



ACT TOGETHER

Ashram Community Trust

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Contents

Rochdale 50th anniversary celebration

Page 1. Un Embarass de richesses.....	Linda Marshall
Page 3. Afterword.....	John Vincent
Page 3. What Ashram means to me.....	Andrew Weeks, Ian Parker, Helen Davies
Page 4.	Jenny Medhurst, Liz Urben
Page 5.	Lorraine Jones
Page 6. Jesus Community 1968-1993.....	Chris Blackwell

Page 7. Celebrating Grace's life and ministry.....	John Vincent
Page 8. A personal eulogy for Grace.....	Andrew Weeks
Page 9. "She leaves behind a lasting legacy"	Andrew Weeks in the Methodist Recorder
Page 10. "Remembering founder of Sheffield shop with a sense of social justice" Sheffield Star obituary	
Page 11. "Inner City Testament"	Book flyer

Page 12. Marjorie Bonehill 1941-2017.....	Andrew Bonehill
Page 13. Arms Fair Protests.....	Sandra Dutson
Page 16. Our Journey through Russia and Korea	Ian and Pat Hamilton
Page 19. "God's Peace cannot be achieved through force"	National Council of Churches in Korea (NCKK)
Page 20. Emergency letter urging immediate dialogue.....	NCKK August 2017
Page 21. Holiday in the Cotswolds – one perspective.....	Linda Marshall
Page 23. Problems of Life in a Wheelchair.....	Valerie Boyd
Page 24. Memories of Mental Distress.....	Alice McGregor
Page 25. Don't Ditch Fairtrade supermarket campaign.....	Jenny Medhurst
Page 26. Growing Christian Groups and Activities.....	Iain Cloke
Page 27. Community information and calendar	



*Gwen Green's 5th birthday cake
with John, Grace & Sandra*

Because I seem to have become the official Ashram Holiday reporter, I was also asked to report on the 50th Anniversary May Weekend. As I was also on kitchen duty it was pretty stupid to have accepted, so when you see in the middle of the text you know that something needed grating or chopping at that point and I am not able to report on what was going on in another room.

As many past members as could be located had been invited to join us, particularly on the Saturday in Rochdale, but some were already there on the Friday evening. As I arrived in the kitchen I found Nirmal in animated conversation with Gwen and Peter Green, who – though I hadn't picked up on it in the past – had worked in the church in Sri Lanka early in his career. Very soon afterwards I was greeted by Jenny Tambling (now Daggers), one of the initial residents of the London Ashram Flat, where the London Group meetings were held for many years. Jenny had played a major part, as a volunteer, in setting up the Vauxhall Inner City Farm, which is still flourishing today, but after that she moved on to become an academic in the Theology Department at Liverpool Hope University.

After trying between us, unsuccessfully, to eat all the food we had brought to share, we gathered at 8.30 to speak in turn on "When and how I came into the Ashram Community". This is where I needed proficiency in shorthand to record all the varied responses, classify and analyse them, to find out just what percentage was as a result of a meeting with/a letter from John Vincent. So let's just guess at ca.75%. But there were other routes too. There was the winding up of the Alliance of Radical Methodists, there was the daughter who went to milk goats in Sparkbrook, there were a good



Un embarras de richesses!

number that came to ACT via UTU, there was the one who first met us when we had the Ashram Holiday on Iona, and yes, there was one who came to us via the website. There were a good number who had been with us since the seventies and a steady trickle after that, but I wish we had thought to record the session live for posterity!

The Saturday morning began as usual with silent reflection and breakfast, but then it was off, for some, on a trip down memory lane. But for most of us it was our first encounter with Champness Hall, the most amazing (former) Methodist Church I have ever seen – its size, its grandiose architecture, its art nouveau tiling. It was here that the 32 year old John Vincent became not just minister but superintendent in 1962, and from where, a few years later, the Ashram Community was founded.

John had put up a display of photographs, articles, books from that time, including a book of recipes from the Young wives Group, produced by – you can guess who – and what a blessing it was that Grace was able to be with us to enjoy the celebrations. There were articles about the beginnings of Ashram from the Methodist Recorder, there were issues of a very professional-looking local newspaper produced by Champness Hall for some years.

