

SPECTRUM

engage

STUDY PRAYER EXPLORATION COMMUNITY THEOLOGY REFLECTION UNDERSTANDING MOTIVATION

Life after death – how does it work?

EASTER 2009

Issue: 2

INSIDE:

News from the
Spectrum Co-ordinators
-page 6

Memories of Sandaru
Methodist Clinic
in Sierra Leone
- page 12

Book Reviews
- starting on page 11

News from the
Mission Partners
- page20

*Tony Buglass, Superintendent
of the Upper Calder Circuit,
writes:*

At the heart of the Christian faith is the promise that death is not the end, and that we will spend eternity with God. We look to the resurrection of Jesus as historical proof that God is willing and able to do the same for us - to raise us from death and take us to be with him in bliss for ever.

The questions and confusions arise when we try to describe

what life after death will be like; more precisely, what we will be like when we are raised. The NT is full of promises of glory, completion, perfection, eternal joy - but most people are confused in their understanding of what we will be. Concepts of immortality, resurrection, soul and resurrection body jostle in a mix of half-shaped ideas. What about the state of the dead now? Are they still in the grave, awaiting the last trumpet? Or is there a 'communion of saints' already with God in eternity? Different Christians will answer in different ways - Protestants, especially more biblically minded ones, will look for a future day of resurrection, while those in the Catholic and Orthodox traditions will affirm the communion of saints. The reason is a confusion of the two historical minds in which the Christian faith has been formed: the Hebrew mind of the original biblical writers, and the Greek mind of the world in which the Church began to grow and define its beliefs. These two have been synthesised against the background of the modern mind and its beliefs. Three questions are necessary to clarify the issue: the nature of the human person, the nature of death, and the nature of survival after death.

The Person:

The Hebrew view

A person is an essential unity, *basar* (flesh) animated by the life force, which is either *ruach* (spirit/breath) or *nephesh* (sometimes 'soul', more often 'living being' - so Gen.2:7). The dividing lines are often blurred: in Gen.2:7 *nephesh* means the living person in a way which includes the whole person; soul and spirit can be interchangeable ideas as the 'life-force'. In the NT, the ideas are essentially Hebrew, although the words used are Greek - *basar* = *sarx*, *ruach* = *pneuma*, and *nephesh* = *psyche*.

The Greek view

A person is a duality - the essential living being is the soul (*psyche*), which inhabits the body (*soma*). It is the soul which is most important in religious terms, because it is the soul which is

Comment [I C B1]:

the person, and is the life of the person. The body is no more than a vehicle for the soul.

The modern view

Modern scientific materialism has led to an understanding of the person which is entirely physical. There is no understanding of soul or spirit, but the person is the 'mind', which can be located to the electrical activity in the brain-cortex.

Death:

The Hebrew view

Death means the departure of the life-force, and the consequent death of the person. The most ancient views are that death was a shadowy existence in Sheol, the place of the dead. This was so shadowy an existence as not to class as life in any sense. Without the life-force, the body could not exist - similarly, without the body, the life-force cannot exist as an independent or immortal soul, but merely exists in Sheol.

The Greek view

Death is the freeing of the immortal soul from the prison of the body. The body cannot exist without the life-force of the soul, but the soul is immortal and can exist very happily without the confines of the body.

The modern view

The life-force of the body is contained within the body: conscious awareness is seated in the brain, therefore when brain-activity ceases, death occurs and the person is extinct. There is no independent life-force to survive. The body decays or is destroyed, and nothing remains of the person except the memories held by other people.

Survival:**The Hebrew view:**

Ancient thought was that there was no survival of death, other than Sheol. Hope was therefore for a long life, and survival of the name through offspring (eg Prov.3:2, 7:2; Dt.4:1). Eventually, propelled by the knowledge that God was sovereign even over Sheol, and by the injustice of the idea that good and wicked will end up in the same place and state, Hebrew thought arrived at the understanding of resurrection (first clearly stated in Dan.12:2). If the person is to survive death, it must be in some bodily form, because the person is a unity of body, soul and spirit. Rabbis later taught that any mutilations suffered in life would also be present in the resurrection body.

The Greek view:

In ancient Greek religions, the immortal soul was free on the death of the body to travel to the Elysian Isles (a mythical paradise) where it could exist in bliss and freedom for ever. Death was therefore not really death, but a rebirth into a new mode of existence.

The modern view:

Materialism allows for no personal survival after death. Memorials are very important, so that the name of the deceased should at least be preserved for posterity. 'Spiritual' evidence (near-death experiences, spiritualism, etc) are dismissed as emotional or psychological phenomena, wishful thinking, or trickery.

The result:

Christianity began with Hebrew ideas about resurrection, but was born into a world which spoke and thought in Greek terms. Consequently, the Greek idea of the immortal soul became an important expression of the Christian expectation of life after death. Christian tradition has been a mixture of the two quite

different concepts. Modernism is relatively recent, and has never completely overcome earlier religious ideas. It is also a very bleak prospect, so people have clung to a variety of ideas, mainly a mix of immortality/ resurrection, but including ideas drawn from Eastern religion (such as reincarnation). 'New age' spirituality includes a range of ideas drawn from many different mythologies, in keeping with the 'pick 'n mix' nature of post-modern thought - the fact that many of these ideas are inconsistent with each other doesn't seem to matter, as long as they provide comfort.

