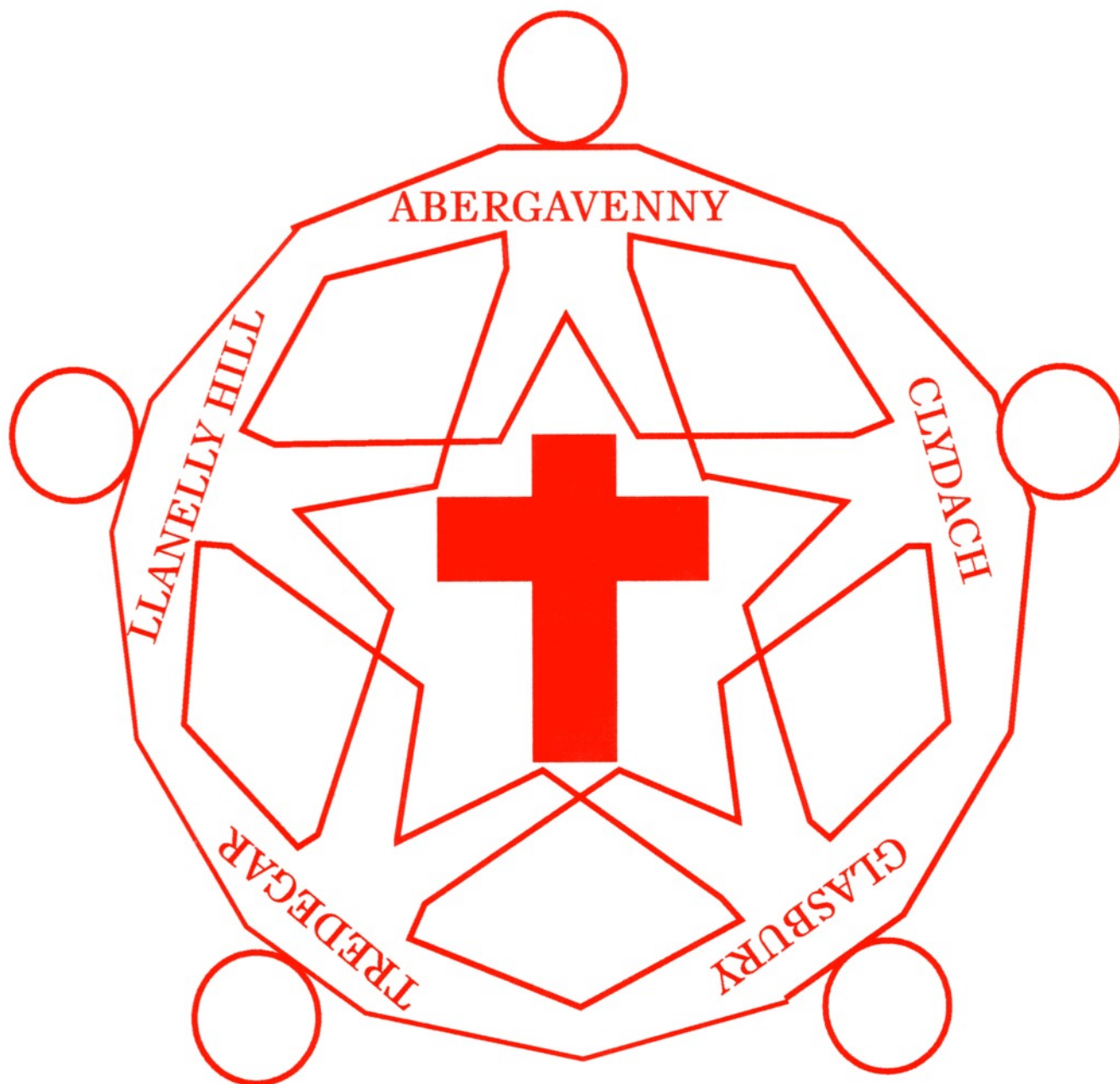


July/August 2011

LINKS



**Newsletter and Magazine of the
Abergavenny Group of Methodist Churches
in the Hills and Vales Circuit**



Taunton Family Camp

Taunton Racecourse Somerset

30th July – 5th August 2011

The Rev Andy and all the family are going to Bible Camp – are you coming too? You can stay in a Tent, Caravan or Hotel.