On the top floor of the building there had been, at that time, some residential accommodation for people engaged in the church's work in the area, which became the Champness Hall Community, and it was out of this that the idea of the first Ashram House developed, a house with an open door, welcoming neighbours to use their facilities, having space for local groups, offering English lessons to Pakistani women, in an area that was already becoming multi-cultural.

But now we must return to the Saturday morning. After opening devotions led by Liz Turner and Neville Whitehead we heard reminiscences by several of the people who had also been involved in the early days and had joined us for the Saturday morning.

First up was Chris Blackwell, one of the earliest residents of the Rochdale Ashram House, which opened in January 1970. He described it as being the 'leaven in the lump' in the local community for fifteen years. Chris was also involved in setting up UTU

(the Urban Theology Unit in Sheffield). He is now a Franciscan Tertiary (as was Ken Seagers of the London Agape Group till his death a couple of years ago) but Chris wears the Franciscan cross *under* his shirt, in keeping with what he identified with in Ashram – following Jesus in a practical way, with the emphasis on what we do rather than what we believe.

Next came Peter Crompton, who described how in March 1967 he and three others met with John Vincent in a restaurant, and they then called the conference which created Ashram in July of that year, at the Champness Hall. Peter explained how he later joined the Rochdale house. He recalled that it was always an exclusively Christian community, though new residents later on did not necessarily come from Ashram, and the house carried on, letting the local community set the agenda.

Mark Coleman, the present Vicar of Rochdale, (whose church café provided the catering for our imminent lunch) told us how he had been greatly affected by what Ashram did in the 1980s, and Robin Parker, another prominent figure in Rochdale, looked back at his formative years, initially studying at Cliff College and coming on a ‘mission’ to Rochdale, where he stayed at Champness Hall and realised that the Cliff College style was not for him. He studied for the ministry, but then went into social work and subsequently into local politics, becoming Mayor of Rochdale in 2008.

Howard Knight had been a regular visitor to the Rochdale House, and said that his memory was of it being ‘a lot of fun’, while Stuart Jordan went back to the earliest days, coming to Champness Hall as a Community Service Volunteer at the age of 17. The Community there had formed his future Christian life, leading him to become a Methodist minister, and he had the distinction of helping to organise the very first Ashram Weekend, which was held at Champness Hall itself in 1967. Others who spoke included Jan Hicks, who came to Champness Hall in 1965, and Ian and Pat Hamilton, early residents in the Sheffield UTU *One World House*.

After all these reminiscences, indeed testimonies, our Leader and Founder spoke on “Ashram Community – Past, Present and Future”, along the lines of the insert in

the May edition of ACT Together. At this point the lunch to be brought in by caterers started being brought in, so Liz Urben and I had to retire to the smaller room to receive it and missed the open discussion that ended the morning session.

The lunch was plentiful, varied and delicious and gave time for more conversations with old friends, but help with clearing up afterwards meant that I missed the Central Rochdale Walkabout that followed. However, my husband returned with a fistful of leaflets celebrating the heritage of Rochdale, majoring of course on the 28 ‘Rochdale Pioneers’ who started the co-operative movement. I promised myself that I would return some time to see it all for myself, because now it was time to return to the Scout Centre, handily placed on Rochdale Road in North Manchester, for the rest of the Weekend’s more mundane activities (i.e. meetings of one sort and another).



Mike & Pat Newton, former Middlesbrough House residents

But there was another treat in store – the evening meal brought in from a local Indian restaurant, which had been chosen, so I understand, as a result of extensive on-the-ground research by Josie Smith. From mine and Liz’s point of view in particular it was an excellent choice, as the main dishes were so substantial as to be sufficient for the Sunday lunch as well, leaving us with just some rice

and a pudding to prepare. The programme for Saturday evening’s entertainment gave a choice between a DIY quiz or watching a film. Such had been the *embarras de richesses* during the previous 24 hours that the majority vote was for a film (*Ladies in Lavender*, starring Judi Dench and Maggie Smith)..... but I decided on the even more relaxing activity of chopping rhubarb for Sunday’s pudding.

The Sunday programme returned to the more usual pattern, though with some of the former members still present, and no need for the ‘community preparation’ of the lunch. One slight change, as a result of time constraints, was the incorporation of the members’ sharing of their discipleship commitments into the membership renewal liturgy, something which clicked with me and could I think be worth considering again for the future.

