



# ACT TOGETHER

Ashram Community Trust

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# Letter from Hebron - Six Difficult Months

The last 6 months have been particularly traumatic both for Palestinians and Israelis. However we have very different understandings of what we are living through. As ever in this troubled land there are competing narratives. Israelis believe they are experiencing a “wave of terror”. They are understandably fearful of standing at a bus stop in case someone runs at them in a car or of walking down the street in case someone runs at them with a knife. Some Israeli settlers have even been attacked in their own homes so nowhere feels safe. Palestinians on the other hand are living through a wave of “martyrs”; i.e. Palestinians unnecessarily killed by the Israeli occupation. Over 200 Palestinians and 30 Israelis have been killed since October 1<sup>st</sup> 2015. Some have dubbed this ongoing unrest as the “knife intafada”. However it is not really a popular uprising (intafada). There is no organisation and no real support from the general population. These are a wave of lone wolf attacks each one a copy cat of the one before with no planning but just grabbing the nearest weapon to hand; a knife from the kitchen or a vehicle. They are fuelled by despair. Very often youngsters are seeking revenge for a family member or friend killed by Israeli occupation forces.

I believe that the present wave of unrest was triggered by Hadil Hashlamoun's killing close to my house in Tel Rumeida, Hebron. This was followed soon after by the arson attack by extremist Israeli settlers on the Dawabshe family in Duma which killed a baby and his parents and left a young boy orphaned and seriously injured. Hadil died in hospital from gunshot wounds and loss of blood but before she was dead already we were hearing conflicting reports as to what actually happened at our checkpoint. Initial reports said there was no knife. The Israeli army quickly countered with a claim that she attacked soldiers with a knife. Then we heard that it was an argument about her Islamic dress; that she refused to take off her nikab and show her face. Later we were told that she never said a word the whole time. Other people said that she was visiting her friend, the doctor's daughter, in Tel Rumeida and certainly her friend was distraught when she was called from her house and saw Hadil lying in a pool of blood at the checkpoint.

I knew 2 of the main witnesses and an Israeli peace activist I know had contacts with the soldiers so we

decided to do our own investigation and try to arrive at the truth of what actually happened. It was a complicated process and in the end we could not agree on every detail. Two crucial facts came clear early on and were confirmed by the military's own investigation. Hadil did not pose a threat to life when she was killed and she was refused immediate Palestinian medical assistance and left to bleed for at least 40 minutes before being treated by an Israeli ambulance. The soldier who killed her was not punished in any way and stayed on duty at the same checkpoint. I believe there was a knife but she dropped it and did not threaten anyone with it. Her family still denies the knife and still claims she was just visiting her friend. What her motives were we will probably never know. Did she intend harm to the soldiers but lacked the courage to take action? Did she plan to commit suicide and become a martyr? Did she expect to be arrested and not killed?



*Shahuda Street checkpoint- the former main shopping street*

This lack of clarity and competing narratives has been a feature of almost every one of the subsequent attacks. The Israeli army claims that every one of them posed a threat to life. Palestinian eye witnesses often say there was no knife present or that they saw soldiers plant a knife after the shooting. There has not been conclusive proof of any of these claims. The army is very quick to remove evidence and bodies very quickly after each shooting. They have been running a long campaign to remove Palestinian CCTV cameras and to prevent international observers from being in the areas close to the checkpoints. Israeli police evicted international observers from their apartment overlooking a checkpoint where several young men have been killed. In no case do Israeli police secure the crime site and open investigations. Israeli settlers wander freely around the bodies on the ground and there are lots of opportunities for soldiers and settlers to tamper with evidence.

So even if there ever are objective international investigations into any of these killings it is unlikely that they could come to conclusive results. In almost all cases there is no immediate medical attention for the Palestinians and often they have to wait a very long time. Hadil's death was very upsetting and frightening for all the residents of Tel Rumeida especially women. We all have to walk over Hadil's bloodstain and past the bullet holes in order to get out the checkpoint into town.

Women were very afraid that any misunderstanding at the checkpoint could result in their death. Later when it came clear that the majority of Palestinians getting killed are young men then the young men became afraid to walk through Tel Rumeida on their own. They either kept away from the soldiers or found someone to accompany them. For me I was picking olives in the ancient olive groves in Tel Rumeida for 6 weeks. It was a bizarre experience in the eye of the storm. For the first time ever we had almost no harassment from settlers or soldiers. In fact we had soldiers and police on constant duty in the olive groves to protect us, wishing us "shalom" and chatting in a friendly way with the Palestinian families. Yet from every side we could hear the sound of tear gas and sound grenades as Palestinian youth clashed with Israeli soldiers at all the checkpoints around us. Every so often we would hear a burst of gunfire and we would stop and hope that no one had been killed. One time we heard the shooting from Qurtoba School and we got a message that a young man had been killed there so we stopped picking and went home. Too close.

That was the week in which at least one person was killed every day in Tel Rumeida or nearby at the Abraham Mosque. Many residents got so frightened that they left. This made things even more scary for those of us who stayed. We were terrified that extremist Israeli settlers would move into the empty houses. Luckily most residents came back the next day when the Israeli army announced that they would register all those who live in the area. The army declared the centre of Tel Rumeida to be a closed military zone. Only those who had been given a number on the army's list would be allowed through the checkpoints. Arwa's family live just outside the zone so we were not allowed to pass through and go into town for 2 months. We had to make a long detour or catch a taxi. Sometimes it was possible to get into town through the neighbours gardens and over the walls but this was not an easy option. Nobody in Tel Rumeida could have visitors from outside. These draconian measures were a nightmare for the residents but they did have the effect of stopping any knife attacks in the area since no one could get there. No resident of Tel Rumeida has ever attacked anyone. Attacks and killings still continued around the Abraham Mosque. In many cases people who were killed there were not posing a threat to anyone at the time and in some cases may not have been armed at all.

Two weeks ago I heard 2 bursts of gunfire from my house. At the time I did not know what it was but within an hour Arwa, who was in England at the time, sent me a photo taken by one of our neighbours of 2 young men shot dead at the checkpoint close to our house. Shortly after B'tselem released a video taken by a friend of mine, Emad Abu Shamsiya which showed that al Sharif had been shot and killed 10 minutes after he had been wounded and was no longer a threat to anyone. The

video caused quite a media storm in Israel and on the social networks. Israelis seemed to be evenly divided as to whether the soldier was a hero or a murderer. In the end he has been charged with manslaughter but merely confined to barracks and not imprisoned. From the debate it seems that Israel is drifting steadily rightwards and those who would support democracy and the rule of law are becoming increasingly marginalised.

The despair of Palestinians is driven by the lack of any peace process so that there is no hope that things will improve soon. Added to this is the increasing number of house demolitions in Israel and in the West Bank, the continuing confiscation of more Palestinian land and the ever expanding settlements across the West Bank. Recently Marwan Barghouti has announced from prison a plan to lead a non violent uprising. Apparently he has written support from leaders of Hamas and Islamic Jihad so it is an exciting breakthrough. He proposes to end the Oslo agreements and the security co-ordination and to make the West bank ungovernable through non violent direct actions. He would also rescind Palestinian recognition of Israel unless Israel also recognises the State of Palestine. It is a risky proposal but it does offer a way forward and a way of uniting all Palestinians in a common cause. Let us hope that some good will come from it.

I am aware that this is not a balanced report. I can only give one narrative and tell what I have experienced from a Palestinian perspective. I am aware from Facebook that Israelis have a very different perspective and are experiencing a lot of fear at the moment and for many there is a frustration with their own leadership. Please continue to hold Palestinians and Israelis in your prayers as we face an uncertain future. May God bring peace and bring it soon !

