

In Touch



Issue 20: The Campfire edition

Winter 2010

Welcome to the winter edition of IN TOUCH.

Before the advent of electricity, radio and television, traditionally Winter was a time for gathering around the fire and telling stories. It was a time for community and sharing, a time when people talked to each other and encouraged each other through the dark months.

I think this must be in built into us because I have had a lot of stories and poems handed to me for this edition of IN TOUCH from a variety of people who were kind enough to share them.

It can be too easy to forget that we are called to be part of Gods

family. We live in a world where daily pressures demand our time and attention. They can wear us out and make us long for quiet and rest. The church magazine is an opportunity to keep in touch with what others are doing and experiencing in our fellowship and in our community. Its a chance to share things that have encouraged us in order to encourage others.

I hope that you find the pieces shared in this edition as edifying as I have whilst preparing this edition and I would like to thank those who contributed.

Janet Rhea

A word from the Pastor

“The leopard can’t change it’s spots, can it?”

Dear Friends

Employers have long considered reliability to be a desired character trait amongst employees. However, I recently discovered that thinking such as this might be discriminatory! The Daily Telegraph reported that a Jobcentre Plus in Norfolk refused to display a job advert which concluded with the line, “must be very reliable and hard-working”. The reason: fear that it would be seen as discriminating against unreliable workers! Duh! Political Correctness gone mad methinks.

It’s quite possible that this story the result of a over zealous bureaucrat who was having a bad hair day. We may never hear about it again. On the other hand, it raises an interesting and significant human issue that is always bubbling beneath the surface. Are there character traits that are bad? As individuals should we be seeking to improve our character? It is appropriate to encourage others to change?

When behaviour is challenged, people are often quick to make excuses. “I can’t help it, this is who I am.” “It’s in my genes.” “It’s how I was raised.” “A leopard can’t change its spots.” To some degree and to a certain extent, these responses may be valid.

However, the Bible contains a message that cuts right across this idea. Not only does the Bible make it clear that change is possible, it’s essential in our walk with God. Just take a look at Philippians 4:12-13 and Colossians 3:1-17. Change is needed and we have a Saviour who, by His Spirit, gives us that means to put to death the earthly nature and clothe ourselves with all the characteristics that reflect the nature of the one we follow.

The Bible has a lot to say about the possibilities and the pleasure of becoming more like Jesus. Take a look at the „fruit of the Spirit“, listed in Galatians 5:22,23, and we find attributes that reflect the Spirit of God: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. In fact, most people who aren’t believers recognise these as positive and desirable attitudes and all the negative opposites, also listed in the earlier part of Galatians 5 as undesirable.

Unlike the thinking of the world, the difference with the Bible is that the right sort of behaviour traits aren’t a question of opinion - God spells them out for us. Where does that leave us? It leaves us with the challenge to ignore the thinking of the world that says people can’t change and embrace the life-changing power of the Spirit of God.

Your friend and Pastor

Mark Reid



The Wooden Bowl

A frail old man went to live with his son, daughter-in-law, and four-year-old grandson. The old man's hands trembled, his eyesight was blurred, and his step faltered. The family ate together at the table. But the elderly grandfather's shaky hands and failing sight made eating difficult. Peas rolled off his spoon onto the floor. When he grasped the glass, milk spilled on the tablecloth. The son and daughter-in-law became irritated with the mess. 'We must do something about father,' said the son. 'I've had enough of his spilled milk, noisy eating, and food on the floor.' So the husband and wife set a small table in the corner. There, Grandfather ate alone while the rest of the family enjoyed dinner. Since Grandfather had broken a dish or two, his food was served in a wooden bowl. When the family glanced in Grandfather's direction, sometimes he had a tear in his eye as he sat alone. Still, the only words the couple had for him were sharp admonitions when he dropped a fork or spilled food. The four-year-old watched it all in silence. One evening before supper, the father noticed his son playing with wood scraps on the floor. He asked the child sweetly, 'What are you making?' Just as sweetly, the boy responded, 'Oh, I am making a little

bowl for you and Mama to eat your food in when I grow up. The four-year-old smiled and went back to work. The words so struck the parents so that they were speechless. Then tears started to stream down their cheeks. Though no word was spoken, both knew what must be done. That evening the husband took Grandfather's hand and gently led him back to the family table. For the remainder of his days he ate every meal with the family. And for some reason, neither husband nor wife seemed to care any longer when a fork was dropped, milk spilled, or the tablecloth soiled.



Things I have learned

I've learned that, no matter what happens, how bad it seems today, life does go on, and it will be better tomorrow.