Linda Marshall

Greetings from old friends were received from

David Mowat, Helen Robinson, Moira Neish, Elizabeth Mitchell, Chris Pritchard, Steve Wild, Caroline Wallace, Heather Holmes, Alison Boyd, Magdalena Hoebes, Trish Stroud, Pat And Bob Billsborrow, Roy Crowder

Afterword from John

My address in the Spring ACT Together was not read, but summarised and a bit preached!

We then said “Any Questions?” - No one had any!
But we also said “What Was Your Story of Ashram?”
What we got was a fantastic series of personal experiences of individual people and what they contributed to Ashram in the early days. Two things emerged.

First, they each one indicated how some element of the Ashram life had inspired or fed into their later ministries and careers. It was as if the practice and model, the method of discerning, concentrating, model-building,

community creation and project development that people had been part of in Ashram then became part of their life’s work in very different contexts.

The second thing was that the Ashram way of being led into things as a practice and project Jesus model and was being applied in radically different ways – the “Jesus Thing” we called it (a 1973 book title). Not an inward imitation of Jesus so much as a practice imitation. I found this all very moving. It made me feel we had not failed totally to open up some contemporary Jesus “things”. I am more than content!

John Vincent

What Ashram means to me

I first joined Ashram after meeting Grace Vincent in New Roots in 1987 and I've been a member ever since. I was at medical school then. Since then I have worked in women's health, trying to improve the care of pregnant women both in the UK and around the world. I spent two years in Uganda and have now ended up in Liverpool. I work as both a consultant obstetrician and as a professor in the University. In all that time Ashram has been there with me. Indeed, UTU was where I met my wife! The Ashram Community was alongside me as I worked in difficult situations in Uganda, and continues to be a reference point for my life. Not only my life as an academic, but also as a father, husband, and a member of my community in Liverpool. The community has been enormously important in shaping who I am today.

Many communities or institutions are vocational. They have a specific agenda and are training people towards that aim. Ashram is different. It meets you where you are - without judgement and without criticism. In that way it works for us all. It asks each of us how we should spend our lives as disciples of Jesus. And that is important whether we are doctors, community workers, accountants or builders. Each one of us is seeking to live our lives as followers of Jesus – inspired by his message, inspired by his lifestyle. And the community does that largely by inspiring us with stories told by other members of the community: examples of how community members have change their own lives, how they have campaigned for justice, how they have sought to bring about a new world.

And for all this I will be forever grateful.

Andrew Weeks

For the middle decade of my thirty years in Ashram,

I was accompanied by two other people. I know others here have chosen Ashram as the place to give thanks for their children.

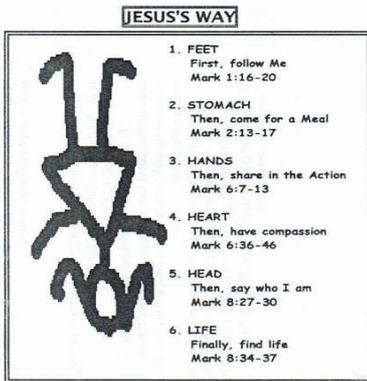
When my 10 week old baby cried all night, someone battered on the door to sit with me for hours; a 10 month old was accommodated on a silent retreat, kept quiet by regular feeding of satsumas; when I chaired a community meeting whilst swinging a car seat, there was someone on hand to theologise about it. Later, there were treasure hunts and fancy dress cupboards, beaches and hills. I remember particularly my teenage son and his friend being typecast as the young rebels, John and James, and embodying the disciples; my daughter listening to an asylum-seeker and then acting out his story.

This week, both ensured that they had postal votes to take part in the election where they thought that they could have most influence. I am grateful for the influence of Ashram on my children and on the other young people who have been part of us over the years.

Helen Davies

I was quite young when I decided the essence of Christianity was being a follower of Jesus, and that following Jesus was an uncomfortable pursuit if you were from a comfortable middle class background. It was a great reassurance to me when I met John Vincent, because he was not only an ordained Methodist minister, but also a New Testament scholar of repute, yet he interpreted the gospels the same disturbing way that I did.

Ian Parker



In 1973 I returned from a life-changing two years as a VSO teacher in Nigeria to a job in Harrogate, and a comfortable very 'white' Methodist Church where the only connection with the world outside Britain was through British missionaries .

