the end of February so arrangements can be made about bringing, or not bringing, the children over in the summer.

If you could welcome two Russian speaking children into your home for 2 weeks between 4th August or 6th August and 18th August 2016 Roger Voller, the Leeds organizer, would be very pleased to hear from you.

Outings and events are arranged for the children and host family children are always welcome to join in the fun.

Apart from being willing to provide the fortnight's accommodation the main requirement is to have a DBS check.

Roger Voller can be contacted on rv87@hotmail.co.uk

I am happy to tell you about the health benefits of the visit.

There is also plenty of background information on line at www.chernobyl-children.org.uk

You may not be able to help but it maybe you know someone who could, please feel very free to share this appeal with friends and colleagues.

Martin Schweiger Tel: 0113 4400736 Mobile 07760311406
germ.buster@phonecoop.coop

KITCHENS – A MEDITATION

When you walk into your kitchen, what do you see? The dishes, pots and pans are just where you left them – piled up in the sink and waiting to be washed and put away until they are needed for the next meal. And then there are all the electrical gadgets sitting on the work surface waiting until you need them. At this moment in time, they have one thing in common, they are absolutely still. And they will remain so until they are required.

These objects provide us with an important lesson, especially in our ultra-busy, active, rush-about world. To be **still** seems to be one of the hardest, yet possibly the most necessary, lesson for us to learn, and one which we find very difficult to take on board. However we need to remember that we are human **beings**, not just human **doings**! We live our lives to the fullest when we set aside time for reflection and being still, to recharge our batteries and to enjoy the world around us.

Think of the last time that you noticed the beauty of nature – cotton wool clouds overhead, the soft murmuring of a stream, the birds singing overhead, the flowers in the hedgerows and gardens – wasn't it because you had allowed yourself to become still? Or the last time that you had a powerful experience of prayer or insight. Wasn't it because you had become still and quiet enough to hear an inner voice or appreciate the mysteries around you?

Always in motion, we rush through work, meals, conversations as if there were no **tomorrow**. The truth, however, is that we have no **today**. What did I have for lunch? What were you saying about your brother? Must dash off now, I've got another appointment. Life rushes by, slightly out of focus.

We need to remember that a good photograph is taken by a camera that is still, not one that is moving. Similarly our mind works better in an atmosphere of stillness. For once, therefore, don't **do** anything, instead just sit there, and give thanks that we are surrounded by inanimate objects, teaching us to slow down, recharge our batteries, and simply to **be**. Sit still, rest, be quiet, and let the power of love overcome you.

Gerry Leake

WHAT DID LUTHER EVER DO FOR US? – A series reflecting on the influence of Martin Luther on Methodism by John Summerwill

5. Worship

The word 'liturgy' means 'work of the people'. One of Luther's chief complaints about liturgical worship was that it had been taken from the people and become the preserve of the clergy. To restore it to the people, he translated the liturgy into German, gave the people more parts to say, encouraged congregational singing and allowed communicants to receive both the bread and the wine at Communion.



Luther published a number of books about worship, including guidance on public services and private devotion. Their contents are too vast and complex to cover in a short article like this, and his views changed over time, so there was never one definitive statement from him about how worship should be ordered. I can only summarise some key features.

In the Catholic churches and monasteries of Luther's time mass was said daily and priests observed the seven daily offices, all in Latin. At mass the scriptures were read in Latin, which the laity did not understand, and there was little preaching. Luther complained:

'Three serious abuses have crept into the service. First, God's Word has been silenced, and only reading and singing remain in the churches. This is the worst abuse. Second, when God's Word has been silenced such a host of un-Christian fables and lies, in legends, hymns, and sermons were introduced that it is horrible to see. Third, such divine service was performed as a work whereby God's grace and salvation might be won. As a result, faith disappeared and everyone pressed to enter the priesthood, convents, and monasteries, and to build churches and endow them.' — *Concerning the Order of Public Worship*

The principles that guided Luther in his reform of worship were three:

1. All liturgical elements that are contrary to the teachings of the Scripture should be eliminated.
2. All those elements that are commanded by God in scripture should be retained.
3. Those things that are neither commanded nor forbidden are considered *adiaphora* ('things indifferent').