Making sense of it:

There are a number of possible solutions to the question of what happens after death, but each raises further questions:

1. The Bible teaches resurrection of the body, not immortality of the soul. However, what happens to the dead person during the time between death and resurrection? Also - the longer time passes before the resurrection, the more people may have shared the same carbon atoms - does that cause problems in the resurrection process?
2. An immortal soul would be a useful idea for bridging the gap between death and resurrection - but is an immortal soul inconsistent with the biblical understanding of God as the one who gives resurrection life, not simply decides where the immortal soul will spend eternity? Is an immortal soul enough to be a full person in eternity - we recognise each other in life by physical characteristics: how would we recognise a disembodied soul in eternity?
3. If we reject the non-biblical idea of the immortal soul, we could bridge the gap between death and resurrection by saying that the dead are 'stored' in the memory of God, and recreated by him on the last day. However, that is of no comfort to me, because that isn't 'me' which gains eternity but a replica - for it to be me, there

has to be some continuity between that which dies and that which is raised.

It is impossible to be too dogmatic about what will happen after death. We are limited both by our inadequate language and our lack of data - this is something far beyond our experience. There is one vital clue within our experience, and that is that God raised Jesus from the dead. Because of that, we know that God is bigger than death, and can raise those who trust in him to eternal fellowship with him. Paul explores the idea of the resurrection body in 1 Cor.15, but that also raises questions for us - what does the idea of a 'spiritual body' actually mean? We have a firm hope, not only that we will be raised to fellowship with God in eternity, but that we will be raised to discover the answers to all the questions we cannot answer now!

From the Co-ordinators

Spectrum is not yet a year old but there has been a lot of interest and an increased membership, many people have visited our website: www.spectrumfaith.org.uk

Many others have taken the information packs and CD. We attended the Christian's Together in Britain and Ireland conference at Swanwick in the autumn and set up a stall - all the materials we took were cleared out! Who knows where it has all gone! There will also be a stall at the Methodist Conference this year so look out for us if you are attending or visiting.

We had the 'Winter Leadership Team Meeting' in January at Willersley Castle with a full attendance. There was a lot of enthusiasm about the groups and the 'Explore' material this year, there was no problem finding new people to take on jobs with the exception of a publicity officer and from next year an editor for 'Explore'. Oh yes and we need an auditor! Hopefully by the time

we get to the AGM we will have names beside these appointments.

We could not remember when the FK membership fee went up from £3.00 per year to £5.00; probably in the early 90's when a cup of coffee was £0.50! Of course, costs have increased, mainly the printing and postage of 'Engage' so we have decided to be more realistic and we are proposing to the AGM that the membership fee increase next year to £10.00.

There will be an essay competition this year with first prize being a £50 book token and second and third prizes £25 book tokens. The subject is 'Today's destruction, tomorrow's world: Healing the broken relationships between Planet, People and God' See later in this edition for further details which can be found on page eight.

The conference promises to be an exciting one this year with Philip Lewis and Dilwar Hussein. Are we afraid of others if they are not like we are? Do we think they are wrong and misguided? Do we see others as class 'B' human beings? (or even class C). How can we live together and have a genuine relationship with each other which honours and respects the other? 'Christian's and Muslims living together' promises to be a challenging conference. There are still a few places left if you have not booked!

Next year the conference will be on the subject of Creation, Covenant and Conservation and the speakers will be Rev Caroline Horman and Rev John Butterfield.

We missed Phil Mason at the committee but we coped without him! He is, however, still there in the background and we are grateful for his on-going support for SPECTRUM. And for yours too.

Derek and Debbie.

Spectrum E-group

Spectrum has an E-group. For those unfamiliar with the concept, it is an e-mail address - in this case hosted by Yahoo. The principle is that an e-mail sent to this address by any member of the group will be dispatched to every other member. This provides a valuable facility for discussion and is also a means of quickly disseminating information to every member of the group. For the second of these points, it is clearly of much more value if we have a significant number of members who have signed up.

Discussion can be related to any topic which comes under the general umbrella of Spectrum, but it offers two valuable possibilities in relation to Spectrum Explore (the Study Paper in old speak). One is that there are members of Spectrum who are unable to join a group - either because there is no group within travelling range or because that group meets at an inconvenient time.

Such people could be involved in a discussion of the topic presented by Explore, doing it on line. A second possibility is that a member of a group which does meet may feel that an idea which has come up among them could well be shared by a wider audience or needs a wider discussion.

All that it needed to join is to send an empty e-mail to: Spectrum_faith-subscribe@yahoogroups.com and then respond to the reply. Once you are a member, an email sent to: spectrum_faith@yahoogroups.com will reach all current members.

Because of the automatic underscoring of this address, it may not be obvious, if you want to write it in your address book, that the

two words are separated by an underscore - thus 'spectrum_faith'

.
Any further queries about this can be addressed to:
alex.conn@ntlworld.com

AlexConn

In Memoriam

The following members have died since the last issue of the magazine was published:

Sidney O. Dixon
Tony Padwick
Albert Stacey Lewis
Sidney Tong
Alan Dye
Clive Thexton
William Fulton
Roger A. Jones Peter Morley
Rodney Cocks
Wesley Spooner

Please notify our Pastoral Secretary, Roy Newell, of the deaths of any of our members, or of any cases where a letter to a member on behalf of Spectrum might be appreciated.