But through a Scottish friend from Nigeria I learned about Rochdale House and went to visit for a weekend, and then became one of Ashram's lone members. I was envious of all that went on in the Houses and branches elsewhere but a long way from Hull and my nearest 'lone' neighbours. After two more years of VSO in Malaysia I decided to give up looking for a secondary school near my beloved Dales or Lakes, put my feet in the right place, and try out an Ashram House. I got interviews on successive days in Middlesbrough and Rochdale, and despite the delapidated state of Middlesbrough's bus station accepted the job there.

And it was absolutely the right place for me – in the heart of a deprived and multi-ethnic community, with a supportive family whose children I could 'share', where I was able to start campaigning for global justice, and through meeting Konathu John be inspired to start a life of fair trading. When there were no longer enough residents to make the House viable I faced a crisis - how could I earn enough (I was then a part-time home help) to pay the rent of rooms big enough to store me and my boxes? And wonderful Ashram members offered to share their home, or their income so that I could stay on Teesside! But very soon Frank became more than a WDM tea customer and we married, which entailed a move out to the edge of Teesside ("I'm marrying you, not a big house, and we're moving!" became impossible with the recession of the early 80's).

Greystone was big enough to host Ashram agapes and local gatherings (breakfasts were a speciality to begin with, but shared food is always the key). I could help respond to issues affecting local people,through my CAB and promote an understanding of global issues in schools through the One World Centre. And we were on hand to help run the Ashram House in Parkfield which became a home for destitute asylum seekers. The sharing of their stories helped to open the hearts of local people and challenge the scaremongering agenda of the press.

And an unexpected bonus - walking along the shore at Redcar, between the power of the sea and that of the then-working steelworks I learned to love industrial landscapes too. Thank you to Ashram for helping me to find the place to be.

Jenny Medhurst

Some of the readers will already know that my first contact with John Vincent was when I was a student at Nottingham University. He preached at the Christian Association – the inter-denominational service – one Sunday evening. I remember him proclaiming there was no need for external symbols for Christianity, such as church buildings, while wearing full Methodist robes. The name clearly stayed in my memory as, a couple of years later, when I had my first job as a graduate working as a family case worker in Chesterfield, I came across information about a course he was running about Christianity and community and went.

From those two steps I started attending the Sheffield Eucharist Congregation before moving from Chesterfield to 210 Abbeyfield Road, Sheffield*. When I moved to London a year later I joined the London Ashram Group and then, on 1 January 1976, became one of the London Ashram Group community

flat residents.

For me Ashram was, and is, about challenging how I live my life and the causes I support as a Christian. In this I have been supported by the sharing of our stories, discussions and occasional action with other London members in our regular monthly meetings. On a very mundane practical level it means, for more than 40 years, meetings have mainly been held where I am living (demonstrating that all roads and public transport lead to south London) and, as far as possible, my diary is planned around being at home on the 3rd Sunday of the month.

Liz Urben

**When I lived at 210. other residents were two couples, one from Switzerland and the other from South Africa. Luzi and Max were both studying at UTU. By the end of the 1970s we had lost touch with each other. But a year ago an email was forwarded to me via one of the organisations where I volunteer asking whether I had been at 210. As a result, this year, the London Ashram Group welcomed Luzi and Renata to our July meeting.*



The Black Dog of Depression is always hanging around me, sometimes far away, sometimes close at hand. At the time of the weekend of Ashram's 50th

anniversary celebrations it was by my side and I found it very difficult to speak publicly even though I really wanted to say what Ashram meant to me. I struggled to get the words out and in the end, all I could do to sum it up in a sentence was to declare tearfully that "Ashram is like coming home".

Happily, I am now in a much better place than I was at that time, the Black Dog is a small speck in the distance and I would now like to explain what was behind those few words.

I have always lacked confidence in myself and have caused myself a lot of distress because of trying to please others and to do what I think they expect of me. It has been hard for me to be convinced that I am appreciated and I frequently believe that I have failed or that I should have done things better.

I tend to put myself under pressure because of all that I perceive I have to do and think that if I do not achieve them others will be disappointed or angry. When something goes wrong, I usually think straight away that it must be my fault and that "everyone will blame me".

It is hard for me to change this way of thinking, but with counselling and the support of my wonderful husband Brian and some good friends (both within and without Ashram) I am making progress and am beginning to feel more confident and in control.