*Dave Havard*



# Visit to Palestine. October 2015

Never again will I be able to sing “O Little town of Bethlehem” without seeing the town as I saw it in October last year. No more cosy manger scenes, rustic shepherds and exotic men from the East. Instead, a poor, rather scruffy Palestinian town, bordered by an ugly 8 metre high concrete wall and overlooked by a shiny bright settlement on the hill above it. Bethlehem lies within the West Bank, a territory



which has been under military occupation since 1967, and many of its residents have not been allowed to travel beyond the West Bank since then.

In contrast to this negative view, I have to say that most of the local Palestinians I met, were impressive in their friendliness and openness and stoicism. Our guide, Wisam, told us of a time when he was a teenager and the people in his village just outside Bethlehem, decided that rather than buy expensive milk from Israel, they would keep their own cows. 18 cows were hidden in garages and outhouses, but the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) soon became aware of this and instigated a hunt, declaring the cows to be a ‘security risk’. The young Wisam enjoyed being part of a plot to move the cows around nightly to avoid detection, but eventually, being deemed a security risk, the cows were arrested and removed. A darkly humorous film, part animation, part acted, was made of this event, called ‘the Wanted 18’, which I plan to acquire!

As part of our 10 day stay, our group of 10 women visited many Human Rights projects in the West Bank and in Israel. In particular I was impressed by Sharon, a young Jewish woman from ICAHAD, the Israeli Committee against House Demolitions. In a run down area of East Jerusalem, where Palestinians are daily harassed and hassled by their settler neighbours, we sat on some old abandoned settees and chairs in a street, under some fig trees while Sharon told us about her work. She puts her life on the line, almost daily, in her involvement with for ICAHAD by opposing the might of the State of Israel. A real David and Goliath situation. Jeff Helper, the founder of ICAHAD, Jewish himself and living

in Israel, says ‘I’ve nothing against Jews, I love my people and my country. It’s the State of Israel which is wrong – the military occupation, the arrests, torture and indefinite detention without trial of Palestinians as young as 12. This in order to further its aims of the Judaisation of Palestine’. And this was the message we heard everywhere.

One morning, we got up at 4.30am to go to the Gilo checkpoint which is the one through which many Palestinians in the West Bank who work in Jerusalem have to pass twice daily. People were being herded through a construction like a cattle chute to pass through security and are sometimes detained for hours, for no good reason. Amin, a coffee stall holder in the makeshift daily market for provisions, wanted us to hear his story. Some years ago, on the olive farm which had been in his family for generations, the IDF uprooted his olive trees, destroying his livelihood and his family’s inheritance. He told us that after throwing stones at a police car, he was arrested imprisoned and interrogated, being bound hand and feet and allowed one 5 minute visit to the toilet a day. He said to his guard ‘if you have a nice garden with lots of lovely flowers you have grown, nice smell, nice colours, and one day your neighbours come and pick all your flowers and spoil your garden, what do you do?’ When the answer came ‘I kill him!’, Amin said ‘but this is what you do to me!’. He was beaten up again for his trouble. Now he gets up at 2am every morning to make his way to the checkpoint to sell coffee to his fellow Palestinians. I could say much more about this visit, and it’s good that we’re kept up to date with the news on the ground from Dave and Arwa. Enough to say that I returned home with a burning sense of the brutal injustice in that beautiful country. It’s given me a desire to learn more, to keep up to date with events there, join the Palestinian Solidarity Campaign and to pray for the people caught up in this terrible conflict – one which could be the tinder box for global disaster. Bethlehem – the hopes and fears of all the years are met in you at this moment.

*Maggie Jones*



*Bethlehem Checkpoint*

*Picture EAPPI*



## Women of Palestine: Living through trauma, building resilience

It was great to see Arwa again at the end of her March speaking tour arranged by the Northern Women for Palestine (for whom 'North' is a little south of here!) She spoke at our local UNISON AGM, at a meeting with local Asian women, and then at a Palestinian Fairtrade breakfast at a local church.

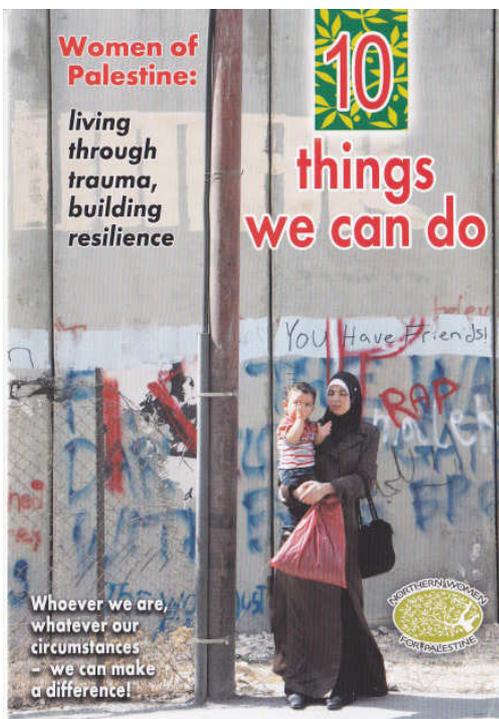
It was hard to hear how much more difficult life has become for them in Hebron but she remains hopeful that things have to get worse before they get better – and is encouraged by the strengthening Boycott, Disinvest

and Sanction movement (BDS)

So I thought I'd better find out how I could do more, and first I read "Farming Injustice: international trade with Israeli agricultural companies and the destruction of Palestinian farming" (a download from the BDS website.) I hadn't thought through how the illegal Israeli settlements are economically viable. And it's international trade with agricultural companies there which makes them possible and is helping them grow.

In 2010 Israel exported \$2.1 billion worth of fruit and vegetables, two thirds of which went to Europe, and a third of these were produced or packaged in the settlements. The occupied Jordan valley is the source of most of the herbs, half the grapes and many of the dates, all produced with stolen water. Israeli surpluses are dumped in Palestine undermining local production, and displaced Palestinians, now workers in settlement businesses (1000 of whom are children as young as 11 yrs old) get paid on average less than a half of the legal minimum wage, and work in highly dangerous and exploitative conditions. So please spread the word – boycotting Israeli fruit and vegetables is one way in which we as consumers can help protest at these illegal settlements.

And there are lots of other things we can do -



1. Explore the story of Palestine- through films, books, websites, news
2. Tell the story of Palestine in your conversations, in the local press, arrange a speaker or a film
3. Show people politics can be creative-cook food from Recipes of Resistance, get crafty making kites or a quilt, explore Palestinian music, drama or film
4. Buy Palestinian products – foods from Zaytoun, crafts from Hadeel
5. Find a project that appeals and support it – scholarship funds, medical aid, the Middle East Children's Alliance
6. Speak truth to power- write to your MPs/MEPs, newspapers, challenge bias at the BBC. Correct the mistaken view that Israel is the victim rather than the aggressor.
7. Support Palestine through your daily shopping- look out for Israeli fruit and veg and talk to your shop keeper and friends about what you are doing.
8. Answer the Palestinian call for Boycott, Disinvestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel - support specific campaigns against G4S (on Facebook), the artists boycott, campaign against the arms trade- Israel is a major tested-in-the-field-weapons exporter

9. Show your true colours - wear badges, scarves, jewellery
10. Visit Palestine – Friends of Sabeel, Experience Travel, Zaytoun tours

More details, addresses, websites on the leaflet above from [northernwomenforpalestine@gmail.com](mailto:northernwomenforpalestine@gmail.com)

*Jenny Medhurst*

## From our medical correspondent...

In the Ashram Community Prayers I describe myself as 'Father, Husband, doctor, researcher, thinker and carer'. I'm aware that I've been a bit silent recently – so I thought that I would share with you what I've been up to.