Essay Competition 2009 **Open to All**

Title: 'Today's Destruction - Tomorrow's World:
healing the broken relationships
between people, planet and God.'

Main Prize - £50 cheque or book token
Two runner up prizes of £25 book tokens

Length of essay: maximum 1200 words. Entries must be in electronic format (txt or rtf) and emailed to AlexConn alex.conn@ntlworld.com. For those that do not have electronic communication, a neatly typed script can be posted to Alex Conn at 5 Church Lane, Immingham, DN40 2HB. (Handwritten copies cannot be accepted as the scripts have to be scanned and sent out for judging).

Entries to arrive by 1st December 2009. Essays will be judged by the Spectrum co-ordinating group in their January 2010 meeting. The three winners will have their entries published in the Spectrum magazine and the first prize winner will also be published in the Methodist Recorder.

Rules:

1. This competition is being promoted jointly by Spectrum and the Methodist Recorder. The prizes are to be funded by Spectrum.
2. This essay competition is open to anyone except members of the Spectrum co-ordinating group.
3. Entries must be submitted electronically or typed on single sided paper with double line spacing.
4. Entries must be a maximum of 1200 words.
5. The name and address of the author must be attached to the essay. There should be no identifying name or other marks on the essay pages.
6. The first prize winning entry will be published by the Methodist Recorder under licence. The first three winning entries will also be published in the Spectrum magazine. All entries will become copyright of Spectrum who may decide to publish any of them in some format at a later date.
7. The first prize will be a cheque or book token for £50. The two runner-up prizes will be a book token for £25.
8. At the discretion of the judges additional prize-winners may be awarded free membership of Spectrum for 1 year.
9. Closing date: 1 December 2009.
10. Send Entries to: Alex Conn alex.conn@ntlworld.com. For those that do not have electronic communication a neatly typed script can be posted to Alex Conn at 5 Church Lane, Immingham, DN40 2HB, to arrive by closing date.
11. Judging will take place in early January 2010 - results to be announced in the Methodist Recorder as soon as possible thereafter. The judges' decision will be final.
12. Winners will be notified towards the end of January 2010.

In my opinion

I write to express a concern which could well be Connexion-wide. While working with my wife at a catering event at church, I spent an idle moment examining a used bottle of what was purporting to be Communion wine. It is made by Amethyst of Reading, has the main title 'Old Tylehurst Priory' and round the top of the label it says 'Sacramental Raisin Flavour Cordial'.

During the Eucharist, we say that our Lord took the wine, not that he took the cordial. Both because I regard the scriptures seriously and also as a Methodist Minister, I have the duty to uphold our discipline, and I regard the instructions in the Worship Book that the juice of the grape shall be used is part of our discipline, I am disturbed by this discovery. Maybe others were aware of it. I had never looked in detail at the bottle before. Even to use the description of 'cordial' is generous. Its ingredients are listed as: Water, Sugar, Flavourings, Citric Acid, Colour (Caramel), Preservative (E223).

I imagine that Trading Standards would not be prepared to take it up, even though the use of 'Sacramental' might be misleading. It may be acceptable to some other denominations.

In my view, its use should be strongly discouraged in Methodism, even apart from its far from attractive taste.

One local church where I am sent by my Superintendent to preside quite frequently has only a small congregation and they were finding that its preservative was not too effective. They have got over the problem by using supermarket grape juice - where the main or only component is grape juice. As it is drinkable, the stewards who provide it finish it off at home rather than trying to keep it.

I raise this matter because I have been using the muck for years and it is the first time I have looked in detail at the bottle.

Am I alone in being appalled? I don't find any reference in the New Testament, in Christian tradition through the centuries or in Methodist tradition or current discipline to suggest that an artificial, fruitless concoction is the appropriate substitute for wine in the Eucharist. Heaven forbid that we go back to Ribena, but while that is not grape, at least it is a fruit!

Alex Conn

News from Nepal

From Allan and Andrea Smith in Butwal, Nepal.

[See also: Overseas News]

January 2009.

Many of the earlier problems that were being experienced have disappeared, supplies of petrol and diesel fuel is readily available, bottled gas, which many people use for cooking, is also readily available, and prices have dropped from their peak. The biggest problem currently is probably the lack of electric power, which is having a major impact on both home life and the entire country.

Electric supply

At present we have electric power for 8 hours each day, on a regular schedule, in 4 hour blocks, of which one is generally during the night. The shortage is caused partly by the low water levels in the rivers during the winter dry season, causing shortage of hydroelectric power, and partly by the failure to build new

power stations. Currently the generating capacity for the whole country of about 28 million people is effectively about 260MW, while the peak demand is estimated to exceed 800MW, so demand exceeds supply by more than three times.

A comparison with the UK looks something like this:

	General Capacity	Peak Demand
For each Nepali resident	8 watts	28 watts
For each UK resident	1200 watts	1050watts

The biggest challenges are for industry, and training establishments like the Technical Institute, to try and remain cost competitive in this environment. Using diesel generating sets for local power is pretty general, but costs about four times the cost of electricity from hydro power. So work hours have to be highly flexible, to make the best use of the available mains power supply. There is no doubt that the electric supply situation, combined with the general world economic problems, is having a severe impact on the employment prospects here.