I've learned that you can tell a lot about a person by the way he/she handles four things:

A rainy day

The elderly

Lost luggage

Tangled Christmas tree lights

I've learned that making a 'living' is not the same thing as making a 'life'

I've learned that life sometimes gives you a second chance.

I've learned that you shouldn't go through life with a catcher's mitt on both hands. You need to be able to throw something back sometimes.

**I've learned that if you pursue happiness, it will elude you
But, if you focus on your family, your friends, the needs of others, your work and doing the very best you can, happiness will find you**

I've learned that whenever I decide something with an open heart, I usually make the right decision.

I've learned that even when I have pains, I don't have to be one

I've learned that every day, you should reach out and touch someone.

People love that human touch -- holding hands, a warm hug, or just a friendly pat on the back.

I've learned that I still have a lot to learn.

Contributed Celia Pears

Poets corner

You can ask the Lord because He will not give you a wrong answer.

You can wait upon the Lord because His timing is always perfect.

You can trust in the Lord because He makes no mistakes.

You can hope in the Lord because He holds your future.

You can rest in the Lord because He is in control of your life.

You can lean upon the Lord because He is completely faithful.

I know that You can do everything,

And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You.

Job 42:2 NKJV



Spotlight

Robin and Anna Marfleet

Rob and Anna, and their two children, Asher and Amélie, started a three year course at All Nations Christian College, in Hertfordshire in September 2009. They believe God is calling them to overseas mission, probably in Europe.

Rob is studying for a BA (Hons) degree in Biblical and Intercultural Studies including Theology, practical ministry, personal development and an Arts Pathway (which involves creative evangelism and worship amongst other things.) Anna is starting a diploma in Biblical and Intercultural studies this term.

In their prayer letter, Rob writes, „After much prayer and careful thought we strongly believe that this is the right time to do this, despite the uncertainties of the current economic climate. In fact our decision to go ahead has been part of a process which God has

been taking us on for the past year or so. It includes fulfillment of various prayer requests - that have confirmed this step of faith. It has involved our deeply evaluating our lives, our hopes and plans and our calling for Christ, and perhaps most significantly heart-felt promptings from the Holy Spirit through prayer and listening to God's word in seeking out His plans for us as a family. Romans 12: 1-2 (NIV) says "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will."

„There have been three clear, significant things that God has spoken to us about during this process:

1. "It's not a question of can you afford to do this, but rather can you afford ~~not~~ to do this?"
2. "Are you sold out for me?"
3. "Are you prepared to put yourselves at my mercy?"

All of these things have been hugely challenging to us as a couple - especially as we desire to be honourable and responsible with what God has given to us - not least our young family. The fact remains

however, that God asks us to trust Him in all things."

After an initial visit to the college, not expecting too much to come from it, Rob and Anna discovered that this was a door which needed pushing a little harder. In doing so, they found it had opened, with both of them being accepted to study and being offered accommodation on campus - one of their key stipulations in going.

„Are we taking a risk about what lies ahead and the thought that we have to rely on God for our every need?" says Rob. „Absolutely! Are we excited about seeing Him work in our lives, changing us as people and continuing to be our provider amidst more challenging circumstances? Absolutely! It is essential that we prepare ourselves properly before moving overseas and we are acutely aware that we have a lot to learn. We believe that God has much to develop in us as He gifts us for what lies ahead."

So far, God has met their financial needs wonderfully, and they are grateful to people who have supported them, sometimes anonymously. Another answer to prayer is that they immediately found tenants for their house in Ipswich, so the rent covers their monthly mortgage payments. Student grants/loans and various benefits mean that they can manage the course fees and childcare costs, but they still have to pay the rent for family accommodation at the college

(£640 per month), buy food and run a car. They have settled in well, made many new friends and are learning a lot. They are able to worship at a nearby church. But they are aware that the choice they have made makes them vulnerable. „We are aware that as we raise our heads above the parapet, the enemy will be firing at us. We will need prayer for unity, love and security as we step out in this way.“

It was good to see Rob, Anna and the children at MRBC on Christmas Day, and they appreciate the ongoing contact with folk here. In Rob"s case, this was the church he grew up in, where he was baptised, and became part of the worship team.

If you would like to help them financially please have a word with Andrew or Debby. Rob and Anna have set up a stewardship account (www.stewardship.org.uk) so that they can claim tax back on donations..

They intend to send out regular newsletters so you can keep in touch with their progress and how God is leading them. If you would like to receive these, please let them know. They would even welcome visits!