### Father and Husband

As the children come to secondary school age, so life changes at home. Froom is now working part-time as a 'Forest School Practitioner'. She takes children aged 5-16 out of school for sessions in the forest to do activities that encourage teambuilding, reconnecting with nature, and outdoors play. She loves it and feels she has finally 'found her true vocation'.

The children are growing up rapidly. Emma is now 13 and a wonderful singer and piano player. Many evenings she is either in lessons, practicing or performing at musical events in her school and around the city as part of the Liverpool Philharmonic Youth Chorus, her school choir, and WAC – the Weekend Arts Club. James (11) directs all his effort into sports, especially cricket. He has reawakened my lost passion for cricket and in our time together you will find us practicing leg breaks in the hallway, huddled around the radio listening to the test matches or looking at YouTube videos of the cricket greats. Charlie (9) is still in primary school but is wonderfully creative, always thinking laterally to find solutions to everyday problems. He also loves his drumming and free-running.

### Doctor

I do 2.5 days per week clinical work - doing antenatal clinics, overseeing delivery suite and being on call for emergencies. My specialist areas are the care of women in labour and care of the overweight pregnant women. But I'm maybe known best for my innovations. I have now invented or developed 6 different pieces of kit – one is commercially available (the LifeStart Trolley from Inditherm / Inspiration Healthcare), one has been sold to an innovations company, 3 are still undergoing testing and 3 are patented. Two relate to ways

of helping a newborn to receive expert care immediately at birth without having to cut the umbilical cord (see 'Wait for White' infogram below). One is for richer settings and was part of a £1.8 million pound grant from the NIHR,

### His first feed is through the cord



Let the cord drain  
before clamping it

#waitforwhite



and the other is a low cost version that we are developing in Uganda with a grant from the Sir Halley Stewart Trust.

Potentially the most exciting is a new device to treat postpartum haemorrhage. This is also being funded by the UK government (NIHR), but has to go through all the regulatory agencies to prove safety in mannequin and human tests. A picture is below and a video



explaining it is on YouTube (search under 'PPH Butterfly'). The 'first in human' studies are set for December 2015, and we are applying for funding for formal UK clinical trials. Another of my team is working on a version for low resource settings.

## Researcher

Whilst some of my research relates to innovations, my main interest is the translation of maternity care from wealthy to poorer settings. I speak in conferences around the world about this, and publish articles looking at the best way of doing this. We have just completed an MRC trial in India looking at the best way to start labour off in women with high blood pressure in pregnancy. Most of the previous high quality studies had come from the Global North and were not necessarily applicable to the South. But we have been able to use the side effects of a low cost tablet (misoprostol) to start labour off effectively – and it seems at least as effective as other methods. I run a website on this drug ([www.misoprostol.org](http://www.misoprostol.org)) that seeks to inform people about the most effective doses. We have also been looking at ways of improving newborn care in low resource settings. We are running a study in Mbale, Uganda looking at whether the provision of alcohol hand rub to new mother as part of a birthing kit can reduce neonatal infection rates. This is in rural villages without access to latrines or running water. Around 10% of newborns get badly infected in the first 3 months of life and many of these die. So we have funding from the MRC to run a pilot study – we’re hoping to convert this into a major cluster randomised trial in 2016.

## Thinker

This is a useful tag to speak about my spirituality. We are active members of a congregation called ‘Zone 2’ at the Anglican cathedral in Liverpool. Whilst the setting and some of the theology isn’t particularly ‘me’, the all age café style worship is very much ‘Ashram’ combining interactive intercessions and activities with songs and time together. We all enjoy it and the interactive worship has a way of getting ‘under my skin’ and making me think about Christianity in ways that other forms of worship do not. Emma is particularly enthusiastic and was baptised there on the same weekend as the Ashram weekend in October.

We’ve been campaigning on the refugee crisis and have written letters and supported

refugees locally as part of Refugee Action. Froom and I thought seriously about whether we could take a refugee family or orphan into our house – but we have decided that we simply do not have the capacity for that.

## Carer

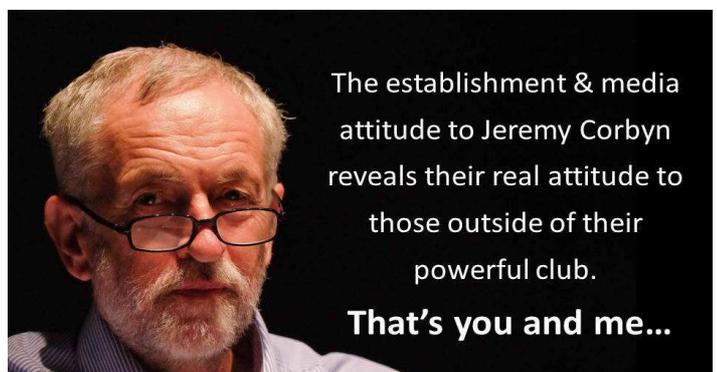
The biggest change to my life over the last few years has been my involvement in ‘Corbynism’. I re-joined the Labour party after a gap of 25 years after the last election and have campaigned for Jeremy Corbyn since then. Most of that is work on social media with the production of ‘infograms’, which can be widely distributed. A couple of examples are below. Like many, I have been hugely frustrated by the media treatment of him, but this has only inspired me to work harder to get the message across. I see him as the most Christian of all political leaders for many years (not only because of his initials) and fully deserving of our support to shake up the system.

*Andrew Weeks*

The UK is suffering from a global economic crisis created by the banks. Who should pay for it?

- A. The bankers who caused it?
- B. Everyone according to their ability?
- C. The poorest through cuts in services and welfare payments?

Austerity is a political choice.



# 200 years and still going

At Bishop Street Methodist Church, Leicester, currently celebrating its 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we had a request from the New Life Covenant Church who use the Church for their service on Sunday afternoons, if they could use the church and all the rooms for their 12th Anniversary Weekend. This would be from a Friday evening, all day and evening on the Saturday, and afternoon and evening on the Sunday.

If we agreed to the request, it would mean that the following 12 groups would be affected:

- Friday evening: Alcoholics Anonymous group  
Narcotics Anonymous group
- Saturday: The café in the foyer  
Superkitchen, run by the café, to offer a 2/3 course meal with food donated by foodbanks.  
Community Cycle workshop – renovating bikes for asylum seekers  
Weightwatchers  
Saturday Lunchtime AA  
Mandarin class  
Polish AA group  
Polish womens' AA group
- Sunday: NA group  
AA group

We obviously had to turn the request down.

These are just a few of the activities that take place on Bishop Street's premises. The centre of the church has fixed pews, but down one side is exhibition space. Recent exhibitions have been: a Christian Aid exhibition on Haiti, 'Time to Change' art exhibition by a mental health group, U3A photographic exhibition, art exhibitions, a national exhibition by the Victorian Society, and '12 years' project exhibition by the Zimbabwe Association.

At the end of the exhibition space is a prayer corner, and next to that the vestry has been turned into a Heritage Room tracing the people and events in the history of Bishop Street.

If you came into the church during the week, you could find down the other side of the church, 'Sew Sociable' offering sewing talks and workshops, 'In Stitches' needlecraft group, portrait drawing classes, and Café Mama breast-feeding support group with breast-feeding councillor sessions.



Co-ordinated by the Arts and Spirituality Worker, other activities in the church have included:

- A banner making workshop
- Exhibition of Church Banners
- Creative Worship evening
- Contemplative Photography evenings

Talks in the Chapel, a monthly activity focus's on a topical subject for an hour from Folk, Song and Dance in the Great War, various aspects of Richard 111, and Christmas music.

All the different activities attract many people onto the premises. The foyer was converted three years ago into a café, run as a social enterprise project to help people establish or re-establish themselves in the workplace. Open during the daytime, it provides a variety of light lunches and refreshments to the public as well as to the groups using the church space.