For ourselves at home the power supply problems are a minor inconvenience; we have an effective battery back up system which gives us plenty of lighting, we just have to programme other major electric usage around the available supply.

We keep our life style as simple as possible, and the limited availability of electricity encourages us to maintain this.

Butwal Technical Institute

The shortage of electric supply has been giving us big problems at the Institute in organising the various practical training sessions. In a typical week we have 80 students at the Institute doing short courses (12 week to 24 week duration), last week we

then had an additional 62 fourth year apprenticeship students taking their final practical skill test (a 14 hour test).

All require, to different degrees, electric power; to make best use of the available mains electrical supply, and to avoid overloading our own generator requires careful scheduling, working seven days a week and starting by 6am in the morning. However, the team of instructors and workshop staff have been working very well, with all programmes keeping close to schedule. The practical skill test was successful, the students enjoyed the challenge, and the results seem very good, especially for the welding students, where the standard is once again higher than any previous year.

We are especially pleased with this year group, they are the first group to use the new curriculum. I was concerned that the new material may have been too much, and the theory exams too difficult, but they all seem to have handled it very well. We have seen most of these students mature from 16 year old teenagers to 21 year old responsible adults, and this has been very satisfying.

Iona is not a hiding place

He escaped to an island over the sea
and there, not distracted by the common things
would gaze out on the turquoise ocean
and fear the silence of the gulls.
For in that peace
came the demons
of deep repressed memories
flooding in to fill the empty silence
under the clear blue sky.

No chance of retail therapy

no chance of cinema or theatre only
one inn
and in that full bar
those he'd see the morning after. No
refuge for a troubled soul.
No refuge for a troubled heart.
Iona magnifies spiritual experiences
and the down side of that gift is that
if you are not comfortable
with your brokenness
then the sharpened focus
will magnify the pain.

@2007 John Butterfield

Memories of Sandaru Methodist Clinic in Sierra Leone

By Mary Groves (Rowe)

Sandaru Penguia is a chiefdom town in the north east of Sierra Leone near the Guinea border. Apart from the forested ridge most of the country is about 1000 feet above sea level intersected with deep, narrow valleys.

Access is difficult. There are only two motor roads, with a few spurs to smaller villages, and they do not join up; so there is no through route.

Most of the people in this part of the country were pagans, animists whose main religion was praying to the spirits of the dead. From a Christian point of view the whole area was unevangelised until the late 1950's, when it was no longer respectable to be a pagan, so people were willing to be converted to Islam or Christianity.

The people's idea of medicine was to hang chains around their necks, or smear green concoctions made from various plants from the bush all over themselves.

During the 1950's the remote area of Penguia Chiefdom was visited by the minister from Bunumbu, a long and arduous journey by road to Manowa and then on foot to Sandaru, a distance of about twenty miles. This was hard for the minister but even harder for the farmers who had to carry their cocoa and coffee crops all that way to sell them. I was told that on one or more of these journeys the farmers heard the gospel being preached. They were

so inspired by what they heard that the request came from them, 'Please could you send someone to our chieftom to tell our people the good news of Jesus Christ?'

My late husband, the Rev'd Sidney Groves, who spoke Mende fluently, was asked if he would be willing to commence this pioneering work and we agreed. By this time a yet basic road had been prepared, mostly by manual labour, connecting Manowa and Sandaru. In December 1958 we made our first journey together up that road. I remember it vividly

because it was whilst we were travelling that I told Sidney that I thought I was pregnant with our first child.

The road is mountainous so that the only vehicles which could reach Sandaru were Land-Rovers and lorries. Half way up is the 'big red hill', which no one who has visited Sandaru will ever forget. It is a slope of mud with a gradient of about one in three. With the Land-Rover one could use low ratio, which was fine in dry weather but impossible when it was raining. When the rain had stopped you waited for half an hour and then tried again. There was a bend in the road where you might get stuck. If I did I would blow my horn, and the men from Musalo half a mile away would come and push me up.

In 1959 we came to the UK on leave. I did the Diploma of Tropical Disease and Hygiene at Liverpool University while Sidney completed his London External Bachelor of Divinity and our daughter, Alison, was born.

When we returned Sidney travelled to Sandaru regularly, preaching and teaching and overseeing the erection of our simple wooden bungalow which was brought in sections from Kenema Forest Industries. I lived most of that time at Bunumbu Union College. In April 1961 our second baby, Peter, was born at Segbwema Hospital. I visited Sandaru a few times with the

children. I well remember one journey when the Land-Rover was stopped by a man who wanted to see the children and patted them on their heads. Three days later we got a message that the same man had developed smallpox! Fortunately I had vaccine with me and Peter was quickly vaccinated as were a number of other people. In the middle of the night I remembered that I had not updated Sidney's vaccination - so I woke him up to do it there and then.

In July the bungalow was ready and we moved in. It was such a novelty for the local people, that we found it difficult to wash or go to the toilet without an audience. It soon became clear to the people that I could help them when they became ill. They had not realised that this would be an additional benefit to the mission. As the weeks passed men, women and children were waiting under a nearby tree even when I woke in the morning. Some were very ill, carried on a rough type of stretcher, a lot of babies and children on their mothers' backs. They came with a variety of illnesses: measles, TB, malaria, dysentery and tetanus being the most common. Some babies were even born in our spare bedroom.