A Week to be refreshed

It is often said we are on a journey and anyone who has travelled with children will be familiar with the question “are we there yet?” At times it can feel like we are travelling slowly for all sorts of reasons, however, there are a number of things we can do in order to move more quickly towards the destiny that God has for us. Sometimes we need to change gear, put our foot down and as Paul said “press on towards our goal.”

The good news about Jesus is not just for adults, it is for children and young people too. The programme at camp reflects Good News Crusade’s commitment to make the Good News available to everyone. There is something for everyone, every day.

SPEAKERS INCLUDE: Steve Double, Carl Beech, David Cleave and Jeff Lucas.
Further details – Rev Andy Williams
<http://www.gnc.org.uk/camp.htm>

From the Manse

DIG THAT GROUND!!!

I mixed some sliced beef with tomatoes from the market, two spoonfuls of mayonnaise, a sprinkling of freshly ground pepper and then some lettuce fresh from my garden. There is something about the taste that is amazing. The garden is bursting with vegetables and fruits.

We have had radish, lettuce, strawberries, our first new potatoes and I am eyeing the Broccoli, wanting it to be ready as soon as possible. In the next few weeks (months) we will have cauliflower, spring onions, cabbage, more lettuce, peas, parsnips, raspberries, leeks, carrots and then a bumper crop of apples.

In the dark days of February I prepared the ground, dug it over, fertilized, removed the stones, dug it again, raked, dug again and finally hoed it. I laid my cloches, put lettuce and radish in and waited. Within a few days green shoots appeared.

I would not be enjoying incredible lettuce if I had not had a plan and done the preparation. My back ached sometimes when I had finished digging the garden, my hands were dirty and I needed a shower. It took me time and energy.

The church is an organic institution. We must do preparation, plan, work out strategy, pray, read our Bibles for “Words” from God, plant the seeds of faith and salvation and in time we WILL reap a harvest.

We are in a period now before September of continuing to prepare the ground and then on the 1st of September we begin a year of intensely looking at worship. I urge you to pray, to immerse yourselves in God’s Word. However, we must have an expectation that God is going to do something. No point in planting a seed unless you think something might grow.

Enjoy the summer, the harvest is coming!

Blessings

Rev Andy

Forward notice re:

Harvest Festival at Castle Street 17th/18th September

This year the church will open only on the Saturday 17th for refreshments and viewing of the harvest and floral decorations. If we need a title/theme it will be "Seeds for the Harvest."

Please bring fruit and vegetables on the Thursday 15th. for the harvest displays. Some greenery from gardens would be useful also for those doing floral decorations who do not have gardens of their own.

Stewards will be needed please from 9.30 am to 5 pm on a rota basis for the Saturday to keep an eye on security of the church and attend to visitors.

We give God thanks for food we eat, flowers we enjoy, varieties of fruit and vegetables in abundance He is the Lord of the harvest, His Word is the seed for the harvest of souls.

M.P

"As the rain and the snow come down from Heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth."

It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

You will go out with joy, and be led forth in peace, the mountains and the hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands." (Isaiah 55 : 10-12).

*"The heart of revival is the revival
of the heart."*

Mark Stibbe

Maua Update July 2011



Since our visit to Maua, Kenya in 2007, with Habitat for Humanity, our link with Maua Methodist church and Maua Methodist Hospital has meant that we have provided funding for two nurses to be trained, another student nurse to continue his training and considerable sums of money for emergency use.