The church community consists of people from a variety of countries and backgrounds. Many work unsocial hours and find church attendance difficult, some are seeking work or have low incomes, some are unable to work, some are students, a few are asylum seekers, some are families with small children, some are retired.

I fit into all of this by co-ordinating the Monday Drop-in for anyone who wants a very cheap tea or coffee, a chat, a game of cards or just to sit. Many of our regulars have some kind of mental health issue, are unemployed or live on their own. I also pick up 'one off' bits of work that need doing for the church – getting the Annual Report Together, Co-ordinating the Church Christmas meal, initiating a clearing out of years of accumulated 'rubbish' on the premises. Regularly there is usually something to pick up from the monthly Finance and Property meeting, from Sunday monthly stewarding and most importantly to try and help the varied congregation members relate to each other and to help them feel part of the church community.

*Margaret Mackley*

## A Tribute to CHRISTINE BRAMHALL



*L to R: Playing in a park; Child; Teenager; At Ashram Weekend May 2015 just before the diagnosis of cancer; In Sri Lanka with Nirmal; In Sri Lanka with hunter-gather tribal chief and Nirmal*

Chrissy's greeting on her mobile was, "Pixie here, I'm out in the woods playing with Hanuma..." Now, she was the naughty Pixie, and I was the Hanuma, the mischievous monkey warrior/god from the ancient Indian epic *Ramayana*. Indeed, our life together was steeped in benign mischief and laughter. We were like children, something Chrissy never lost. We meditated silently together, read the words of the Buddha and Jesus together, enfolded them in our beings, wrote about them, and tried to practice that from day to day. She had a pronounced capacity to be mindful, concentrate, understand, and cultivate insight. All that, with selfless love! Now, Pixie is no more.

**Childhood** – As Chrissy said, she was born in 1950 in Jessops Hospital, the youngest in a family of four – mum, dad, elder sister and her. Baptised in the Church of England, she lived in the slums on the Moor in Sheffield, then inner city, breathing highly polluted air. The family lived in a very small back to back house, with a shared outside toilet. They had one small communal room, a cellar, upstairs room for her parents and a small loft for her and her sister. No bathroom, running water or heating, apart from a coal fire downstairs. Chrissy's play area was the road in front, the yard at the back, and unbeknown to her parents, the bomb site over the wall – prohibited ground! Given this environment, Chrissy had various illnesses up to the age of five. Sometimes she felt abandoned when she was in hospital, and was unable to understand that her parents would return. Her parents were poor industrial workers, and even sweets were a luxury. But, Chrissy emphasises that there was caring and

sharing in the neighbourhood and family was proximate. There were no physical fences between the houses, and no mental ones between people. That demised when the slums were demolished and family and neighbours were rehoused in various areas in Sheffield.

**Schooling** – Chrissy remembered nursery days, particularly the malt and cod-liver oil. Then she went to St Ives, a church school. She enjoyed school and focussed on playing more than studying. Once, having been forced to eat meat, which her body rejected from babyhood, she ran away from school and home with a friend, but was soon found playing a few streets away. Thereafter, she always came home for dinner. Her next school was also a church school at Woodseats. There, she was often top of her class, and won many prizes. All the books she chose as prizes were religious, including the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer.

**Healing** – I believe Chrissy took to nursing at Nether Edge in her mid-teens. She served several years in hospitals, and then worked in Occupational Health Nursing in Sheffield's industrial sector. Thereafter, she turned to complementary therapy, and obtained the highest qualifications in several areas. She was a Reiki Master. She became self-employed and practiced in these areas until retiring a few years ago. After that, she continued voluntarily.

**Partners** – Christine Hartley married Jim Bramhall when both were quite young. The separation after about twenty years together

was difficult, and she remained single for several years until she met Glen Turner. They lived together for many years, split up, but kept in touch. I met Chrissy some years thereafter, I believe about five years ago.

**‘Spirituality’** – It was no surprise to me when Chrissy said that she had no pastoral contact whatsoever from the Anglican Church, or for that matter any church! So, when I met her she was in New Age spirituality, in my opinion, a progressive step away from the church. Then her inquisitive mind sensed my in-depth engagement with the words of Jesus and the Buddha. Over the last years of her life, that was primary to her, and was the foundation of our relationship.

**Ashram** – Chrissy rightly said that filling a form and becoming a member was of no avail to her. However, she participated actively in Ashram, and practiced an Ashram ethos of caring and sharing. She was a frequent guest at our 77 Rock Street community house, and engaged in its life. She loved our home, which was her second one in Sheffield.

**Community Home** – Her inborn nature to care and share without counting cost or thinking of any reward, made her to open her home to others, even residentially. Taking nothing, she gave a roof to the homeless and frequently hosted ‘spiritual’ sessions at home, also providing food. Today, this practice has spread to others whom she hosted – is that not ‘salting the earth’ and ‘lighting the world’?

**Sri Lanka** – Chrissy called it “my island in the sun”! The *summum bonum* that came about from her four long visits to Sri Lanka was to spread the culture of community caring and sharing, by nurturing community homes. She was much influenced by the lifestyle in the home of my dear and longstanding friend Tony, whom she loved and revered so dearly. We intended to be in Sri Lanka over the last winter to promote community homes. However, that was not to be. But I intend to try to do that in memory of her when I’m in Sri Lanka next – hopefully very soon!

**The Last Eighth Months** – Chrissy started to become poorly around May 2015. She accepted the diagnosis of advanced aggressive peritoneum cancer realistically. After all she was a medical woman and knew

the possibility of it being terminal. Alongside that she had hope for recovery, and did everything possible to get better. I was with her throughout this period, a vital period in our relationship – understanding more, and growing from the experience.

She asked me to contact her colleagues in complementary therapy. They came from day to day – I met them for the first time! And so did her dear neighbour Margaret, helping in everything. Some even said “I would not have been where I am today, but for Christine”. Chrissy never ever told me about what she had done. Surely, isn’t that not letting your left hand know, what your right hand does? Chrissy loved her niece Tracey very much, and she was around very frequently and did so much. Ashram’s practical and caring Sandra planned ahead, spent quality time with Chrissy whenever she was in Sheffield, and introduced her to ‘mindfulness art’, a therapy that Chrissy enjoyed very much. I must mention dear John and Grace who were sort of ‘on call’ during this entire period. Their frequent pastoral succour given to both of us was beyond measure and value. Also, several others, her friends, mine, and those of Ashram gathered around us during her last months.

Perhaps, of most significance was the reconciliation Chrissy lovingly initiated during this period with her ex-husband Jimmy and his partner! They came with love and kindness to her bedside. Chrissy steadily became weaker, and a marked decline occurred just after Christmas. She could hardly talk; but then she softly and brokenly whispered the song: ‘Country road take me home to the place I belong ...’ On 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2016, just after 11 am the nurse who was with her called me to her bedside. I held her and whispered, “feel well and happy, whatever”. That in my view was the Buddha’s motto, and she had cherished it close to her heart. And then Chrissy passed away in her home which was open to all, having given away all her material assets – she went as she came! May Chrissy be released from all suffering; May she attain Nirvana or in other words Life Everlasting.

*Nirmal Fernando Sheffield, February 2016*

## From Valerie

Three years ago I was a relatively healthy 80 year old, apart for some arthritis in my knees, and able to drive my Ducato motor caravan here there and everywhere to help with my voluntary work as a Traidcraft Fair Trader and as a Methodist local preacher. My GP then set the wheels in motion for me to have a knee replacement and I went into hospital where the operation went ahead and was successful. I was ready to go home when it was found that I had a pressure sore on my left heel, so I had to stay in hospital, where it was discovered that I had blockage in the arteries of both legs. Various complications resulted in an 8 month stay in hospital and the amputation of my right leg above the knee and daily dressings on my left leg. This meant that I could no longer look after myself and it was thought best that I should go into a nursing home.