Dear Child,

I felt I should write to you as I thought of you today. I think about you every day, every hour, minute and second of every day but today I felt I should write. The thing is I have something on my mind and I thought that maybe, just maybe you are the person I should choice to share it with.

Last night I was watching the earth as I do every night and as I watched I saw something that really upset me to the core of my being. Because I am love I had no option than to be upset and hurt. You see last night as I watched I saw a man sat in a darkened room, his head was slumped in the palms of his hands

and his spirit was low. I have to admit it is not an unusual sight for my eyes, but it tugged on my heart strings. Or maybe I should say the sight of this man grabbed my heart, pulled it, pushed it, twisted it and ripped it apart.

This man was pondering life as he sat staring at the drinking glass that sat on the table in front of him. The empty glass just there and he thought to himself how much that glass reflected him. The glass like him had been used over and over again. Like the glass, each time he was used he was left with a residue on the inside of himself. Over the years the glass had become stained and tainted from the constant use.

He reminisced about when he had first seen the glass; it was given to him by a dear friend. When he opened the box he had been astonished by the clarity of the glass, with its shape so beautiful and pure. He too was seen by others as a thing of beauty. He too was popular and admired by his many friends and family members but still as he sat in the dark, he was now just like the glass again, chipped, stained and old.

Time past as he sat there and nothing changed with the glass but now his mind drifted from the glass. Now he slumped back into the chair where he sat. His mind focussed on just one thing now, the emptiness. Not the emptiness of the glass but the emptiness of his life, of his very existence. As minute followed minute his dark room became

darker, his spirit heavier and his heart emptier.

The emptiness just may the darkness darker and the darkness made the emptiness emptier. My heart broke as I watched. His emptiness was full of earthly possessions; he was not a poor man by the world's standards. His darkness was lit brightly with the light shining in through the huge bay window in his room but still there was darkness. His bank account was full but still his soul was empty.

I remembered then when you had felt like that man sat in the dark. I remembered when you too had felt so empty, when you had been engulfed by the darkness. I remembered how my Love had filled your life on the day you finally came to me with the heart of repentance. I remembered how your darkness that day was flooded with the one true light that is my Son.

I remembered how stubborn you had been, I remembered each time your friend, and one of my Children had offered you words of support and how each time you listened with your head but refused to allow it to touch the emptiness. I remember each tortured prayer that was offered up to me on your behalf. I remembered the tears they cried as they begged for me to save you from the darkness. I remembered the oceans I cried as I ached to hold you and turn you to me but knew I had to wait for you to turn to me first.

Last night I cried for the man I saw, I longed for him to turn his face in my direction and cry out to me. I just longed for one of my children to speak to him, to invite him in to eat with them, or just to ask him if he was ok. I wanted so much for him to see the flash of light from my son reflected in a kind deed done by one of my Church. I wanted so much to see a little glimmer in his darkness, or see his head turning in my direction if only by a fraction of a degree. I want to watch as his emptiness is filled with my love and his darkness is lit by my Son. I don't mind if it takes weeks, months, or years as long as he is able to see just a glimpse of my Love in my People.

So that's my dilemma, I Love you and I love him. I died for you and I died for him. I can light his darkness like I lighted yours and I can fill his emptiness with my Love. I knew I could ask you to help as I heard you sing in Church "Send me". So maybe you could do just something to help this guy and then I can use you to show him my love for him. May I suggest you start by just acknowledging him next time you see each other putting the bins out? Oh sorry did I forget to tell you, he lives next door to you.

All my Love, always filling the emptiness and lighting the darkness.

Father

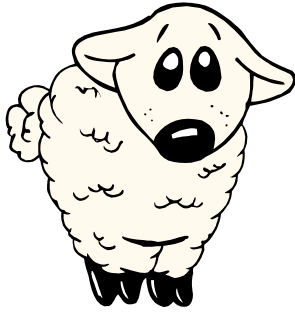
Contributed Vince Lee



BOOK REVIEW

17 things MY Kids taught me about God By J.Mack Stiles

This is a book that I discovered in the church Library whilst waiting for Saffron to come out of C-Kers. It's a book about how the author "Grew into spiritual maturity" as a result of interacting with his children and seeing life, spirituality and God from their perspective. It recounts stories of experiences with the children that challenge the authors view and which made him see God and his faith with fresh eyes. It has chapters such as „Armageddon in the back yard," „Dealing with the devil on a train to Amsterdam," „Breakfast rebuke at MacDonald's," and the „pint-sized postmodernist." It tackles big subjects; Sight, Sin, Grace and Light all in a friendly and amusing way which doesn't compromise the importance of the issues involved. The stories shared make you smile but don't undermine the point the author is making. Above all it is a book that is easy to read BUT makes you think. I would recommend it to you when it reappears in the library.



