

APRIL 2008

THE MINISTER'S LETTER

My dear friends,

For a minister, after a major Christian festival, there is a certain sense of anti-climax. Discussing this with colleagues over the years, we have agreed that our own celebration of the occasion is changed by the fact – the privilege – of leading the celebration of others. So whilst I have been fully a part of our celebrating together, there has always been a part of me which focuses on “what comes next? Is this part ‘working’?”

So, from my own perception – which will not be yours – our own celebration of Easter a progression from a warm, joyful sharing of a Passover, to a cold distribution of eggs to surprised passers-by, to a quiet meditation on the pain of Our Lord, then to a warm and joyful lead-up to a jubilant proclamation that Jesus is “Alive!”, “Risen!”, “Today!”.

In my first sentence I used the word ‘anticlimax’. We can’t avoid an emotion like this. Almost by definition, if there is a ‘high’ it must be followed by a ‘low’. Indeed the traditional title of the Sunday after Easter is “Low Sunday”.

But this year **could** be different. We **could** use the ‘high’ of Easter and the emotions we had then as a springboard to a new awareness of Christ and His sacrifice for us, and then as Pentecost approaches be prepared for a new awareness of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

We need the Holy Spirit’s guidance, too, in the life of the church, and I’m asking that you join me in prayer for three specific causes.

Firstly that at our Church Meeting on 12th April the right decisions are made as we vote for our new Elder(s). As I have written in previous *Messengers*, we owe a huge debt of gratitude to the men and women who serve us in this office. The Office of Elder was once described to me as that of ‘Spiritual Aristocrat’. This might seem high-flown, but it goes some way to describe the men and women with whom I have served during my years in the URC. So, pray for them.

Secondly, please pray for the Life and Mission Choir, as we complete our rehearsals for Spirit Songs – to be presented here on Pentecost Sunday, 11th May.

And finally, I ask your prayers for our Moderator, Roberta Rominger, as she prepares to take post in the summer as the Denomination’s General Secretary. Roberta comes into the office at a turbulent time in the URC’s life, and our prayer support is urgently needed! I shall personally miss my ‘boss’, but believe that the church could not have made a better choice for this office.

Oh yes, and pray for me, and for each other: we’ve exciting places to go together, if we let the Spirit take us there

Love and peace to you all,
Revd Jim.

GREETINGS FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY ELECT

Easter 2008

To the United Reformed Church

Greetings to you in the name of our risen Saviour!

At General Assembly in a few months' time I will be inducted as the new General Secretary. It is an awesome responsibility, not least because of the giants who have occupied the post before me. I write to ask for your prayers and to share something of my excitement and anticipation with you.

I came to the United Reformed Church in 1985 from the United Church of Christ, U.S.A. Initially I was accepted for a four-year commitment, and I remember the phone call I received towards the end of the four years from the Convener of the District Pastoral Committee, saying that they needed to review me in order to give advice to the URC Ministries Office as to whether I should be allowed to stay. Panic! I had fallen completely in love with the URC and it was a desperate thought that I might be sent away. From that time I have never taken the United Reformed Church or my presence in it for granted. I thank God for who you are - for what we are together.

The United Reformed Church is where I have met most of my best friends. What amazing people we have among our members! Creative people, deep thinkers, superb activists, artists and hymn writers, sensitive pastors - name a gift and someone in the URC will be living it with Christian passion. My own relationship with God is regularly nurtured by inspiring, powerful worship and fantastic Bible study in a whole variety of URC settings.

It is the URC that has made an ecumenist of me - I trained in an ecumenical college, but it never occurred to us there that Christ might call us out of our comfort zones to real engagement with each other. The URC has given me opportunities to express my faith by helping to change the world - Commitment for Life, the Jubilee Debt Campaign, Make Poverty History. We set out high ideals and then strive to make our church reflect them - multi-cultural inclusiveness, the ministry of the whole people of God, ever-new obedience to a Spirit who will not be contained in "the way we've always done it".

Do you recognise this picture? My vision for the United Reformed Church is that we would discover a new confidence in who we are so that we can invite others to join us. Where's the virtue in being a well-kept secret? I am well aware that we spend more time rubbishing ourselves than naming our blessings.

One of my heroes, Benjamin Zander, offers a great line: "A cynic is a passionate person who doesn't want to be disappointed again." My hunch is that that little insight fits a great many people in the URC. I am a passionate person who does her best to avoid cynicism as the spiritual disease it is. Despite my share of disappointments, I really believe in this church and its future. Or more accurately, I believe in the God who believes in us. The power at work in us is the same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead. We have that on good authority. I look forward to what we will become together.

Yours in Christ,
Roberta Rominger.



NEWS AND NOTICES FROM THE CHURCH

CHURCH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING **SATURDAY 12TH APRIL** **AT 2.00 P.M.**

We will be holding our Annual General Meeting on the above date and time and urge all Church Members to attend but if you are unable to attend, to give your apologies to our Minister or myself.

The AGM is an open meeting to which we invite all members of the congregation.

At the AGM reports will be presented on the life and work of our Church over the past year. So, please make every effort to attend.