Following the first of these principles, Luther opposed the unscriptural veneration of saints and strenuously objected to the practice of praying to saints to intercede with God on our behalf. Christ is the only mediator with the Father that we need. Luther therefore abolished the celebration of saints' days and greatly simplified the calendar of festivals, arguing that myths about saints had distracted Christians from the pure word of God. Prayers to saints and to the Virgin Mary were abolished, as were prayers for the dead and for the Pope.

The second principle led to much more focus on scripture, including both more use of psalms and of preaching. Latin continued to be used for well known hymns like the *Te Deum* and the *Sanctus*, but Bible readings and preaching in German made the worship more intelligible.

Luther simplified the daily offices, reducing them to two—morning and evening prayers — each including Bible reading and exposition as well as hymns, psalms and prayers. They were not to go on for more than an hour, so as not to weary people. ('Three cheers for that', you say, but he also said that the reading and preaching should be half an hour!) He did not expect lay people to attend except on Sundays, when the eucharist—with a sermon— was to remain the principal act of worship.

The third principle led Luther to be easy-going about traditions like clerical garb, incense and images.

'Images, bells, Eucharistic vestments, church ornaments, altar lights, and the like I regard as things indifferent. Anyone who wishes may omit them. Images or pictures taken from the Scriptures and from good histories, however, I consider very useful yet indifferent and optional. I have no sympathy with the iconoclasts.' *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*

In his Small Catechism Luther provides a simple form of morning prayer for family use as follows:

'In the morning, when you rise, you shall bless yourself with the holy cross and say:

In the name of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Then, kneeling or standing, repeat the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. If you choose, you may, in addition, say this little prayer:

I thank you, Heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, your dear Son, that you have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray you to keep me this day also from sin and all evil, that all my doings and life may please you. For into your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let your holy angel be with me, that the Wicked Foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Then go to your work with joy, singing a hymn, such as the Ten Commandments, or what your devotion may suggest.'

There is a similar pattern for evening prayer, and short graces to say before and after meals.

From a Methodist perspective, none of this is very strange. We may be a little surprised to find Luther so conservative in holding on to Catholic practices that cause English Protestant heads to shake, like crucifixes and crossing oneself: the English Reformation followed the more radical Calvin, who taught that worship should contain only what scripture commanded and explicitly approved. However, it is no surprise to us that worship should be simple, in plain language, centred around the reading and preaching of the word, with plenty of congregational participation in the singing. That's what we do. And it's thanks to Luther that we do, for without the reforms he instituted we might have inherited a tradition of worship even more obscure than that of medieval Catholicism. Of course, the Catholic Church itself has changed as well. It did reform itself after Luther and again, radically, in the 1960s after Vatican II. The ecumenical Liturgical Movement since the 1970s has brought the worship of the different denominations ever closer and enabled us to worship together in ways that were not possible before the healing of the rift in the late 20th century.

One significant difference in our practice is that we do not celebrate Holy Communion every Sunday. That is a hangover from the Calvinistic nature of the English Reformation, which made Communion a rare event to increase its solemnity and importance. John Wesley encouraged weekly communion without much success, and the Methodist Sacramental Fellowship campaigned from the 1930s onwards for more frequent communion, making little headway until the Liturgical Movement changed ministerial thinking and made communion more frequent and more accessible. Even if the will existed for Methodists to receive communion weekly we would be unable to staff it unless more local preachers were authorised to celebrate.