Something for the children

Jesus taught his disciples using stories and one of the ones which tells us most about how important each of us is to him is about a lost sheep. A man had 100 sheep when he noticed that one had wandered off and got lost. This was not a good thing and the man was worried. I think he was right to worry. I saw a sheep recently wandering down the bypass on its own. It had clearly got out of its field and was lost. I have to say it didn't seem to have a lot of road sense and it was in a lot of danger with the cars whizzing by. Anyway Jesus continued by saying that the man cared about all his sheep and so he left the 99 sheep safe together and spent a lot of time looking for the lost sheep. He didn't give up until he found it.

Jesus told this story to show us what he is like. He is the good shepherd and we are his sheep. Sometimes we forget him and wander off on our own living our lives our own way without thinking of him, asking him for help or thanking him for what we have. When we do this we are in danger.

But Jesus promises that each one of us is so important to him that he will never give up looking for us. Isn't that wonderful.

The story of the lost sheep can be found in your Bible in Luke chapter 15 if you would like to read it for yourself.

Parish Nursing

Parish Nursing Initiatives 2009/10

In the Summer edition of In Touch I promised to explain in more detail the Initiatives we are currently involved in.....this issue we will look at

Chair Based Exercise Class

Ever heard the expression „use it or lose it?“ Its a good strap line to promote the Chair based exercise class!

It must be tempting as muscles and bones begin to ache the older we get to sit and avoid exercise as much as possible. Wrong!! By doing just that we create more issues with stiffness and with stiffness comes pain. Did you know just a few days in bed at any age can cause muscle weakness and wastage?

Three years ago Parish Nursing was offered some free places on a training course for trainers in chair

based exercise. We were fortunate that Linda Bunn felt this was something she could offer as a Parish Nurse support worker volunteer. Soon after Jackie Manning trained so she could stand in when Linda was away.

I am pleased to say this valuable class is still running today. Linda has some of the original members attending and it is a joy to watch (and hear) the fun and laughter they have together on a weekly basis. Linda usually ends the session with coffee and a chat. If the other volunteers and I are available we also meet with them.

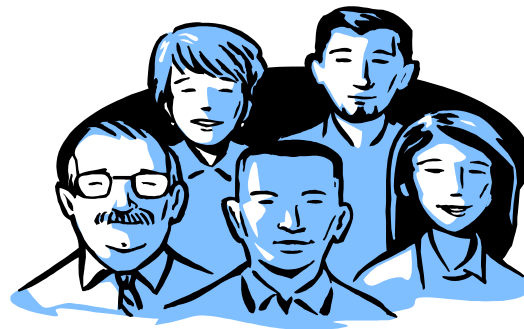
The benefits to individuals are clear to see, strengthened muscles (some having progressed to a new level requiring stronger therabands - Please do ask Linda what they are!), a sense of belonging and the building of new relationships amongst themselves and others. The group has a few members from this fellowship who also join in.

If you are interested in finding out more please speak to Linda Bunn.

Jane Pears

The work of Parish nursing requires equipment and resources. For this regular donations are needed to support the work. If you feel you could regularly contribute a form has been included at the end of In Touch for you to fill in and hand in. Please do pray about this so that the work can continue.

Steve Lineham



Being Church in a Small Group

Here at MRBC we don't only just meet as a large congregation, but we also have small groups meeting in people's homes during the week. Two groups meet during the day, whilst the others meet in the evening.

If you already attend a group - great! This article hopefully will give you some ideas to extend the scope of your group. If you're not already part of a group, why not give it a try? It's an opportunity for fellowship, study and prayer during the week and an opportunity to get to know others in a friendly setting. Most people find it a blessing to share God's word and their Christian experiences together. We grow most as believers when we grow together with others and a smaller group is one way of doing that. We read in Acts 2 how people met in each other's homes and broke bread together. Their shared lives were all part of their spiritual growth.

Some of you in our small groups have seen the table which is based on Acts 2:44-47 which I just referred to. The early church is a model of the characteristics of what being church is about and is worth

looking at as it was at a time of rapid growth. These characteristics can be summed up under four “W” headings - Welcome, Worship, Word and Witness. As a church congregation we do all these things as part of our ministry.

However, there is of necessity of there being a certain level of formality in our main church activities.

This serves us well, but most people also benefit from a much more informal and smaller version of church and we have for some years promoted our small groups because they can “reach the parts” that other church meetings and activities can’t. The table gives us some contrasts between being church in a larger congregation to a smaller group.