I so often feel that I am out of place and that I don't fit in. At church, it can be because I don't believe in the Virgin Birth or I think

From Lorraine

there are other paths to God than Christianity; with neighbours or work

colleagues it is not watching reality TV shows or knowing all the so-called celebrities. In other groups it may be that I'm not a vegetarian and have never been to university, and almost everywhere I seem to be in a minority due to not having children or grandchildren.

In Ashram I feel accepted and allowed to be different. I am supported and encouraged and don't get the feeling that I am being judged. If I express different views, people seem genuinely interested in listening to those views and I don't think I have to do what others expect (In fact, I don't think they *do* expect anything from me but are willing to accept whatever I can offer). Ashram is a safe place in which to disagree or to question and explore what I think about any issue. There don't seem to be "right" answers and I feel loved and supported when I am struggling.

So this is why I described being in an Ashram gathering as "like coming home". I felt enough at home at that time to give in to the emotions I was experiencing and knew I was loved and appreciated just being me.

The members of Ashram are by no means perfect and all of us display a lack of tolerance and understanding at times, but there does seem to be a genuine desire to allow people to be whoever they want to be, to welcome them at whatever point they are to share in each others' journeys.

I can't get to many Ashram meetings now because of geography but it's good to know folk are there and that I have friends I can contact if I need support at a distance.

So, I truly thank God for Ashram!

Lorraine Jones

“Jesus community” (1968-1993)

To me, Ashram has always been essentially about following Jesus. Some do this as conventional Christians - even ‘RADICAL’ Christians! Others do it out of respect for a great moral teacher and a towering ‘man of compassion’.

What we do rather than what we say

Such ‘following’ of Jesus tends to be practical rather than theoretical – more about doing good, than what we *believe*. Jesus told a story about two sons who when told by their father to go and work in his vineyard responded in diametrically opposite ways. One said he would do so. The other that he would *not*. But in the event, the one who *said* he wouldn’t do it, actually did it. And the one who *said* he would, didn’t.

Jesus as so often concludes with a question: which son did the will of his father? Then He starts teaching. He says that people on the margins of society, the outcasts - like prostitutes and collectors of Roman taxes - enter the Kingdom of God ahead of religious and civic leaders.

In 1965, in his book ‘Christ and Methodism’, John Vincent wrote (in connection with this story of Jesus): “It is the task, not the word, which is decisive.....It is whether somehow or other God gets His will done which is important.....”

Saint Francis laid a similar emphasis on ‘deeds’ when he wrote in his Rule of 1221: “All the friars.....should preach by their deeds.”

These days I am a Franciscan tertiary and I wear my Franciscan cross. But I generally wear it under my shirt not in public view. I don’t ‘wear my heart on my sleeve’ precisely because Francis said it’s the way we live our lives, and the social services that we offer, which should be our primary way of proclaiming Jesus.

Incidentally I recall that in the early hippy-ish years of Ashram we used to wear our Ashram crosses at Ashram Weekends. We called them “danglies”.

Ashram houses

After 50 years of Ashram it is difficult to say much in just a few minutes. (I have written in Act Together about my progression from Ashram Community into the community of the Franciscans.) So let me conclude by focusing on one

small part of Ashram history - the community houses, and in particular the first house, the one here in Rochdale.

I came to Rochdale by accident. A friend – Dave Gamble – was living and working in this building; and I had just got my first paid job at Crumpsall Hospital in Manchester and was in need of somewhere to live.

I had just completed 12 months of living in community with homeless men, in Exeter and Liverpool, as a member of the Simon Community. And that experience had given me ideas about establishing a Christian community house. Coming to Rochdale I discovered my ideas had a lot in common with some thinking that had been going on in Ashram.

And so it came to be that in January 1970 Gladys Brierley, Elaine Peace, and I moved into 17 King Street South.

The role of the house and the neighbourhood it was set in was described well by Gladys in 1986 -

“King Street South in 1970 contained a cosmopolitan mix of families in an area of poor quality housing in which the Asian community had gathered. It included a number of disadvantaged families with a large number of children....We invited the residents of the street to meet us for coffee and allowed the area to write the agenda. We offered the use of our phone (public phone boxes were usually out of order), and the use of rooms for local councillors and Asian community groups. We had a playroom for children and small clothing store. We taught basic English to women and girls newly arrived from Pakistan.