In December 1961 we came on leave to the UK. On our return it was clear that a simple building was required for the medical work. Under Sidney's guidance Moray the carpenter built a basic three-roomed clinic within earshot of the house. The children played happily with the gardener and the houseboy, Sammy and Tamba keeping an eye on them, and were quite used to coming to see what I was doing in the clinic. I worried about them being exposed to so much illness but apart from three dreadful days when Sidney was away and Alison desperately ill with pneumonia, they remained very well.

One particular group of patients caused considerable distress. These were the new-born babies with tetanus, resulting from the cord being cut with a dirty instrument. Try as I might with tube feeding and sedation nearly all these babies died. The turning

point came when the Paramount Chief's wife brought her desperately sick new-born baby to us, too ill for me to be able to help. I went to see the Paramount chief accompanied by Sidney of course. Owives were seen as their husband's possession in that society. I explained that if I had delivered the baby this would not have happened. He called a meeting of all the senior women in the chieftdom and said that all pregnant women should come to me to be delivered, and went on to say that if they didn't they would be feed! Thus began a very busy year when there were as many babies born at Sandaru as in the mission hospital at Segbwema. One of the village women, Feimatta, went to Segbwema to train as a birth assistant and Sara King, one of the hospital nurses who had some midwifery experience, was seconded to come and help. One of the most memorable times was Christmas Day 1963. Sidney's uncle, Alderman John Nixon, aged ninety, and his wife had come to spend Christmas with us. We had planned a service in the little church to be followed by a feast. (This church has now been rebuilt by the generous donations of Harpenden Methodist Church). Just as we were due to set out a very large woman walked up the hill in labour.

When I examined her, I found she was about to have twins. I sent the others on and stayed behind. Things were made more difficult because the woman spoke only Kono and I spoke only Mende, but sign language can work wonders. In the afternoon the twins were successfully delivered. I had found it a tiring couple of hours but she simply put the babies in a bowl on her head and walked off back down the hill.

One of the first seriously malnourished babies I came across was Magayai Lucy Lahai. Her mother had been too ill to breast-feed her. At six months, when I first saw her; she weighed between eight and nine pounds and was just skin and bone. I fed her three times a day and she thrived. It was an amazing experience when Sidney and I visited in 1980 to meet Lucy very healthy and by then a mother herself.

Another memorable day was when one of the women had a retained placenta. As I have said, there was little privacy and women friends and relatives were watching through the windows as I gave her an injection to put her to sleep. All the watchers were convinced she had died. I scrubbed up as best I could, removed the placenta and she woke up. The Ah! Ah!' of the watching women was one of amazement and disbelief.

In many ways it was a very lonely and hard life, but satisfying. Sidney and I left Sandaru early in 1964.

Editor Wanted!

I love the job of editor of the Spectrum magazine and the FK Bulletin before it. However, I have now been doing this for about 10 years and I believe that it is time for me to move on.

Are you a creative thinking person who can become the next editor? The magazine as you see it doesn't need that much editing - perhaps the most difficult part for the editor is getting quality articles to fill the pages for the three issues a year - and telling some contributors that their material is unsuitable!

Spectrum is a very broad based organisation and the magazine carries a wide variety of viewpoints. Some computer literacy is needed but my colleague and friend Rob Anning formats the material and does all the liaison with the printer. The editor's job is just that - editing - which involves getting material (sometimes writing it yourself), knocking it into shape, and sorting it into a balanced running order for the next edition.

Other tasks involve making sure that the study paper is ready to go to print with the summer edition of the Engage magazine. The editor plays a full part in the co-ordinating group winter meeting in

January in Derbyshire. I have also helped organise the biannual essay competition.

If you like the sound of this job you can contact me for an informal conversation about what is involved (see back page for telephone number). If you would like to be considered for the post please contact Derek or Debbie, the Spectrum co-chairs. The Spectrum AGM in May during the annual conference will make the appointment.

John Butterfield

'Fay Back'?

'Fay back' is the Haitian word 'to reverse' or literally 'to make backwards'.

We are not designed to walk backwards! It is possible but difficult and can be disastrous! Do you remember as a child the sports days with the three legged race and the egg and spoon race - and the running backward race! It was hilarious but when we apply the principle to life it becomes a disaster. We have eyes that look forward, legs that only work well in the forward direction; we are just not designed to move backwards.

Nor are we designed to stand still; if you are struggling with back pain, often you can walk but cannot stand still for any length of time. To stand still is to ask for back pain, for varicose veins, or for dizziness. To stand still makes us a good target for predators. It is dangerous to stand still, especially in the middle of the road!

We are designed to move forward in a world that is constantly moving forward, winter never follows spring (except maybe after a major asteroid strike!) nothing in nature stands still, nothing moves backward, species become extinct despite our best efforts

to prevent it happening, they never come back. New species are created totally unknown to us even if they are only viruses, Always forward.

Even in our society we are moving forward. Inflation is the norm and a real fear is the fear of deflation and what that would do to society. Every new car is 'better' than the one that was two years ago and who would I want to go back to no central heating and a black and white television set! We may look back to the 'good old days' but we would not like to be there - so many of us would be dead if we were.