There are, perhaps, some lessons from Luther that we have forgotten. He was wise enough to value the core elements of eucharistic worship that could be traced back to biblical times and to the early church and he kept familiar features of worship that people knew and loved as long as they were not inconsistent with scripture. He had no sympathy with those who would sweep away all that was old just because it was old. The basic structure of the Lutheran liturgy and its key elements would be recognisable to Catholics of every period. Some of us feel at times today that the Methodist Church is no longer the church we joined. We find it difficult to recognise some of its liturgy, its worship practices and its hymns. Important as it is that the Church and its worship are relevant to the times in which we live, it is vital too that we maintain continuity with our Christian ancestors, and sustain our faith by drinking from the same well as they did, or else we lose our Christian identity. Particularly we stand in danger of losing—if we haven't already lost—our sense of the holiness of the house of God and of the sacred mystery that we come to encounter there. Without that, there is no worship, only empty ritual and entertainment.

I hope that the celebration of Luther's quinqucentenary will renew our sense of the preciousness and worth of our inheritance. **Next time: Hymns and Psalms**

Picture: *Luther leading family worship, by G.A. Spangenberg (19th cent).*

WE DIDN'T DO GREEN THINGS BACK THEN

Checking out at the store, the young cashier suggested to the much older lady that she should bring her own grocery bags, because plastic bags are not good for the environment. The woman apologised to the young girl and explained, "We didn't have this 'green thing' back in my earlier days."

The young clerk responded, "That's our problem today. Your generation did not care enough to save our environment for future generations." The older lady said that she was right -- our generation didn't have the "green thing" in its day. The older lady went on to explain:

Back then, we returned milk bottles, soda bottles and beer bottles to the shop. The shop sent them back to the plant to be washed and sterilised and refilled, so it could use the same bottles over and over. So they really were recycled. But we didn't have the "green thing" back in our day.

Grocery shops bagged our groceries in brown paper bags that we reused for numerous things. Most memorable besides household dustbins was the use of brown paper bags as book covers for our school books. This was to ensure that public property (the books provided for our use by the school) was not defaced by our scribblings. Then we were able to personalise our books on the brown paper bags. But, too bad we didn't do the "green thing" back then.

We walked up stairs because we didn't have a lift in every store and office building. We walked to the grocery shop and didn't climb into a 300-horsepower machine every time we had to go two streets. But she was right. We didn't have the "green thing" in our day.

Back then we washed the baby's nappies because we didn't have the throw away kind. We dried clothes on a line, not in an energy-gobbling machine burning up 240 volts. Wind and solar power really did dry our clothes back in our early days. Kids got hand-me-down clothes from their brothers or sisters, not always brand-new clothing. But that young lady is right; we didn't have the "green thing" back in our day.

Back then we had one TV, or radio, in the house -- not a TV in every room. And the TV had a small screen the size of a handkerchief (remember them?), not a screen the size of Yorkshire. In the kitchen we blended and stirred by hand because we didn't have electric machines to do everything for us. When we packaged a fragile item to send in the post, we used wadded up old newspapers to cushion it, not Styrofoam or plastic bubble wrap. Back then, we didn't fire up an engine and burn petrol just to cut the lawn. We used a push mower that ran on human power. We exercised by working so we didn't need to go to a health club to run on treadmills that operate on electricity. But she's right; we didn't have the "green thing" back then.

We drank from a fountain when we were thirsty instead of using a cup or a plastic bottle every time we had a drink of water. We refilled writing pens

with ink instead of buying a new pen, and we replaced the blade in a razor instead of throwing away the whole razor just because the blade got dull. But we didn't have the "green thing" back then.

Back then, people took the tram or a bus and kids rode their bikes to school or walked instead of turning their mums into a 24-hour taxi service in the family's SUV or van, which cost what a whole house did before the "green thing." We had one electrical outlet in a room, not an entire bank of sockets to power a dozen appliances. And we didn't need a computerised gadget to receive a signal beamed from satellites 23,000 miles out in space in order to find the nearest chip shop.