I am now a relatively healthy 83 year old, though confined to a wheelchair, and still living in a nursing home. One positive result of this is that I have much more time to read. I have always loved books since I was a child and in trouble for reading under the bedclothes with the aid of a torch. This became rather more serious when I was caught using a candle.

Years later, newly married, I was delighted to be able to read at the table during meals without comment (my beloved was also reading at the other side of the table). Now I have a constant supply of reading matter brought in by family and friends, and usually spend part of every day reading. I also write articles for the church magazine and the local newspaper, when I can no longer put off doing them. I'd much rather be reading.

Happily I've now been able to continue with a Bible study group, which meets in my room

every other Monday afternoon. I should mention that it's a very small group - my room is of the size in which, as the old saying goes, it's impossible to swing a cat round. My work for Traidcraft also continues, with the help of one of my sons who lives locally.

If I want to go anywhere I have to go by taxi, and every Sunday morning I go to church by this means. On the third Sunday of every month after the service coffee is served in the Hall and we have a Traidcraft stall. Again with the help of my son, I supply three other churches with

Traidcraft items for their monthly coffee mornings. I'm still looking into the possibility of resuming my work as a local preacher, the main difficulty being that although all the church premises have disabled access, some have problems inside.

Although my life has unexpectedly changed, there are so many things I can still do, and I'm sure there are new things waiting for me that I haven't come across yet.

*Valerie Boyd*

*PS Valerie always humbles me with her work for Traidcraft. She co-opted her bible study group into helping her organise and run a Big Brew event at her Church for over 60 people. Cakes and sandwiches, competitions, and films - they all had a great time and raised £350 for Traidcraft's development charity. My group of able bodied internet users got 50 people to a Big Brew of fabulous cakes and a "Meet our Peru Producers Tour" talk and raised £270. Well done Valerie!*

*Jenny Medhurst*



*In the Winter Gardens with nephew Richard*





Luz Marina Garcia Rutz at work ©Theo Lessing/OBR Studios

Teesside Fairtrade campaigners were delighted to host a producer visit to several Fairtrade breakfasts during Fairtrade Fortnight - the first time we had such a privilege for 8 years. So we were looking forward to meeting Luz Marina, a member of a Colombian coffee co-operative with a large number of women and indigenous community members. The co-op has been selling Fairtrade coffee since 1992 – long before our supermarkets started stocking Fairtrade, so we were keen to hear of the benefits it had brought its members.

Luz didn't disappoint us – she is really grateful for the university education she received thanks to the Fairtrade premium, and keen to tell us how members have been helped to farm organically, and to grow food crops and rear animals to ensure they have food security. This is especially important as climate change is bringing disease and changing temperatures. She was bouncy and vivacious and delighted to encourage us to do more to promote Fairtrade because of the real benefits it had brought her community....

BUT I was devastated. One of the schemes she focused on was the Breakfast and Lunch Clubs that

## Chastening news

the Fairtrade premium funds in schools so that children can concentrate on their lessons. It seems that even farmers selling coffee to the Fairtrade market can't afford to feed their children. When I protested that the premium was supposed to be for community projects and that the coffee income should be enough to enable farmers to feed their families I was told that the Fairtrade price couldn't be too much above the unfair price or people wouldn't buy it. And that Luz's coffee co-op only manages to sell 35% of its coffee to the Fairtrade market as there aren't enough people asking for Fairtrade coffee....

Hard news to hear after thirty five years of campaigning for Fairtrade. I'd read about the Thin Months, and the Hungry season, and the 55% of kids in the tea region of Malawi with stunted growth but I had thought that Fairtrade producers would be protected. And they are - but not anywhere near as much as I had hoped. So we need to find more effective ways of sharing the Fairtrade story, and telling more people how important it is that those who work hard to produce food for us can afford to feed their families!

**BEFORE YOU FINISH EATING BREAKFAST IN THE MORNING, YOU'VE DEPENDED ON MORE THAN HALF THE WORLD**

Martin Luther King Jr. A Christmas sermon on peace. 1967

## Take Part in the Largest Coffee Break on Earth!



One brilliant, easy and fun way you can do this is to take part in the biggest Fairtrade Coffee Break on Earth on 13/14/15<sup>th</sup> May. Fairtrade's stable pricing and technical help enables coffee farmers to adapt to climate change. Register all the Fairtrade cups of coffee you drink in those three days at [www.fairtradechallenge.org](http://www.fairtradechallenge.org) and be part of spreading the message that if we all choose Fairtrade coffee all year round, we can support farmers *and* safeguard the future of our favourite drink. The more coffees we count, the stronger our message to governments and community leaders. Inspire/encourage your friends and family and your church to take part with people around the world! It's simple and quick to do - download attractive resources at [www.fairtradechallenge.org/materials/downloads/](http://www.fairtradechallenge.org/materials/downloads/)



## Pitsmoor Youth Housing Trust

front room of our house in Abbeyfield Road to see what we might do to provide supported housing for young people, such as Ian. We were not sure exactly what, but we had a few ideas and a determination to do something. The inevitable Committee was formed. John Vincent suggested we call this venture Pitsmoor Youth Housing Trust and PYHT was born! (good to see some of the original members here today)

There were three significant events early on.

One was when we persuaded F&CS (Sheffield SS Dept) to make a small grant to us after 3 managers from the Childrens Residential section came to discuss our ideas – I can see them now sat on our settee in our front room – the 3 wise men. Ian Storr (he has remained involved with PYHT ever since and is here today), Dave Thornber and John Hinde. Thanks to them we did get some financial support from SS.

Secondly. Having some money – not much – meant we needed a Treasurer. I happened to know that Anne Knights, previously deputy manager at Eastcliffe – my boss! – had taken maternity leave and embarked on an accountancy course. I phoned Anne out of the blue - without hesitation she agreed to be treasurer. The rest is history!

Thirdly. I went to see Jenny Brierley at South Yorks Hsg. Assoc. and somehow managed to convince her that what we had in mind SYHA could support. This was crucial and SYHA has worked closely with PYHT ever since. SYHA subsequently purchased 84 Andover Street from Ashram Community who had used it as a community house (not entirely coincidental that some of us happened to be members of the Ashram Community!) and leased it to PYHT. This was our first house, for 6 residents + resident warden. Ian was the first resident.

It's been a bumpy ride at times. We changed the model from resident warden and appointed Anne as non-resident manager. Under her leadership PYHT has grown and developed almost beyond recognition to provide excellent supported living for up to 30 or so young people (that is, up to about 6 months ago when our unsuccessful funding bid caused closure of the project). Much of the credit must go to Anne – she has done an exceptional job as manager over the years and also in particular to Sharon, chair of the Trustees for very many years who worked extremely well with Anne. A dynamic duo backed by an excellent Board of Trustees. We must also not forget a dedicated staff team.

PYHT can be justly proud of the service it has provided to many hundreds of YP over the years. I certainly welcome this opportunity to thank all who have been involved and am proud to remember and celebrate with you today its many very considerable achievements. Thank you.

*Speech by David Peck at the Pitsmoor YHT celebration event in October 2015 to mark its closure after 34 years.*

I've been asked to say something about the origins of PYHT as I was involved in its inception 34 yrs ago, c 1981/2 and am still involved as a Board member today.

Prior to the start of PYHT I was a Residential Social Worker providing support to young people in care, especially teenagers. As such, I became increasingly aware that too many left care at 16/17/18 yrs old ill prepared to live independently without the support most young people take for granted. Not surprisingly, many were simply unable to cope and often spiralled or drifted into debt, delinquency, drugs or depression.