The Church Council have agreed that for the next year until August 2012, we will support the hospital's work with AIDs orphans and vulnerable children. The hospital is establishing an Early Childhood Development Centre (ECDC) in the grounds of one of the outlying Methodist churches at Athiru Gaiti.

This peasant farming community is severely affected by HIV/AIDs, which has contributed to high numbers of HIV orphans. These children are cared for by ageing grandparents, who are unable to support the children educationally. There is a high level of illiteracy in the area promoting poverty and high dependency on aid, and it is vital for the community that literacy levels are raised so that they can become self-supporting. There is major stigma towards people suffering from HIV/AIDs and children orphaned by it and much ignorance about how the disease is spread. Currently the Hospital is supporting 4500 children from 1620 households, and their Giving Hope programme is providing

the basic needs of food, shelter and education of 1,700 orphans and vulnerable children.

Through the Early Childhood Development Centre the hospital hopes to:

- Decrease the negative impact of HIV/AIDS through education
- Support and improve the health and nutrition of pre-school orphans and vulnerable children
- Provide local community and carers with training and skills to nurture their children and reduce stigma in the community
- Decrease further spread of HIV/AIDS through community outreach programmes
- Work with Government at all levels to implement early childhood development standards

Our support from Castle Street over the next year will help to provide high quality early childhood development for 120 children, as the hospital works with the local community at Athiru Gaiti, Maua district, to ensure local ownership and support of the orphans.

The children will benefit from a holistic programme providing food, social skills, emotional support, and intellectual stimulation. Employment has been created for two teachers and a project officer and workshops will give those who care for the children knowledge and skill to assist in the children's learning. The lessons learned in setting up this programme will enable similar centres to be set up in the future.

The funding will provide help with

- the salary of a project officer (500/= KS per day) **£3.50 a day**
- Two teachers (300/= KS a day each) **£2.10 a day each! The lowest a supply teacher would earn in this country would be a £100 a day.**

- Teaching materials 100/= KS per child per year **70p a year per pupil! How much do our schools spend on materials a year?**
- Food, porridge and lunch 15/=KS daily per child **10p a day !!!!!**
How much does our breakfast and lunch cost!

Just a little of our money goes a very long way in Kenya and we can really make a difference by supporting this project individually and as a church.

*Our friend and contact in Maua Methodist hospital, **Stanley Gitari**, asks us to pray for orphans and vulnerable children in Kenya and elsewhere, and for people willing to support them in getting early education in a programme that seeks to encourage those aspects of community that are positive, so eradicating illiteracy and poverty and building self-reliance.*

We take food, shelter, healthcare and education as our right. For many in Kenya, especially in rural areas, none of these can be taken for granted.

There will be opportunities for fundraising as a church later in the year, however individuals who wish to make one-off gifts or a regular donation as part of their tithe giving could use the **pink gift-aid envelopes** found in the porch at Castle Street, mark these “Benevolent Fund, Maua.”

Brenda Woodier



90 children in a class



Daily porridge and lunch provided

A Four Year Plan **for Castle Street Methodist Church**

“To identify clear, definable, achievable goals and to see the church grow spiritually and numerically. ***To reflect constantly on where we are going and to be open for God to change our vision.***”

The four years consist of:-

1. Season of Worship “How do we Praise God?” Sep 11 – Aug 12
2. Season of Fellowship – “Let us love one another” Sep 12 – Aug 13
3. Foundations – “What do we believe?” Sept 13-Aug 14
4. Season of Evangelism “How do I share my faith?” Sep 14 – Aug 15

On the 1st Sunday in September the vision for the coming year will be preached about, each quarter a sermon will be preached restating the goals of the year and encouraging people to grow in God. Constantly reminding the congregation where we are going with God. (This would be in the normal Sunday Morning service at 10:30 a.m.)

Each month an article will appear in the magazine upon the relevant subject and different members of the congregation would be encouraged to contribute.