Chris Mortimore
Church Secretary.

**COFFEE MORNING
AND LUNCHESES
IN THE COMMUNITY HALL
WILL BE HELD ON
SATURDAY, 5th April 2008
From 11 a.m. with
Lunches at 12 noon**

*Come along and join in a time of good
fellowship, good food and chat!*

ELECTION OF ELDERS

Following the nomination process I can inform you that one person who received the required number of nominations has agreed to stand for election.

Therefore, at the AGM to be held on the 12th April at 2 p.m., Mr. Charles Aidoo will stand for election.

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Message from the Editor

Now it's back to normal after a very wonderful holiday cruising on the new Queen Victoria, visiting Hawaii, Pago, Pago, (American Samoa) and Fiji. On to Australia where I met up with a school friend and, for those who remember her, Dawn Chapman as she was and the family. Dawn sends her love to all at The Hyde. Next New Zealand, to Auckland, Napier and Wellington. Then lastly to San Francisco. In all it was about 57 days of travelling! It was very enjoyable and exciting although at times, just a little exhausting but it is good to be back.

Thank you to Jim for stepping in and producing the Easter edition of The Messenger. I think you have excelled in your apprenticeship as stand-in editor and I am very grateful to you.

May I please have material for the May issue of The Messenger by no later than Sunday 20th April. Thank you.

Vivien Crispe

BOOK READERS

Book Review:

'The Life You've Always Wanted' by John Ortberg

Our house-groups are currently thinking about transformation, taking Romans 12.2 *'Be not conformed to this world, but rather be transformed by the renewal of your minds...'* as our theme. While away last week I came upon this book and the blurb by Richard Foster on the back attracted me: 'John Ortberg takes Jesus' call to abundant living seriously, joyfully, and realistically. He believes human transformation is genuinely possible, and he describes its process in sane and practical ways'.

'Sane and practical ways' to transformation sounded just what I needed.

I bought the book and read it over the next few days and recommend it to you.

The subtitle is 'spiritual disciplines for ordinary people' and the book describes a series of disciplines, or practices, which could help transform our lives to become more like the ones Jesus wants us to live.

These disciplines are not rigid rules, but more a set of practices that help us keep Jesus at the centre of all that we do.

Ortberg writes with gentleness and humour, giving many examples from his own life and experience as a minister in America.

So what are these practices that help to give me the life I have always wanted? Well, according to Ortberg they include: celebration, slowing down, prayer, servant-hood, confession, receiving guidance from the Holy Spirit, secrecy and humility, and reflecting on Scripture. Each of these has a chapter to explain why we need it and how to incorporate it into our lives. Throughout, Ortberg returns to our aim of reflecting Jesus in all that we do, which we show by our love for God and other people.

None of these practices is a new revelation, but they are described with a modern perspective that helps to make them meaningful and practical to us today.

I particularly liked the chapter on celebration, which is headed 'A Dee Dah Day' – Dee Dah being the name given by his young daughter to anything joyful and fun.

As I walked through woods later on the day that I read this chapter – grinning as I usually do when walking through woods – I realised that for me, these are Dee Dah places, and I should make a practice of walking in them more often! Ortberg reminds us that God wants us to find joy in the places and events and people of our lives. He also reminds us that God wants us to *bring* that joy to the people in our lives; not just our family and friends but the strangers we meet along the way. The practice of celebration, along with other practices such as slowing down to hear God and take time for people, prayer and meditating on the word of God, helps to transform our lives so that we can do just that.

'The Life You've Always Wanted'
is published by Zondervan, 1997

(Article submitted by Toni Anthony)

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Thank you, Toni, for the book review on 'The Life You've Always Wanted.'

If anyone has been reading a good book lately or has recently read a book which they have particularly found interesting and would like to recommend it to others to read, please find a minute or two to write a brief review.

I will be happy to insert the review into The Messenger so that others may have the opportunity to read it.

Vivien Crispe
Editor.

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REDUCE WASTE, SAVE ENERGY, TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE

We are all becoming increasingly aware of the threat of climate change and that we must take action **now** to reduce this threat.

But what can we do as individuals?

We can start to reduce our personal contribution to climate change through a number of simple actions:

- simply get recycling – by recycling all the materials collected through your weekly recycling service, you will be helping to save the energy that would have been used to create items from virgin raw materials. For example, recycling just one recycled aluminium can save enough energy to run a television for three hours. If you are not already recycling, you can do so through the Black Box scheme, or communal recycling facilities if you live in a flat. For information, contact ECT Recycling on 020 8371 3670, email barnet@ectrecycling.co.uk
- or visit: www.barnet.gov.uk/recycle-from-home.
- reduce and reuse – if you are already recycling, visit www.barnet.gov.uk/waste-minimisation to see other ways in which you can reduce the amount of rubbish you throw away. By reducing and reusing your rubbish you are saving all the energy which otherwise would have been used to produce, transport and dispose of those items.
- cut your energy use – this will lessen your impact on the environment as well as reducing your energy bills. Nearly half the UK's emissions of carbon dioxide – the main cause of climate change – come from the things we do every day at home or at work.

Why not see how many of these ideas you could implement in your home or workplace to save on your gas and electricity bills.