All of this is true for our faith journey and our worship life, There are those who look back with nostalgia to how it was and want it back, there are those who want it to stand still, 'Let's stay as we are,' but forward motion is what we are designed for in our faith journey too.

In Spectrum we are reaching out to new things and new thinking in our faith journey. The reports from our groups are so encouraging; we are actually getting excited about what there is to learn 'out there'!

This is the 'spring' of our future; our Church is not designed to look back or to stand still any more than we are, indeed to do so would be disastrous. I believe the Holy Spirit will move us forward as we are willing to set our face to the future.

Fay back? No! 'an avan' (go forward)

Derek and Debbie

Book Reviews

The Shack

by William Paul Young

Publisher: Windblown Media

ISBN 978-0-340-97949-5, £7.99

When I was lent a copy of this novel I hadn't heard of it even though it is a New York Times number one best seller with over one million copies in print. I don't usually like so called Christian fiction as it can be trite and patronising. And I especially dislike books that manipulate your emotions with tragic sob stories but I enjoyed this book. It is an attempt at theodicy, that is, justifying the ways of God in the face of suffering and evil in the world.

It is fiction but on a deeper level it contains theology and allegory. Despite the book's popularity among Christians, there is ongoing controversy. Eugene Peterson, Professor Emeritus of Spiritual Theology at Regent College in Vancouver says it 'has the potential to do for our generation what John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim Progress* did for his,' yet Dr Albert Mohler, President of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary says, 'This book includes undiluted heresy.' My view is that if you are not too bothered about the gender of anthropomorphic projections of the godhead then it is pretty orthodox!

Young himself writes: 'As you read the story, we pray that God will touch your heart and open up places where you might be stuck, and help you see the way he loves you in richer and deeper tones and colours and sounds. We believe that this book is a gift to you. As words on a page, it has no power to do anything, but as you read don't be surprised when something happens inside that you were not expecting. That is so like Jesus.'

If that is the purpose of the book then it worked for me. It was like letting a breath of fresh air into my theological and spiritual

understanding of theodicy and also, surprisingly, into my understanding of the mystery of the trinity. Perhaps I hadn't tried to think deeply about the internal relationships of the trinity before but here is a very clear picture in human terms. A trinity of three human characters each with a unique identity, complementing each other perfectly and living together in a relationship of pure love and trust. Each in their own way attractive and warm.

An important part of the book's value lies in something I suppose many Christians must have wanted: to have a face to face encounter with God. Not just a dream, or a vision, or a meditative communion with God, but an actual, in the flesh meeting, just as the early disciples of Jesus had enjoyed. Young seeks to paint a picture of what such an encounter might look like in the contemporary cultural setting of rural/suburban/ smalltown USA - specifically in a backwoods shack. This is the value of a fictional approach - to make more real certain spiritual realities which we already know through works of non-fiction.

As fiction the story line is good enough to hold your interest! For a first novel it is very good. My only criticism is that some of the explanatory discourses are rather long and sermon like but it isn't meant to be a theological text. It is a piece of art which has the power to move and also give insights. I warmly recommend it.

Tony Buglass

A Sociological History of Christian Worship

by Martin D. Stringer.
CUP 2005 pb £16.99
ISBN 0-521-52559-4

Martin Stringer is an anthropologist, sociologist and theologian, and in this book he presents us with dimensions of worship hitherto unrealised by most of us, not least those who are traditional liturgists. He helps us to see that the shape of the liturgy very much has to do with

the whole of the context in which the Church finds itself. He borrows the concept of 'discourse' from Michael Foucault and develops it in relation to worship. By 'discourse' I understand it to mean the sum total of social, political, cultural and other influences which impinge upon the life of the Church and which, in particular, help to shape the pattern of its worship.

The author divides the history of the Church into three hundred year periods, not for the sake of neatness, but because each period has its own main 'discourse', which, having its own special characteristic, determines the form of the liturgy. For instance, when the Emperor Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire, this led to more formal rituals, the construction of basilicas as sacred places and public processions as elements in the liturgy of the Church. Each period since that time, similarly, has its own 'discourse' to which the church responded in creating its liturgies.

The book reminds us that in every age the Church finds itself relating to the complex nature of the situation in which it finds itself, whether in local, national or worldwide communities. Liturgy is not, therefore, merely an exercise in discovering the form of historic texts, reproducing them and using them in contemporary settings. Rather is a living liturgy responsive to the whole ambience in which the Church itself exists.

Although Methodism is only mentioned in one single paragraph on page 204, this is nevertheless a stimulating and inspiring book which anyone wishing to understand the evolution of Christian worship or to create relevant liturgies for our time simply cannot ignore. The last chapter contains significant pointers for the development of the present and future liturgies of the Churches. This book represents an exciting approach to liturgy which saves it from being regarded as an end in itself, which, to be honest, is a trap that we easily fall into!

Richard Firth

The Flood,
David Milne,
Canongate, 2004
ISBN 184195507

This is a novel which successfully recreates the bronze age era of Noah and the ark. Milne describes both the corruption of the world and the dynamics of the relationships in the family as six hundred year old Noah makes his nearest and dearest obey the instructions that he has received from Yahweh.

Sticking closely to the biblical text this fictional account displays the single-mindedness of the patriarch as he leads his family on this seemingly impossible adventure.