Every two to three months the Leadership Team will reflect on the vision (by listening carefully, observing and praying) and will make any recommendations needed to the Church Council. Each August we will have one service when we reflect on the past year and we celebrate what we have achieved.

The seasons are designed to build upon one another, worshiping together, moving to fellowship, deepening of our faith, , causing us to pray for one another and finally to share our faith.

Our growth targets need to be achievable and I would imagine we could have a vision for 5 new people in the first year – 10 in the second, 20 in the third year and maybe 40 in the fourth year. This would add something like 70 people to the church in four years.. However, to grow involves risk and a willingness to step out. **TO BE BOLD.**

“However, it is better to try, than to have never dared to believe that God could do something amazing in our church”. *A.W.*

BACK TO CHURCH SUNDAY

Castle Street, 25th September.

After this issue of the joint July/August Links magazine the next will be the September issue. Harvest and Back to Church Sunday will be upon us . . . immediately! We need to think and plan ahead.

Why are we having a Special Invitation Service?

1. People need Jesus in their lives.
2. People are hurting.

Ask yourselves the questions:

1. What does church mean to you?
2. How does knowing Jesus make a difference in your life?

Be prepared to give an answer to anyone who asks you.

What did it feel like when you came to church for the first time? Maybe nervous, didn't know what to expect, didn't know the order of service or which hymn book to use or maybe worried about what to wear even. Put yourself in their shoes.

Remember God is already working in peoples lives, they are just waiting to be asked by you. A simple, "Will you come to church with me on Sunday" will do. A refusal should not be taken personally. It is God they will be rejecting.

Have you made up your mind who you will ask yet? Are you praying their name; also for your courage to ask?

Everything depends on us. The invitation, our welcome in church to newcomers, during coffee after the service and at other times. We are a friendly church, but are we a befriending church?

Above all, enjoy the challenge, we will have fun and be surprised by how God will work and what he will do. It isn't always what we expect.

We give God all the praise and glory . . . and remain expectant.!

Margaret Pipe

Please Pray for Sudan

Death and Destruction in Sudan

“The situation in Nuba Mountains is beyond imagination, almost all the buildings in the town were destroyed, and all the churches in the town in Kadugli are either burned or looted. My house was looted, and all my belonging were taken away... fortunately enough I was [not in town when the fighting started]. Continue to pray with us for the humanitarian needs of the civilians who are now in the open without basic human necessities.”

By Gabriel J. Waddell

06/16/2011 Sudan (ANS)-In 2005, Sudan ended a decades-long civil war with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement by representatives of the primarily Muslim north and the largely Christian and animist south.

As a part of this agreement, early 2011 was designated as the date that the residents of southern Sudan would vote on remaining unified with the north or seceding and forming an independent nation.

In January, 2011 the citizens of southern Sudan voted overwhelmingly to secede from the northern Sudanese regime, and the result has been to plunge the country back into turmoil as the north and south struggle to maintain power over oil-rich and strategically important disputed borders.

The Christians have been forced to bear the brunt of the violence. The state of South Kordofan is right on the disputed border, and the capital city of Kadugli has been razed.

A pastor in Kadugli provides the following narrative:

“I write to inform you, friends and partners, that a fight between SPLA and government Army has erupted since last Sunday, and as a result of air bombardment, shelling and looting the town now is in ruin. Civilians are evacuated to a place outside the town, but even there they are not safe and we are informed that some people were picked by armed people and killed. Most of the houses are demolished and looted and many civilian are killed. All churches are either burned or looted... The situation is escalating.

Sudanese Military, Militias Kill Christians in South Kordofan

Two dead, two others tortured on day when at least three church buildings are attacked.

06/17/2011 Sudan (CDN)-Military intelligence agents killed one Christian, and Islamic militants sympathetic to the government slaughtered another last week after attacking churches in Sudan's embattled South Kordofan state.