	Church Congregation	Small Group
Welcome	<p>Open, hospitable to all</p> <p>Wide cross-section of society</p>	<p>Trust and confidentiality</p> <p>Deeper relationships and mutual support</p> <p>Groups vary in type of people and function</p>
Worship	<p>Public place, open to all</p> <p>Public proclamation of God’s Word and prayer</p> <p>Worship together in a formal manner including Baptism and the Lord’s Supper</p>	<p>Home, by invitation but all welcome</p> <p>Reflection on particular context</p> <p>Prayer for individual members</p> <p>Worship is informal and arises from shared lives</p>
Word	<p>Trained preachers who have given time for preparation</p> <p>Carefully prepared words in songs and prayers</p> <p>High standards in music and presentation</p>	<p>The insights of a whole group coming to Scripture</p> <p>Unprepared wisdom, insight and testimony</p> <p>Using and valuing each person’s gift</p>
Witness	<p>Extending the horizon</p> <p>Church acting as an institution in society</p> <p>Partnership with other agencies</p> <p>Large, long term projects</p> <p>Relates to denominations and other churches</p>	<p>Enabling mission by every member in the whole of life: work, family, wider society</p> <p>Small, short-term projects</p>

The small group then doesn't replace church but helps us to enrich our experience of God and of fellowship with one another in ways that may otherwise not happen. If you are in a small group, you may want to reflect on what your group adds to your experience of church and your Christian walk - the table is there to help you do this. Perhaps you can study and discuss this in your small groups to see how you can enrich your times together as a small group.

One unusual entry is Witness. Most Christians don't associate witness with small groups - we see it as something the church does and see small groups as just fellowship outlets. However, studies show that people who are searching for their faith often find small groups a much more welcoming introduction to the faith and even church. Some of the fastest growing churches in Britain are cell churches where the main activity of the church is as small groups.

How can small groups be evangelistic? I know some of you have tried one or two of these before with varying levels of success, but you may find that your small group will open a door to encouraging your friends, neighbours and the family to follow Jesus.

Ideas for witnessing as a small group

Open sessions which may be social - parties, BBQs, teas, meals, outings

Seeker friendly Bible studies - there are quite a variety of materials around - see me for details

Inviting people who are searching to come along. It isn't "forbidden" as far as MRBC is concerned and you may find yourselves learning new things as the "not yet" Christians ask you things you need to find the answer to! Go on, have a go. Pray about possibilities and seize the opportunities God gives you.

Mark Reid

January 2010



Finally a brief thought;

Connect - When someone is hurting, we often don't know what to say or do. But even simply expressing, "I'm sorry and I care about you," can make a tremendous difference.

Accept - When we try to help someone, it's easy to direct their emotions or give advice. But emotions need to be shared openly. You'll be a blessing by providing a safe place to grieve.

Respond - While it is important to take action. What you do can be practical (like providing a meal) or symbolic (like sharing a thoughtful gift).

Extend - People are flooded with attention when a loss first occurs, but support usually decreases over time. By remembering and continuing to reach out, you can bring comfort and healing.

From Comfort & Encouragement: A One-Year Ministry Guide for Helping Those Who Are Hurting by Holley Gerth.



Services and events:

Special Services in February and March

14th February - All-Age Service

14th March - Mothering Sunday

28th March - Palm Sunday

2nd April - Good Friday services at St Mary"s and The Triangle

4th April - Easter Sunday

There are services at Maidstone road Baptist church every Sunday. They start at 10.30am and 6.30pm

Solos Events; Solos is a Christian network for the mutual support and social interaction of those who are (singles, widows, widowers, separated and divorced)

Sat 13th Feb; Valentine shared supper at MRBC

Sat 13th March; Ten pin bowling at Martlesham

Easter Month 5 April Meet Wyevale car park

24th April 2pm "Anything goes" at the Spa for those who have booked)

Further events will be in the next edition of In Touch

Women"s fellowship speakers;

Feb;

4th Avril Mayhew

11th Rev Ron Rivers

18th Elsie Holmes

25th Brain Salway

March

4th Jean Luxford

11th John Cope

18th Rev Ken and Doreen Martin

25th Easter Parade

April

1st No MEETING

8th AGM

15th Communion

Further events will be in the next edition of In Touch

The next „In Touch“ will be out mid to late April. Articles need to be with the editor for the last week in March. Please do contribute as it is good to have input from a wide variety of sources. You can pop this in the pigeon hole at the church or e.mail it to me on jans.plan@virgin.net if you have an idea for an article but are unsure about putting it together contact Janet and she will be happy to help you.