Adolescent girls from a nearby hostel enjoyed coming to the house for a chat. Some still speak with affection of Ashram House. Two are no longer alive – sadly one girl committed suicide leaving a baby and another died at the hand of the man she was living with.

We had regular Agapes, and went into the community to discover the excitement of finding Jesus there, in our neighbour and in the situations in which we found ourselves.”

END OF QUOTE!

That project – Rochdale Ashram House - was some kind of ‘leaven in the lump’ in Rochdale for 15 years. And Peter Crompton will tell you more.....

Chris Blackwell, April 2017

CELEBRATING GRACE'S LIFE AND MINISTRY

3rd June 2017

John Vincent



During the last six months Grace and I have been completing a joint autobiography on 'Our Life and Ministry together' called 'Inner City Testament'. On May 16th she added a paragraph: "My part of our rich and wonderful life draws to a close". Now the book will be her memorial.

Always it was "our Ministry". if you complained to one about something the other had said or done, you'd get no response. Towards the end she seemed weaker, so we did most things together.

Now I'm left to do two people's work. I've a list of 15 jobs she did which we need people for. God only knows how we can do it – she did so much. So we in the tiny groups running Ashram Community, New Roots and Burngreave Ashram are desperately calling for others to join us. Anything you can offer is fine – computer skills, washing up, organising things. We've 12 people wanting a 50 – plus Lunch Club, but no-one to organise it. Please see me! Back to the story.

On Wednesday May 17th Cecilia came down with Grace and myself to the Burngreave Ashram where we took the photograph on the service order. The next morning, Thursday May 18th, the two of us spent an hour in the basement of Burngreave Ashram, doing a job she'd done for some years with others – breaking up large cardboard boxes dumped after the Free Meal. We then took a dozen of them to the Shiregreen tip and drove around doing jobs and shopping.

The next day, Friday, for the first time she stayed upstairs – looking at old photo albums with James. The next day she rapidly declined, and all our family came to see it all through together. Dr. Clare Richardson, the Sri Lankan nurses and the Burngreave community nurses were marvellous. On Thursday, 25th May at 4 in the afternoon, Chris, Carol, Cecilia, Reuben and I stood holding her for twenty minutes as she passed slowly away.

Grace is down to speak at the Ashram Gathering on July 24th. In a series on 'Texts I Value', she had agreed to speak on the Emmaus Road story in Luke 24 – how after death Jesus walked with two disciples who did not recognise him until he broke the bread with them. (That's our Gospel reading today!)

Grace was going to use her favourite piece by Dorothy Solle; 'Song on the Road to Emmaus'.

It says

Then we met someone
who shared his bread with us
who showed us the new water
here in the city of our hope
I am the water
you are the water
he is the water
he is the water

and then it ends:

We are the water of life
We shall find the water
We shall find the water

Grace read those words,
Grace was those words.

Grace was not a God person, she was a great sceptic of everything to do with religion. But she was a Jesus person – endlessly reading about it, discussing it, arguing about it.

But above all she was a Jesus person because she loved it. She found it her secret to life, she saw her Ministry and mine as endless attempts to act out bits of it in our inner city context which we both landed in, because we thought it fitted today the context that Jesus chose in the first century, and needed today the ministry that Jesus did then.

Today its a failing part of what they call the Voluntary Sector! We're desperately short of people. Are there any here who might follow her and continue the work she did? She'd have wanted me to say that.

For myself I just have to say it was a kind of honour to spend your life with a person like that.

Grace – a eulogy



I first met Grace 30 years ago when I was a student in Sheffield. From my home in Devon, I had heard talk of David Blunkett and the so called 'People's Republic of South

Yorkshire' and wanted to experience it, to feel it, to be part of a society where community support and care were put ahead of corporate profits.

In my third year, a new fruit and veg shop appeared across the road from the medical school with thought-provoking window displays. I cautiously ventured in. But there I met a friendly silver-haired woman and, before I left the shop that day, Grace had provided me with a handful of Ashram literature and an invite back for supper at the weekly congregation that met upstairs.