Christian sources said a Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) Intelligence unit detained Nimeri Philip Kalo, a student at St. Paul Major Seminary, on June 8 near the gate of the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) in Kadugli's al Shaeer area and shot him in front of bystanders. Kalo and other Christians were fleeing the town after Muslim militias loyal to the SAF attacked and looted at least three church buildings in Kadugli, they said.

SAF military intelligence agents accused Kalo of being a Christian and suspected he was therefore opposed to the Islamic government, the sources said.

"They shot him in front of our eyes and forced us not to cry, or else we would face the same fate," a Christian source told Compass on condition of anonymity. Likewise, another Christian survivor said while breaking into tears, "They killed him in front of my eyes."

On the same day, Islamic militants loyal to the SAF slaughtered a young Christian man by sword in Kadugli Market, the sources said. Adeeb Gismalla Aksam, 33, a bus driver whose father is an elder with the Evangelical Church in Kadugli, was murdered by Muslim extremists shouting, "Allahu-akbar [God is greater]!"

The Islamic militias were heard shouting "Allahu-akbar!" as they began shooting at a Roman Catholic Church building at 3:30 p.m. on June 8, during a mass in which the congregants were asking God to protect them. "As we were praying, they started to pour bullets at us to the point that we were terribly scared," a Christian who escaped the attack told Compass.

No one was hit by the bullets shot at the building from the outside, but SAF agents on June 8 arrested the Rev. Abraham James Lual in front of his congregation, a priest of a Kadugli parish told Compass. Accusing Lual of preaching that people should oppose the Islamic government, authorities took him to an unknown location and tortured him two days, releasing him the following morning, the priest said.

The Rev. Paul Okeny, another Catholic priest, told Compass that Islamic militias loyal to the SAF looted other churches in Kadugli as well, besides attacking Lual's church and depriving him of his belongings. "Authorities confiscated all his belongings and denied him his cell phone," Okeny told Compass.

Christians were in shock as they have become targets for Islamic militants working with the Government of Sudan, sources said.

Another Christian who requested anonymity said he was arrested at gunpoint by SAF military Intelligence agents at 8:30 a.m. on June 8. Accusing him of being anti-Islam and therefore opposed to the Islamic government, the security officers took him to a military jail, where he was severely beaten and “kicked like a ball,” he said.

According to the Christian, one high-ranking official told another, “Why shouldn’t you shoot him in his house so that his body gets rotten in his own house?” After taking him to his house, they started to torture him with sticks, guns and knives, saying, “We will kill you,” he said.

“I was praying to God to be with me and forgive them,” he told Compass. “I thought that was my end, but thank God I was released, but warned to quit the town. As I was running they opened fire on me, but the motorbike was running very fast, so no bullet hit me.” They called after him, “Make sure we will not see your face again,” he added.

The SAF and Islamic militias on June 8 also set fire to buildings of the Episcopal Church of Sudan and the Sudanese Church of Christ in Kadugli, sources said. “I saw a building of the Episcopal Church of Sudan in flames,” said one eyewitness. The Rt. Rev. Bishop Andudu Adam Elnail of the Episcopal Diocese of Kadugli confirmed the incident.

“The churches and pastors were directly targeted,” he said. “The guesthouse in Kadugli, where my staff lives, was looted. The militias and SAF broke into the church building, taking all property, including the sound system, projector, beds, chairs and two motorbikes, including one of the bishop’s.”

On Sunday (June 12), North Kordofan Gov. Mutasim Mirghani Zaki El-deen declared jihad (holy war) on the Nuba people, most of whom are Christians.

Christians in the area said they are still traumatized as result of the atrocities committed against them by Sudan security forces and militias loyal to the government military. Sources in Sudan said Christians are calling their brothers and sisters worldwide to pray for the crisis in South Kordofan. “The situation is critical – we need other Christians to fast and pray for us,” said one source

This situation could easily get far worse before it gets better, and these Christians need our prayers.



Hello again. Well the soap-making went very well at Mulberry House during their eco day. Everyone enjoyed themselves very much.