There was too little provision in Sheffield or elsewhere of semi-independent supported living to help care leavers through the first few difficult years of independence. Apart from Granville Road Project, Cherry Tree + Roundabout's night shelter there was virtually nothing else available in Sheffield.

Before leaving Eastcliffe, the residential unit where I was working as a RSW, to take up a secondment to a SW course, I was keyworker to a lad called Ian who was coming up to 18 when he had to leave care, but was clearly not going to cope independently. But where could he go? My dissertation at the end of the SW course was entitled 'From Care – To where?' (Margaret Mackley who is here today will remember it well as she typed it for me!) Writing the dissertation confirmed my conviction that the provision of supported living, especially for care leavers, was severely inadequate.

In fact, Beryl my wife and I agreed Ian could live with us. He stayed for some years and we kept in touch for many years after. We lost contact just a couple years or so ago or we would have invited him today as he was the reason PYHT started and he was the first PYHT resident.

What happened was that although Ian did OK with us, Beryl and I accepted that what we could offer was not really what Ian and others needed in the longer term. We were then members of the Eucharist Congregation which met in the Urban Theology Unit in Abbeyfield Road and we invited friends in the Congregation to a meeting in the

## Our 30<sup>th</sup> Christmas Traidcraft shop

We got the Goldilocks shop in Middlesbrough's main shopping street for our 30<sup>th</sup> shop- opposite M&S, the right size and affordable. After 29 shops we thought we'd met all the problems before – what else could go wrong? Lots it seems. The first was the electricity being turned off without warning – the last tenant hadn't paid the bill. And then it was going to take 10 working days to get the meter company to reconnect- and we were only there for fifty  
Many phone calls and hours in a cold dark shop later we got the power reconnected – but by then I was in something of a state. I forgot to bring our A Board in when I shut up the shop the next night and brought the ancient rusty front shutters down – CRUNCH!

They jammed ! So we spent Black Friday phoning and trying to track down any shutter company that could help – and were rescued just before dark by two lovely big Sunderland men who got them up and working - replacing them would have been impossible.

So my tenancy was saved and after that it was almost plain sailing- with no winter weather, and practical help setting up and dismantling from a lovely asylum seeker, Ibrahim from Guinea. We took £36,000 in 4 weeks, new customers and volunteers alike delighted!

Jenny Medhurst

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## “What is the Point of Living Simply?” THE LIFESTYLE MOVEMENT

Anyone who states that simple living is a desirable thing to do is likely to be asked this kind of question. The questioner is probably well aware of the gross inequality in living standards worldwide and that human beings cannot indefinitely continue to exploit the earth in the way we are doing - but does not believe living simply will make any difference. They may also believe such a response would, at best, be met with indifference - or at worst, become a source for mild amusement.

The place to begin a response to this question is within ourselves. If we really are convinced there is no long-term future in our present mode of living, then to be true to that belief requires us to act accordingly. Simpler living is also good for our general well-being. Studies have shown that it leads to healthier, more contented, less stressful lives; time can be found to just stand, look and enjoy. What others may think of us does not matter; what is important is that we are happier within ourselves, in our relationship with our fellow human beings and with the world.

But the enquirer may ask how simple is simple? Is it necessary to live like a hermit? This is the kind of difficulty all committed political or religious people have to face; the answer must be that by a process of trial and error we find a level at which, *in all good conscience*, we can be comfortable. As the old saying goes, our conscience must be our guide. It is a process of saying both yes and no - yes to a conviction that it is better for us all to live this way, and no to the pressure of the advertising industry and

all else which attracts us to “lay waste our powers” in the scramble to earn and spend.

There is more to living simply than just getting our personal consumption under control, and that is working to change ‘the system’. The system I am referring to is the interlocking pattern of economic, political and technological structures which are driving everything along. These structures are underpinned by verbal assumptions which include phrases such as ‘economic growth is good’ and ‘technology is driven by a determinism which cannot be halted’. On the contrary, growth (and decay) in the natural order is sustainable; but the forms which human beings have created *are not*. Each small group adds to the pressure and education needed to change people’s views and lifestyles.

We can work along to change the system by (say) writing to our member of parliament or choosing to buy organically produced food - but working with others in a pressure group is likely to be more effective. If inequality, environmental, and simplicity issues are of concern to you, then the LIFESTYLE MOVEMENT might be your niche. For those concerned about the future of planet earth, living a simpler life style is a must. It is good for ourselves, for others and for the rest of creation.

Come and join us!

THE LIFESTYLE MOVEMENT

Jeffrey White, Membership Secretary  
t: 01634 307474 E: trolleybusnut@hotmail.com  
*(The item above was written by an LSM member and has been edited)*

# The Life Style Guidelines

We are encouraged to

- Recognise that there is a connection between the affluence of some and the poverty of others;
- Resist the social and economic pressures to buy what we do not need. Some may see this as *living simply that all may simply live*, some as *living responsibly*, others as *living an Earth-friendly lifestyle*.
- Support other organizations with money, time or talents; not only those concerned with the environment, justice and peace, but also those that help the poor and marginalized at home and overseas;
- Enjoy the natural world, show care for the environment and avoid wasteful use of resources;
- Use non-renewable resources with care. Avoid unnecessary travel, especially by car or aeroplane;
- Encourage the repair, recycling and re-use of materials and products;
- Challenge over-packaging, built-in obsolescence and bad workmanship;
- Avoid overeating and find alternatives to food whose production or distribution involves damage to the environment or exploitation of the poor or the oppressed;
- Enjoy such good things as are compatible with our commitment to care for the planet and its inhabitants.
- Be generous without ostentation and hospitable without extravagance.
- Make time to develop our personal skills and pleasures and share them with others.
- Make time for reflection, for the deepening of our understanding of our planet and of the people in it.
- Take care that our commitment to 'Earth-friendliness' is not at the expense of family or friends.
- Encourage others to join our Movement as a personal contribution to the struggle for global justice and peace and to rescue Earth from further exploitation.
- Make the effort to get to know like-minded people in your area, including other members, and offer and receive mutual support.

## The Life Style Commitment

**Recognizing that the peaceful development and perhaps the survival of the human race are threatened by:**

*The injustice of extremes of poverty and wealth;  
The profligate use of natural resources and the pollution of the environment;  
The denial of useful and creative work to so many people;*

**I therefore seek to:**

*Live simply so all may simply live;  
Give freely so all may be free to give;  
Avoid wasteful use of resources and show care for the environment;  
Work with others for social justice through appropriate action;  
Enjoy such good things as are compatible with this Commitment;  
Share my commitment with others.*

## Radical Jesus: My Life

Some years ago, in the early 2000's, I was introduced to Rev. John Vincent, who was lecturing a group of Episcopal ministers in New London, Ct. I was invited to a gathering; at the time I was an extreme radical activist, a street priest, in the midst of controversy that hit their City like thunder. I had challenged all the denominational big wigs, priests, ministers, for not helping the homeless, who were at the time freezing in the streets.

Why they invited me to this all day session, I was not sure. Except for my knowledge that the Spirit leads and had me present. Rev. John was talking on his book "Radical Jesus". As I listened it was interesting to me that none of those ministers present, not a one, seemed to understand what he was talking about. I ended up interjecting into nearly every point he was making; for not only did I understand Rev. John, it seemed to me, he had written my life down, and was talking about all the things I had done and was involved with. He had written my life? It scared me to death; that this man, this theologian seemed to know my very being, my own soul.