Little did I know that Grace and John were to become a major part of my life over the next 30 years. I moved into the flat and helped manage the shop. I took a year out of my medical work to do the study year at the Urban Theology Unit – and there I met Froo who I married 4 years later. And later, when Froo and I returned home from Uganda to give birth to our first child Emma, we lived again above New Roots and spent our first 6 weeks of parenthood there. Grace delighted in cuddling Emma to sleep and showing her off to the various customers and vendors who passed through the shop.

John formed the Ashram Community with Grace in Rochdale in 1967. In fact, we celebrated our 50th anniversary together with Grace just last month. As a community, we meet together for weekends twice a year and there, as in much of their life together, Grace has provided the perfect foil for John.

Whilst he is academic, political and full of grand plans, Grace was highly practical and focussed on the personal.

The political and the personal: two sides of the same coin. A combination that, for me, enshrines the very essence of what modern Christianity should be all about. Christ incarnate in everyday lives and actions.

One story perfectly illustrates Grace's pragmatism. On Saturday night at Ashram Weekends, we invariably have a social. And for many years this was a ceilidh with

David Peck calling out instructions. I remember on one occasion being told to "take 4 steps forward" as we held hands in a line. And we all did that. "And now 4 steps back" he called. And Grace from across the room called out: "Well what's the point of that then?"

David Peck - sharp as ever - went on... "Well, I do apologise to those who feel that their journey has been wasted, but I'm afraid that you all need to take 4 steps forward again." But that was Grace: ever practical, ever the pragmatist.

For many years, New Roots was her daily life. Set up in an old fruit and veg shop in the middle of the University district it set out to inform, to challenge and to enable visitors to shop ethically, long before it made business sense to do so.

For 30 years she ran the shop, supported by those who lived above it and a band of volunteers all inspired by the simple message of trying to make the world a better place, whatever our origins or beliefs. Grace worked incredibly hard and made the shop itself into a community - a place of lively discussion and of good ethical living. A limerick, written for the shop's 5th anniversary summed her up...

*The founder of New Roots is Grace.
She works at a frightening pace.
She busies and bustles, and flexes her muscles;
It's this Grace that saves us from disgrace.*

And it wasn't until last September, when she was well into her 80s, that she stopped her twice weekly runs to the morning market to buy produce for the shop, and the baking of her famous cakes to sell.



*Grace at the Burngreave Free meal
a week before she died*

A week ago, Grace passed through the door into whatever comes next. And we will all follow her. None of us will avoid it. But when we do, most of us would wish two things: that we die surrounded by those we love, and that, through our actions, we leave the world a better place than we found it. And Grace can certainly tick both boxes.

Thank-you Grace for all that have done for us, for all that you have given us. Our lives would be all the poorer if you had not been around. We will all miss you hugely.
Andrew Weeks

She leaves behind a lasting legacy

GRACE Johnston Vincent, the wife of the Rev Dr John Vincent, was born in 1934 in South India, the daughter of the Rev Wilfred and Mrs Dora Stafford, Irish Methodist missionaries. At age 14 she returned to Methodist College Belfast and Queen's University Belfast.

In 1958 John and Grace met and married. With John she founded the Ashram Community in 1967 which celebrated its 50th anniversary just three weeks before her death. Through the community she has provided support and encouragement to three generations of travellers as they sought ways to express an authentic and radical Christianity among Britain's urban poor.

In 1970 the couple moved from Rochdale Mission to inner-city Sheffield with their

three children, Christopher, Faith and James. Grace taught English as a Second Language at local schools, the only teacher who lived in the area.

As a Methodist she was a local preacher until 1998 and a Conference-Elected member of the Methodist Conference from 1985 to 1990. Much involved in local inner-city community life and issues, she was in 2007 awarded a Burngreave Area New Years Honour.

In the last four years, she has joined with John in taking services around the new Sheffield circuit, which was much appreciated.