Since last I wrote we have had the 24/7 payer room event incorporating our part of the Border Prayer relay event. This went very well and we had numerous people using the room over the week including the early hours of the morning. Ange was in attendance during most of the week and needless to say was pretty exhausted by the end of it. The event was so popular that it ran over by a few days and, in fact, the room is still in situ in that the decoration and all the wonderful words written in the room are still there.

We also held Urban Hymns here at 7Corners, which woke up the neighbours!! We had the gazebo up outside decorated with fairy lights and it all looked and sounded wonderful.

Arrangements and rehearsals for the play are building to a climax. Ange has even arranged to borrow trees for the forest from Macdonald's!! All rests with the weather at the moment and we are hoping that the sun graces us with its presence.

Well that's it for now till next month.

Judith E.

Snippets

Pentecost Festival pulls in 30,000

The Pentecost Festival organised by London churches attracted around 30,000 people this year. The mission's events, spread over nine days, involved lectures, comedy, worship, concerts, drama and poetry. Highlights included Re:Creation, the story of the Bible told in song by a choir and an orchestra, and the final day's celebration at Methodist Central Hall. The latter used film, photography, fashion, art, comedy, graffiti and even flash mobs to present the message, and training was offered in various skills – including leading youth worship. The Festival's team leader, Eunice Obianagha, emphasised the international flavour of this year's events, involving Brazilians, Peruvians, Indians, Portuguese, Ghanaians and Russians. She said the 'spectrum of languages' made the final day 'similar to the first Pentecost!'

Source: Methodist Recorder (16/6)

A Christian is killed every five minutes

According to an Italian sociologist, one Christian becomes a martyr every five minutes. And even that is a conservative estimate, according to Massimo Introvigne. At an EU Conference in Hungary last week, Introvigne urged politicians not to ignore the persecution of Christians. He said these figures need to be 'cried out to the world' otherwise 'dialogue between religions will only produce wonderful symposia but no concrete results'. At the Conference on the Christian-Jewish-Muslim Interfaith Dialogue, Introvigne quoted sources that indicate between 100,000 and 160,000 Christians are killed every year. He said: 'There is always a delicate balance between raising awareness and upsetting countries which can persecute Christians ever more', but 'in Europe the risk is not to speak enough about the issue.'

Source: The Church of England Newspaper (17/6)

Faith, Hope and Trust

In an earlier edition of LINKS we were encouraged and assured that we can prove to be more than conquerors by means of God's whole armour. To do this, we have to promote our own personal faith, hope and trust; in other words our own belief, expectation and reliance. Once again, our hymn-book helps us in this.

Hymns & Psalms 325 calls on the spirit of faith to descend on us and inspire in us the faith that conquers all. Charles Wesley's words are set to a tune attributed to J. S. BACK and called, in translation, "I remain ever faithful", or full of belief in divine truth without proof.

No.63 in our current hymn-book states boldly "All my hope on God is founded - he alone calls my heart to be His own", a confident expression of expectation and desire, set to music of Bach entitled "My Hope", as well as to a tune by Herbert Howells called "Michael", after his own son who died in childhood.

For trust we turn in the writings of Martin Luther, as in No.661, and we think once more of the items of holy armour which were mentioned in LINKS previously:- "A safe stronghold our God is still,
A trusty shield and weapon."

This is Luther's rendering of Psalm 46, which assures us that God "Stops wars all over the world; He breaks bows, destroys spears and sets shields on fire" and we sing it to Luther's own tune "Ein' Feste Burg", in English, "A Safe Stronghold".

All these words of assurance strengthen our beliefs as we consider what we are singing and bear in mind that our faith, "It is an oaken staff, a weapon stout, the soldier's trusty blade".(H & Ps.682)

FGG.

FREE TO RISK - RISK TO BE FREE

To laugh is to risk ... appearing a fool.

To weep is to risk ... appearing sentimental.

To reach out for another is to risk ... involvement.