But isn't it sad the current generation laments how wasteful we old folks were just because we didn't have the "green thing" back then? Please forward this on to another selfish old person who needs a **lesson** in conservation from a clever youngster. We don't like being old in the first place, so it doesn't take much to cheese us off... Especially from a tattooed, multiple pierced adolescent who can't make change without the cash register telling them how much. (*With thanks to Val Faint*)

OPEN WELCOME PROJECT NEWS. MARCH 2018.

By the time you read this, I hope that you will have bought your ticket for our next fund-raising event on Saturday March 17th – our celebration of St. Patrick's Day with a Greek Night. Please don't ask me why Haydn is cooking Greek food for us instead of Irish – one does not quibble with masterchefs! The evening promises to be full of surprises and we hope that you will enjoy it. Tickets will have been on sale since the end of February and as our numbers are limited, do please buy early!

An addition to our events is a concert on Saturday June 30th by the wonderful Free Range choir, who will entertain us with a series of playlets and songs entitled "Cruel Britannia". This covers our history from the 13th century onwards and includes things we can be proud of (or not). The programme is light-hearted and varied and will last about 90 minutes. Light refreshments will be served, though at the time of writing, we are not sure when or what! Free Range have chosen Lidgett to premiere this production and we are very grateful to them. As in the past, the proceeds will be split between the choir and our Church project. Their previous concerts have been extremely well received and the choir has an excellent reputation. More details will be published in the Link in the coming months as well as in the weekly bulletins.

As well as our group events, individuals have also raised money with one of their own. On January 25th, Mary Patchett hosted a Burn's Night meal for a number of friends, with the proceeds being donated to the Project. Mary was

able to give us £300 and we are very grateful both to her and her guests for their generous donations.

The sum raised by the Project group so far is in the region of £5,000 . This is in line with our usual amount at this time of year and, as ever, we say an enormous “thank you”.

We understand from Graham Saunders that the proposed alterations to the front of the church have had to be modified to accommodate the unique architectural features of our inter-war building. We offer Graham and his team our thanks also for their patient liaising with the Conservation Officer. We all look forward to the final fruition of their hard work and your kind generosity. **Margaret Farrar** (*on behalf of the project group*).

THOUGHTS FROM A HOUSE GROUP.

To accommodate the other commitments of members and other events at the church we now sometimes meet on a Monday evening instead of a Thursday evening. Dates for the next few meetings are as follows:

Monday 26th March

Monday 9th April

Thursday 26th April

All are at Shadwell Methodist Church at 7.45 pm and we meet roughly every two weeks. I will post the dates of future meetings in the Link.

We are doing a mix of Bible study as well as continuing to look at selected books to accommodate people’s wishes. In January and February we had two sessions studying the Old Testament. In the first we started by looking at the geography of the Ancient Near East and of Israel itself since this provides important background to the way in which the Bible stories developed. We also looked at the chronology of events in the history of Israel. We spent some time looking at the way in which the texts as we have them came to be written and then we had a session looking at the prophets, the broad themes within them and how these were influenced by whether the prophet was writing before, during or after the exile of the people to Babylon. This is ongoing.

The book we are proposing to look at over the coming weeks, starting after Easter, is in the series we have been using (Little Books of Guidance) and is *Why does God allow Suffering?* by Robin Gill, Professor of Applied Theology in the University of Kent. This is an important subject because the existence of suffering in the world tests the faith of many people. **Stan Pearson**

For those who missed the performance
of this play in October we are performing
it for
one night only.
on

SATURDAY 10TH MARCH, 2018
at 7.30pm

'A CUCKOO IN THE NEST'



A murder mystery
by
Irving Theaker

Tickets £7 - 267 8506
(including supper)

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**ALL MAKES
ALL MODELS
SERVICE**

FROM
ONLY

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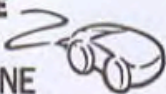
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