The family dialogues recreate the tensions of a group of people and animals confined together for months. Noah's sons and their wives are given varying personalities and add new dimensions to the story. There is also humour and theological reflection as each tries to make sense of what God is doing in the story that they are living through.

A good holiday read which will also provoke some deeper thought.

I've Been Thinking, Lord
(Conversations and Prayers)
Eddie Askew
The Leprosy Mission, 2008, £4.95
ISBN 978-0-902731-70-7

This compilation of prayers and paintings, taken from previous books written by Eddie Askew, was put together by his daughters in memory of their father, who died in 2007 at the age of 80.

Eddie had devoted much of his life to the work of the Leprosy Mission and the proceeds of his books went to support their work. This book is no different.

It is a lovely hardback book which gives a flavour of Eddie's previous work. It will slip easily into a pocket, or make a lovely gift.

Overseas News

**News from
Allan and Andrea Smith serving in Nepal.**

November 2008

Butwal Technical Institute

We were able to welcome the Minister of Industry to the Institute at the end of September, (we report to the Ministry of Industry through the Department of Cottage and Small Industries) in recognition of the Institute's role in training people from the same target area as the Department of Cottage and Small Industries. The Minister (a woman) spoke very favourably about the work of the Institute which has certainly improved morale and motivation. We were also able to have some useful discussions with the senior civil servants that accompanied her, which was also encouraging. Following that visit the Ministry announced the appointment of a new director for the Institute, who has previous experience working at the Institute, and has general support from the local community and Institute staff.

We are now very busy, with a new first year in full time training, and in developing a future vision and detailed development plan. The intention is to maintain the existing programmes of apprenticeship training, along with expansion into a range of compatible short (three and six month) courses. This would more than double the number of students trained each year, from the

current 250 to more than 600. There is of course a need for financial resources, from a western perspective the amount seems quite modest, but difficult to arrange in Nepal.

First year training is always good to see. We take young people with no previous experience of engineering, or working in a regulated environment. In fifteen weeks we have to give them a culture of workplace discipline, safety and the basic skills to enable them to be useful employees to their industrial sponsors. They then carry on with their Institute studies on a part time basis for the rest of the apprenticeship. In two years the development in skills, confidence and capability is remarkable.

Life in Butwal

Life in the Butwal community continues to fill any spare time that we may have. The land dispute that our friend Lila had been engaged in has now been resolved, and to most people's surprise it seems that both sides are happy with the result. The process, however, was extremely difficult, with attempts at intimidation and threats of violence along the way. There is very little 'normal' legal process remaining in Nepal, and the authority of the District Officer system was seriously undermined during the insurrection. So everyone tries to achieve their objectives by any means that they feel like using. In this case using the local community committee as arbitrators, and refusing to be moved by the threats, resulted in a satisfactory outcome.

In our July newsletter we talked about the rice planting season in the countryside around Butwal, and we described our visit to a farming community. Now the rice harvest is almost complete, with most communities at least around here reporting a better than average crop. We went back to the village, to eat with our friends there, and to walk in the fields. There were stacks of rice straw everywhere, a lot of rice already had the rice threshed out. Most work is done by hand, cutting with a small sickle, carrying on the

back, although sometimes an ox cart is used, threshing using flails, beating bundles on the floor, or driving the oxen round and round over the rice straw. There are many Christians amongst the small farmers here, and plenty of interest amongst others in the Christian faith.

Our Butwal congregation at Jaitun Church continues to thrive. The Sunday school has not less than 40 children, and the adult congregation at the main service is around 60 on a normal week. The church community has some activity every day, in church, house group or prayer group. The football team are very active, we have a tournament with the other church teams here in Butwal before Christmas, and they have every expectation of being close to the top.

A new initiative has been to try and organise the social/medical support visiting that the church does into a more formal framework, to better integrate with the other pastoral visiting. In fact, the informal network operates quite well, but if someone leaves that may cease, so we are trying some simple procedures and record keeping.

The hope to put up a new church building continues to remain a hope at present, in a similar manner to Lila's land problems the church land has also some difficult issues to be resolved before money can be committed to new building work.

And December 2008.

The Christmas season here in Butwal starts with carol singing, about ten days or so before Christmas Day. We certainly avoid any of the commercial pressures that are the norm in England, and many other countries. Here there is no tradition of giving presents, having expensive parties and eating excessively large meals.

But the carol singing is generally great fun for everyone. The group of carol singers is more like a crowd, adults and children, often in excess of 100 people, complete with guitars, keyboard and drums. Singing is generally outside the house of a Christian family, and attracts all the neighbours to join in, at least to listen. Nepali carols are sung first, with great enthusiasm, followed by a bible reading from the Christmas story, a short address (each adult member of the congregation takes turns), finishing with prayers for the surrounding community. Then everything is packed up and is moved on to the next site.

Most evenings finish with a basic Nepali meal at the last house for everyone. This year our programme includes ments (best described as shanty towns), Monday at a daughter church about one hour's drive away in a village to the west, and three more nights elsewhere around the town (including our house). We all have great fun, and it is a splendid witness to our neighbours.

Christmas Day will be spent with our congregation in church, for the first time it will be a national holiday (last year the children had school exams on Christmas Day!). We will start the day with food preparation, cutting up vegetables etc, for lunch, then our main service, followed by lunch, and then probably an afternoon of children's (and adult's) entertainment.