After the session, I got his book, "Radical Jesus" opened it and could not put it down. Every page peered out and seemed to be talking about me. Wow, every page? The following day, I was invited back, to more meetings, with Rev. John and others; the leadership and Rev. John were developing a program around his community organizational theology of pastoral care; at least that is what it looked like to me. I was offered sponsorship into this project by the Episcopal Diocesan's representative. It was to be supervised by a local pastor here in CT. and under the supervision of Rev. John Vincent. I would however, be required to take one trip over to England. Sounded good, I was told I would receive a Ph.D, for my participation in this project. I have a Master's Degree; and was not sure why the nice perk, at least at first; but I soon learned why I was asked to participate. I had, the practical expertise to insure their project would be a success here in CT. I was not involved with anything I had not done several times over. I am a Community Organizer and project building is one of my life skills. I am exceptional at it. For I had believed I am lead by the Spirit when I engage in these matters. What would be new for me in this

project was I would learn from Dr. Vincent, the Theology behind my whole life's work. His teaching solidified my own knowledge and how and where I was to find my direction. It turned out to be better than a three year project. For most of the Episcopalians around the State quite a few things were too hard I suspect for them to be able to reach out; the ministers could not seem to pull it together. However with me that did not happen.

I came over to Sheffield, a little journey where I learned, and I loved my trip. Our New London project ended up in the founding of a breakfast food program at First Church, which I started with Rev. Hamond and six of my own staff members that volunteered, sponsored and provided meals at breakfast for five years. The program continues to this very day. It has served thousands and thousands of Homeless people breakfast nearly every morning; also the main part of our project was establishing a permanent Homeless Shelter. Which we did and it serves many people as I write.

However I personally am no longer involved with this multi-million dollar project, though a founder. When money gets involved things seem to take on a different "theology" than my own, or what is so clear in "Radical Jesus". I never received my Ph.D after completing nearly four years of work. I did however benefit more than anyone else I believe. I returned for a second visit to Dr. John Vincent and his wife, I spent a week back there with you folks. Which has for me been one of the most rewarding things I have done in my life. Rev. John's love and direction was all the recognition I needed. It was never about a Ph.D, nor should it ever have been. From my first meeting, from the opening pages of his book; my life unfolded before my eyes. (This is what I do! This is who I am!) Understanding "Radical Jesus" for me took on a life of its own; my theology came together. The shelter goes on and they follow their direction the way they have chosen to go; they care for homeless people. They just missed the whole point of a journey down. They lack the understand of a simple book "Radical Jesus" or may be it is more difficult than I think?

*Fr. Russ Carmichael*

*Editor: This contribution was sent to me some time ago and unfortunately didn't make it into the last Act Together. Since then Russ has 16*

*written again:*

I love receiving Act Together, seeing all you friends and workers. Reading about what you are committed to. Here across the pond I have little time to write, although I got admonished by John last time I was over. He said "write,write". I pray he understands. Radical Jesus is to me the last word on what one needs to do, It is my own life written by John long before I met him and before I ever knew what I was doing. I just follow Jesus. What does that mean?

- A homeless shelter founded and an agency which grew out of our work.
- A TV show "Street-Talk" on public access, that grew out of local concerns and the need to express the voice crying alone in the wilderness: 14 years and a potential viewing audience of over a million.
- A publishing company, works as a ministry to get voices out from behind the Wall: "Little Red Cell"
- A home Healthcare Service that provides the ability for us to make a living that we can then help those less fortunate than us with the profits.

I have always said you can change the world if you do not take the credit. We look for little credit, just following Jesus...Love and blessings

*Fr Russ Carmichael OSB, Ashram Community Associate, Waterford CT, USA*

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## **My faith journey beyond the eucharist**

I was taken by my mother Vera to a local Anglican church at the age of 7 in 1958. In those days this church did matins on Sunday mornings which included the Te Deum, " We praise Thee O God..." and the Benedicite, a very long blessing. As in traditional Anglican churches in those days the model was collect, a prayer to help people concentrate their minds, the most famous of which was on "Stir up Sunday", near to Christmas, "Stir up we beseech Thee the hearts and minds of Thy people..." Later an epistle was read and the gospel. We also had the " comfortable words", " His yoke is easy, His burden light". Then once a month the eucharist interrupted this pattern. The eucharist was quite mystical in form, using a Christianised form of Isaiah going to the Temple, with the choir singing beautifully,

gently and tenderly, "Let all mortal flesh keep silence, and in fear and trembling stand, ponder nothing earthly minded, for with blessing in His hand, Christ our God to earth descended, our full homage to demand, Rank on rank the host of heaven,...." and it included cherubim with seraphim. This comes from the 4th century Coptic Orthodox Liturgy of St James and linked with an early expression of Christianity.

So the influence of the Anglican church for me between 1958-1967, 7-16 years old was mostly non-Eucharistic, and the eucharist pattern emphasised silent mystical contemplation in mind and emotions more than the actual cup and bread actions. Later on I had quite a lot of involvement with Quakers with Meeting for

Worship, building on the contemplative pattern already established, emphasising silence and letting the " Indwelling Light" affect us. This then got emphasised even further by my involvement in Buddhism, mainly Pure Land Buddhism and Triratna Buddhism. Meditation took all outer images and actions in silence, and lets the mind slowly and deeply settle its busy thinking about anything, including the eucharist, in the hope that mind chatter can cease, and "emptiness" can spontaneously arise, an experience of an awareness of utterly unconditioned inner freedom. And once on a winter Buddhist retreat I had this blissful experience.

So whilst I accept that almost all Christians are Eucharistic, Quakers and the Salvation Army are not, yet they are as valid as any other form of Christianity. The Quaker influence has been very deep in me. So I stand uneasily in Eucharistic gatherings feeling out of place and unable to participate in that part of the service. As is clear in the Ashram network, there is a great diversity in individuals and their Christian expressions. All have equal validity but I can easily feel just a little out of it at the actual point of the eucharist. Quakers regard any shared meal as eucharist, so our meals together at Unstone Grange were my participation in eucharist. So may the blessings of Jesus extend very widely amongst diverse individuals with diverse life experiences.

*Cerys Brangwyn.*

## A study group for radicals, liberals and heretics

John Vincent suggested that this contribution be written, because we had just finished studying together the updated 'Radical Jesus'. It was more than 30 years ago that John came to the Hazel Grove Methodist Church to take the Church Anniversary service and to do a worship afterwards with lunch. He challenged some of us that day to start a study group for radicals, liberals and heretics! Mike responded and our group began to meet. We have done some biblical study, but more recently read together some of Hans

Kung, Dominic Crossman, Spong, Karen Armstrong and Adrian Alked. Pleased to hear that Adrian has agreed to become a trustee of UTU. Our group, maximum 12, is something I value for its honesty and care. We have learned to trust each other and to continue to explore what it means to be a disciple of Jesus today. Ashram's involvement in Kerala through the works of Rev. Konathu John, Deacon Dave's life and works in Hebron, etc., are inspirational records of Christian disciples and challenge this suburban middle class group to further action.

*Liz Turner*

### Art in the Ashram

Story: Amy Palmer | Photo: Anwar Suliman

Burngreave Ashram has a new painting called Christ in Burngreave: the Lord's Supper, portraying the Ashram community meal. The four-by-five foot work is a modern version of the Last Supper, in which Christ shares a meal with his disciples.

It was painted by international artist, Ros Norsworthy who specialises in Christian church related artwork. She was commissioned by Reverend Deacon John Vincent, after he saw her 40 foot painting 'The Resurrection' at Victoria Hall Methodist Church.

The picture took over a year to paint. She has left it up to the public to decide which person represents Christ. She says she finds painting passages from the Bible moving and rewarding. John Vincent has had a brass plaque engraved to hang next



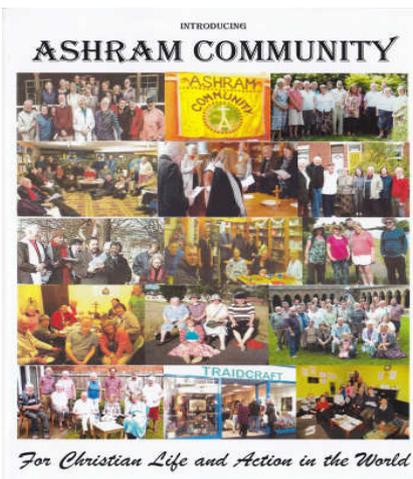
to the picture which hangs over the door. Anyone wishing to see the work can visit the Ashram on Spital Hill.