- turn down your thermostat by one degree – it could save your £40 a year.
- buy energy-efficient lightbulbs – they last up to ten times longer and can save you up to £60 over the lifetime of the bulb
- switch off lights when you leave the room and don't leave appliances on standby – UK households now spend around eight per cent of their electricity bills on standby power
- insulate your loft – it could save you up to 15 per cent on your heating bills if you insulate your entire loft to 270mm
- when you buy electrical products, buy those that have the Energy Saving Trust-approved logo. They are the most energy-efficient and cheapest to run
- carry out a home energy check by visiting the Energy Saving Trust website, and you could save up to £250 per year.

To find out more about saving energy, visit:-

www.energysavingtrust.org.uk

**PREACHING PLANS for -
APRIL 2008**

6th April - 10.00 a.m. - Mr. C. Mortimore
13th April - 10.00 a.m. - Rev. J. Gould
6.30 p.m. - Communion
Rev. J. Gould
20th April - 10.00 a.m. - Rev. Donald Elliott
27th April - 10.00 a.m. - Rev. J. Gould

MAY 2008

May 4th - 10.00 a.m. - Mr. C. Mortimore

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**PREACHING ENGAGEMENTS FOR
CHRIS MORTIMORE**

Please pray for Chris as he leads worship at the following venues during April 2008.

APRIL 2008

6th April - 10.00 a.m. - The Hyde
13th April - 11.00 a.m. - Chesterfield Road
20th April - 10.30 a.m. - Muswell Hill
6.30 p.m. - St. John's, Kenton
27th April - 10.00 a.m. - Queens Park

MAY 2008

4th May - 10.00 a.m. - The Hyde

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MENS' BREAKFAST

THE NEXT MENS BREAKFAST
WILL BE HELD ON SATURDAY,
26TH APRIL
AT 9 A.M. IN THE
COMMUNITY HALL

MEN - COME AND JOIN US!!

Chris Mortimore

DIARY FOR APRIL 2008

APRIL 2008

Wed. 2nd - 9.45 a.m. - House Group
1.15. p.m. - Lunchtime Service
7.15 p.m. - House Group
Thurs. 3rd - 2.00 p.m. - Hyde-De-Hi
Sat. 5th - 11.00 a.m. - Coffee Morning &
Lunches
Wed. 9th - 1.15 p.m. - Lunchtime Service
Sat. 12th - **2.00 p.m. - CHURCH AGM**
Wed. 16th - 9.45 a.m. - House Group
1.15. p.m. - Lunchtime Service
7.15 p.m. - House Group
Thurs. 17th - 2.00 p.m. - Hyde-De-Hi
6.00 p.m. - Elders Meeting
Wed. 23rd - 1.15 p.m. - Lunchtime Service
Sat. 26th - 10.00 a.m. - Men's Breakfast
Wed. 30th - 9.45 a.m. - House Group
1.15. p.m. - Lunchtime Service
7.15 p.m. - House Group

MAY 2008

Thurs. 1st - 2.00 p.m. - Hyde-De-Hi
**Sat. 3rd - 11.00 a.m. - Coffee Morning
& Lunches**

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REMINDERS FOR YOUR DIARY

Church AGM - Saturday 12th

**Housegroups - Fortnightly
9.45 a.m. and 7.15 p.m**

**Spirit Songs - Life and Mission Choir -
Sunday 11th May - 7 p.m. at The Hyde.
and**

**Sunday 18th May - 7 p.m. at
Trinity Church, Finchley.**

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REFLECTIONS

SPRINGTIME

Spring is here – everywhere is full of blossom. The Magnolia trees are in full bloom and the buds on the trees are everywhere. New life is all about us.

Our seasons seem to have been a bit out of kilter this year with snow, high winds and plenty of rain, so some flowers have been very early and some can't quite decide whether they are supposed to be flowering or not. Whatever Mother Nature has decided the gardens look very colourful, fresh and very pretty.

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In a world beset with hatred, bitterness, anger and despair, it is refreshing to experience showers of blessing from God. His showers wash away the dust and grime of the world, and cause the seeds of His love and mercy to sprout and grow in our lives.

As God pours out His blessings on us, so we are touched by His mercy and we find refreshment in our lives. He has promised us every spiritual blessing.

He has promised us His love, and as His love blossoms in us, we are able to love others even as He first loved us.

And so His showers bring about new life in us and our world, even as spring rains bring life after the deadness of winter. Receive His showers today, receive new life.

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*Nothing if so beautiful as Spring
When weeds, in wheels, shoot
long*

and lovely and lush.

God, give us eyes to see
the beauty of the **Spring**,
And to behold Your majesty
in every living thing –
And may we see in lacy leaves
And every budding flower
the Hand that rules the universe
with gentleness and power -
And may this Easter grandeur
that **Spring** lavishly imparts
awaken faded flowers of faith
lying dormant in our hearts,
And give us ear to hear, dear God,
the **Springtime** song of birds
with messages more meaningful
than man's often empty words.
Telling harried human beings
who are lost in dark despair –
'Be like us and do not worry for
God has you in His care'.