News from Chris Esdaile and Alison Facey in Chile

December 2008.

Both Chris and Alison have continued this year their work with women suffering domestic abuse, though with a slightly smaller team in the centre, and have been working hard (though without much success) to obtain significant funds to further develop this work. We have, however, managed to get funding from the Methodist Church in the US to provide additional office space (created from an unused classroom in the neighbouring school).

This is a great advance! As part of the range of help we can provide to the centre users, Healing Touch is now offered - a complimentary health therapy which responds to the needs of the person as a whole. The additional space will be excellent for this, and is something that we have been dreaming of all the time we have been here!

In September, CAF* organised training in techniques of relaxation and massage for a group of around 30 professional women who work in a range of pressurised jobs in Alto Hospicio, including domestic abuse centres, the women's refuge, the legal aid centre, the Methodist schools, and other advice centres. This was held over two days, and was led by two women from Capacitar Chile in Santiago. (* Centra de Atencion Familiar).

130 years of Methodism in Chile

Around 500 people attended the celebration of this anniversary, held in the main square in Iquique.

Church AGM

Alison's report on her work this year was warmly received by the people of her church at their recent AGM. The District Superintendent particularly congratulated her on the church's prison ministry which she initiated earlier this year, especially given that this is not a common ministry within the Chilean Methodist Church.

March 2009

Out of the blue in January, Chris received an invitation from the Chilean Government's Women's Ministry (SERNAM) offering our centre the opportunity to oversee the operation of a new Women's Centre in Alto Hospicio, part of their existing network of centres nationwide.

Everything has happened very quickly since then, and we are expecting that by mid-March the new Centra de la Mujer, Alto Hospicio, will have opened its doors. It is a very exciting development which will hopefully ensure the continuity and security of our work with women for many years to come. The new centre will have a professional staff paid by

SERNAM - a Social Worker who will coordinate the centre, a Psychologist, a Lawyer, and three Project/Caseworkers. Our existing secretary will continue as the secretary for the new centre, funded by the Methodist Church in the UK initially by way of a Special Grant, and our existing Social Worker will continue her part-time work with us (funded by the Anglo-Chilean Society, based in the UK).

The local Methodist church here (where Alison has been Minister) will be providing office space for the new centre - initially this will be a bit of a squeeze notwithstanding some additional office-space recently created thanks to a grant from UMCOR (a part of the US Methodist Church).

Chris will continue as Director of the old Centra de Atencion Familiarr - officially the organisation that will manage the new centre - until we return to the UK in July, principally to oversee the relations between the new centre and the various church structures, and to supervise the financial reporting to SERNAM.

The hope is that he will effectively have worked himself out of a job by the time we return. Alison will continue to provide spiritual support to the users of the new centre, and it is hoped that a way can be found to continue this support after her departure.

SPECTRUM as a movement is organized through a Co-ordinating Group. The members of the group are elected annually at the AGM, which is held during the SPECTRUM annual conference in May.

At the AGM held in May 2008, the following officers were elected.

Joint Co-ordinators:

Rev Debbie Godefroy, 38 Northumbria Drive Bristol, BS29 4HP
Tel: 01179621200 E-mail: rev.deb@blueyonder.co.uk

Rev Derek Poole, Hillview, Derrynagree West Drimoleague, County Cork, Ireland Tel:
003532831929, E-mail: revdpoole@eircon.net

Convenor and General Secretary:

Rev Richard Firth, 55 Beach Road Tynemouth, North Shields Tyne and Wear, NE30 2TX Tel:
01912583268, E-mail: richard@firthfolk.fsnet.co.uk

Treasurer:

Mr George Linaker, "Willow Bank", Knucklas, Knighton Powys, LD7 1 PW, Tel: 01547529173

Membership Secretary:

Rev Rosemary Dale, 5 Water Lane Wirksworth, Matlock Derbyshire, DE4 4DZ Tel:
01629824169, E-mail: revrdale@aol.com

Conference Organiser:

Mrs Susan Towndrow 34 Errington Road, Walton, Chesterfield, S40 3EP Tel: 01246279737

Pastoral/Overseas Secretary:

Rev Roy Newell, 10 Fairway Drive Burnham-on-Crouch, CMO 8PN Tel: 01621782823 E-mail:
royjo@rdjnewell.wanadoo.co.uk

Groups Secretary:

Rev Ruth Orton 257 Cavendish Road, Carlton, Nottingham, NG4 3SA Tel: 01159874942

Engage and Explore Editor:

Rev John A. Butterfield, Craigmill House, Alloa Road, Craigmill, Stirling, FK9 5PP Tel:
01786474601, E-mail: methodist@craigmill.plus.com

Other members of the group are:

World Church Invitations:

Rev Elisabeth Davles-Johns

Ordinands/Publicity/E-group Secretary: Rev Alex Conn **Website master:** Mr Ian Bosman,
ianbosman@googlemail.com

Irish Representative: Rev Derek Poole

Print Production: Rev Rob Anning

Additional Members: Rev Gerry Wilson. Rev Sue Lambert, Mrs Jo Newell, Mrs Hilary Wilson.

If you have any questions, suggestions or contributions to make to SPECTRUM, then it would be appreciated if you will direct your message to the appropriate officer. Any articles for the Engage magazine are welcome and should be sent, preferably by e-mail to The Editor.