The free Ashram community meal is held every Wednesday at 6pm at the Ashram on Spital Hill and is "totally open door".



### Christ in Burngreave

Ros Norsworthy with her painting of the Lord's Supper and John Vincent at the Burngreave Ashram free meal



### Ashram leaflet

After much consultation around the Community John Vincent and Nirmal Fernando have finally got together a new Community leaflet. Two copies are included with this Act Together. If you would like more please ask for them from the Community Office, or your Branch Secretary. Our thanks to John and Nirmal.

# THE NEW CHALLENGE OF DISCIPLESHIP

Discipleship has suddenly been declared as what Christian churches and church members should be preaching, living and pursuing. First, my own Methodist Church Conference in July 2011 adapted a new self-description “strap-line” of the denomination as “A Discipleship Movement Shaped for Mission”. Then in February 2015, the General Synod of the Church of England adopted “Developing Discipleship” as the foundation for “re-imagining ministry”:

Developing Discipleship opened up for discussion questions about our renewal as disciples and the nature of discipleship as the primary and foundational calling before any other vocation to roles or authorised ministries.

In February 2016, the church designated the period 2018-28 as a “Discipleship Decade”. The United Reformed Church has also had an emphasis on Discipleship since 2012.

Working together with a group of Anglican and Methodist New Testament scholars, I am editing a volume outlining the distinctive ways in which different New Testament writers deal with the question – *Discipleship: the New Testament Mosaic*.

In December 2015, the Colloquium at the Urban Theology Unit in Sheffield met to discuss the new emphasis in Discipleship, and how we might service it. We thought it would be a good idea to start with saying

what each one of us thought the idea meant. So we began with writing down our own definitions, we were 4 Anglican, and 1 Methodist ministers, plus 6 members of various denominations. What is Discipleship? The following are from the answers handed in:-

*Being a follower / apprentice of Jesus.*

*Following Jesus to wherever and whatever he calls us to do.*

*Acknowledging a leader, master or guide whom we walk behind. He moves, we follow – walking, active, learning.*

*Being a learner, open to new insights about Jesus and the Kingdom of God as core truths.*

*Being a vehicle for action flowing from these insights.*

*Following or trying to follow, and enacting key teachings from the gospel that Jesus uttered.*

*The relationship between a master and a disciple, and the system and philosophy relating to the practice of a relationship between a master and disciple.*

*John Vincent*

At the May 12<sup>th</sup> Colloquium, John Vincent will do a study of Mark 2-7 using the passages as models for contemporary discipleship today.

The Summer School at UTU and Burngreave Ashram on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> July will have speakers and chapters about *Discipleship*. This will follow a launch and speakers on 'The Servant of God' on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> July. Arrivals on Monday 11<sup>th</sup>, Please email UTU for full details. [office@utusheffield.org.uk](mailto:office@utusheffield.org.uk)

## ASHRAM INNER CITY RETREAT IN BURNGREAVE. 29<sup>th</sup> Oct to 1<sup>st</sup> Nov.

This rich and interesting retreat was planned and run brilliantly by Sandra Dutson. Eight to ten people took part and it was built around the stories in Mark 6 and John 6 of the feeding of the 5000.

We started on the Thursday evening at Burngreave Ashram when Sandra got our heads into what we would be doing, which was to walk around different parts of the area – streets and parks – and look for 5 sorrows and 5 joys each time.

Friday began at Andover Street House where Tamara shared about the rich variety of herbs growing in the back garden. Then Cerys did her first talk about FOOD, where we should and shouldn't eat, vegetarian and vegan and much else. In the afternoon we all went over to New Roots where I shared the thinking and

reality behind it, from the new edition of my book: 'New Roots: Shop for Justice'. We ended at Burngreave Ashram reflecting on the day.

On Saturday we had another talk from Cerys on FOOD, we walked around green spaces at Abbeyfield Road and ended with an agape meal at Burngreave Ashram. On Sunday we all joined John in sharing our experience at Pitsmoor Methodist Church, followed by Cafe Church at the Ashram on the ecological theme.

I think people felt the whole event was a rich and stimulating experience. The next Retreat of April 2016 will be on a Psycho-geographical method (Ian Sinclair etc) led by Sam Humphrey.

*Grace Vincent*



## Members and Associates

We invite anyone interested to request details about becoming a Member or Associate from the membership secretary, Sandra Dutson: [smdutson@btinternet.com](mailto:smdutson@btinternet.com)  
Members and Associates are listed in the 7-day cycle Community Prayers

## Projects and Commitments

Ashram Press – Radical Christianity, Gospel Study, Discipleship, Community Study and Research- projects on Community and related issues  
Homeless and Asylum Seekers - Residence and Community for people in need  
Multi-faith - mutual activities and projects open to all faiths

## DATES

### 2016

2-5 June Inner City Pilgrimage  
9 July General meeting, Northwich  
11-13 July Summer School, Urban theology Unit & Ashram  
August Community Holiday-details from David Dale  
8-11 Sep Inner City Pilgrimage  
7-9 October Community Weekend Unstone

### 2017

25 Feb General Meeting Sheffield  
13-16 April Inner City Retreat  
5-7 May Community Meekend, Middleton  
1-12 July Summer School  
29Sept-1Oct Community Weekend, Unstone

## COMMUNITY

Community Office:  
178 Abbeyfield Road, Sheffield S4 7AY  
T: 0114 243 6688/244 7278  
E: [ashramcommunity@hotmail.com](mailto:ashramcommunity@hotmail.com)

Ashram Press: As above  
See Website [www.ashram.org.uk](http://www.ashram.org.uk) for publications

Ashram Community Trust is a Registered Charity  
Registered Charity No: 1099164  
Charitable Company No: 477991  
Website [www.ashram.org.uk](http://www.ashram.org.uk)  
administrator: [kathclements@ymail.com](mailto:kathclements@ymail.com))

Act Together editor: Jenny Medhurst  
[medhurst@phonecoop.coop](mailto:medhurst@phonecoop.coop)

Articles for the Autumn 2016 edition needed by the Sep 12th.

## HOUSES AND PROJECTS

Burngreave Ashram Centre, Interfaith Chapel and Library  
Burngreave Ashram: 80-86 Spital Hill Sheffield S4 7LG – Tel: 0114 270 0972

New Roots Shop, Basement Speakeasy and Residents' flat  
347 Glossop Rd Sheffield S10 2HP  
Tel: 0114 272 1971

Community Houses: 77 and 79 Rock St  
Sheffield S3 9JB – Tel: 0114 272 7144

6 Andover Street Sheffield S3 9EG  
Tel: 0791 092 2462 (Tamara)  
27/29 Hallcar Street, Sheffield S4 7JY

## BRANCHES

All Members and Associates are attached to one of five Regional Branches. Please contact Secretaries if you would like to know more about meeting or events. The Branch Secretaries are the local contact points for the Community.

## SECRETARIES

**Midlands** – Chris & Lorraine Smedley  
Tel: 0115 9288430 – Monthly Meetings

**London** – Linda Marshall – 01784 456 474  
Saturday Meetings – Monthly

**North-West** – Josie Smith – 01706 841 532  
Meetings as arranged.

**Sheffield** – Grace Vincent – 0114 243 6688  
Gatherings fortnightly – Mons, 7 – 9:30pm

**North-East** – Jenny Medhurst  
Tel: 01740 630475 – Meetings as arranged