To expose feelings is to risk ... rejection.

To place your dreams before the crowd is to risk ... ridicule.

To love is to risk ... being loved in return.

To go forward in the face of overwhelming odds is to risk ... failure.

But, risks must be taken, because the greatest risk of all is to risk nothing.

Those who risk nothing ... do nothing, have nothing, are nothing.

They may temporarily avoid suffering and sorrow, but

They cannot feel, learn, change, grow, live, or love.

Chained by their certitudes, they become slaves forfeiting their freedom.

Only the person who risks is free.

- Chuck Swindoll

God Can

When you feel unlovable, unworthy
and unclean,

When you think that no one can
heal you,

Remember dear Friend,
God Can.

When you think that you are
unforgivable

For your guilt and your shame
Remember dear Friend,
God Can.

When you think that all is hidden

And no one can see within
Remember dear Friend,
God Can.

And when you have reached the
bottom

And you think that no one can hear.
Remember my dear Friend
God Can.

And when you think that no one can
love

The real person deep inside of you
Remember my dear Friend,
God Does.

Author Unknown

Tuesday Club at Castle Street Closes

“There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under heaven” Ecclesiastes 3 v 1

Tuesday Club at Castle Street started in November 1968, forty three years ago. There was a need for a young wives group to come alongside mums staying at home with pre and school-aged children, who had no ‘time out’ to meet socially. As the group were to meet fortnightly on a Tuesday evening, the name “Tuesday Club” was appropriate.

A constitution was drawn up, committee formed and warm welcomes received by the new members. As it was a Christian based group, though open to any lady who would care to come, each meeting, social or devotional, would open with a biblical message and a prayer. It was a time of sharing and caring, frequently over a cup of coffee, and supporting members wherever possible.

Over the years many outings have been organised and much laughter and tears shared. Trips to the Light Ship, Cardiff Bay, Caswell Bay, Amelia Trust Farm, Cambrian Mills were just a few of the “high lights” of Tuesday Club. Fancy Methodists going on an outing to a vineyard and wine tasting!!

Experiences shared at home were many and varied. Hedgehogs visited us; flower arranging and Christmas decorations enthused us, fashions from weekenders were displayed, besides visits from organisations sharing their passion and enthusiasm for working alongside vulnerable and needy people at home or overseas. Fish ‘n Chip suppers have been enjoyed especially out of their wrapping paper!!

But all good things eventually come to an end. No more young wives are part of Tuesday Club. No new blood. However, the club finished the year triumphant. Old friends joined present members, Sugar Loaf Catering looked after the group, best frocks worn and a final dinner was enjoyed by all at Castle Street Methodist Church Hall on June 10th 2011.

We give thanks for the many blessings received throughout the life of Tuesday Club.

Diane Cook

Dates for your Diary



July/August 2011

Please pray for Harcourt Terrace and Vale Terrace each day as they seek God in becoming one church which will become Tredegar Methodist Church.

GNC Camp 30 July – 5 August – have you booked your place?

Circuit

Harcourt Terrace final service Sunday 28 August 6 p.m.
30 August 7:30 p.m. Circuit Leadership Team

Castle Street

5th July Tuesday 7:30 p.m. – all Housegroup Leaders and Pastoral Visitors
7 Thursday 7:30 p.m. Leadership Team
13 Wednesday 7:30 p.m. Prayer Meeting
17 Sunday 10:30 a.m. Rev Chris Walters preaching.
24 Sunday 6 p.m. Close Encounters at Whitefield
27 Wednesday 7:30 p.m. Prayer Meeting
Advance Notice 1 September 7:30 p.m. Thursday Leadership Team

Llanelly Hill

Advance Notice 6 September, Tuesday, 2 p.m. Fellowship , John 1

TREDEGAR

Vale Terrace

Sunday 24 July 11 a.m. Membership Service

Harcourt Final Service Sunday 28 August 6 p.m.