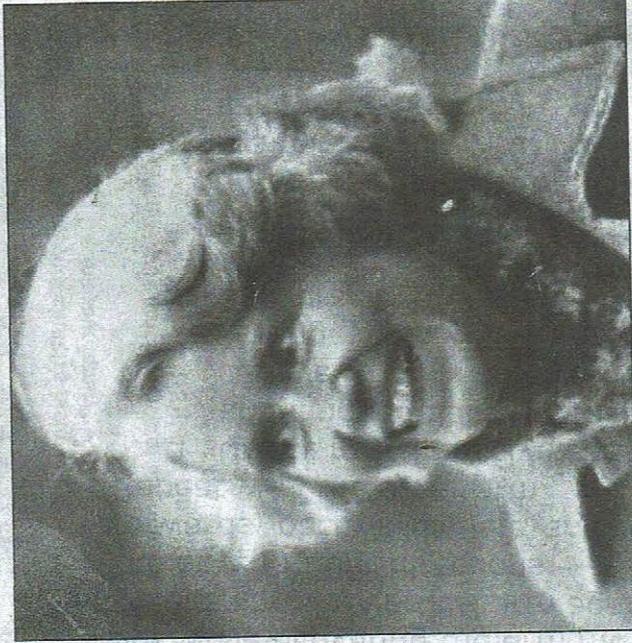
In 1984 I went to Medical School in Sheffield with the aim of living in what was

called ideological dreams! For more than 50 years she has been doing this, working alongside John as they worked to regenerate inner city Sheffield. She set up and ran the popular New Roots shop until she semi-retired in her 70s, finally having to admit that she was no longer the 30-year-old that she felt. But it wasn't until the autumn of 2016 that Grace stopped her cake-baking and her early morning trips to Sheffield market to buy produce to sell in the shop.

As well as New Roots and the Ashram Community, she provides a lasting legacy through those she enthused and supported during her rich life. Loving, gentle and dedicated, Grace has been a great friend and mentor to many of us for the last 50 years. She and her husband

known as "The People's Republic of South Yorkshire". There I found John and Grace who embodied everything that I was looking for. While John was academic, political and full of grand plans, Grace was highly practical and focused on the personal. Two sides of the same coin - together they encompass the very best of modern Christianity.

While groups of us would sit with John in the Urban Theology Unit discussing "radical Christianity", "urban regeneration" and "empowerment of the poor", she would focus on down-to-earth ways of supporting those in need and supporting the local community. She provided the perfect foil to our tea-fu-



Grace Vincent: was highly practical and focused on the personal.

John have been a huge source of inspiration. She's a great loss and we'll all remember her with huge affection and love. - Andrew Weeks

MEMORIAL SERVICE 23 JUNE 2017

Remembering founder of Sheffield shop with a sense of social justice

Richard Blackledge, The Star, Sheffield June 22 2017 updated June 30 2017



Grace Vincent offers vegetarian products from New Roots; at the Sheffield Green fair at St Mary's Community centre, Bramall Lane.

A church minister and former teacher who opened a popular Sheffield grocery shop with a campaigning agenda has died aged 83.

Grace Vincent launched New Roots, on Glossop Road, 30 years ago, with the aim of selling ethically-sourced and Fairtrade fruit and vegetables, as well as speaking out on global issues including poverty, inequality and climate change.

In its early days the shop was a rare outlet for vegan, vegetarian and organic foods in Sheffield, and the place also acts as a hub for activists, providing space for meetings and workshops, and has an unusual edge.

Stock is interspersed with displays of leaflets, petitions

are regularly kept on the counter and messages about hard-hitting problems such as landmines are commonplace in the front window.

Grace's widower John Vincent founded the Ashram Community, a small nationwide radical Christian group, and for many years the pair ran the Urban Theology Unit, an organisation that seeks a more relevant role for the church in a modern city.

"She had an enormous influence on people - getting them into voluntary work and into social or community concerns," said John. "She was an inspirational character, even to me. We used to do everything together."

Grace was born in Kodikanal,

South India, in 1934, when the country was under British rule, and was schooled there before travelling in 1948 to Belfast, where she attended Methodist college and Queen's University, before moving to Manchester.

She met John in 1958, and the couple married the same year.

"We did our courting through the campaign for nuclear disarmament, which I was the North West president of, and she became one of the leaders," said John. "We've always been fighting causes."

Grace had three children with John - Christopher, Helen and James - before they came to Sheffield in 1970. By this time she had started working as a teacher of English as a second language, tutoring at Byron

NEW ROOTS: SHOP FOR JUSTICE



Grace Vincent

Wood Middle School and, later, Earl Marshal Secondary.

After a spell leading an alternative church in Grimesthorpe, based in a corner shop, she opened New

Roots.

The wider Glossop Road building is owned by the Ashram Community, but the shop itself, a not-for-profit venture, is rented out to volunteers on special terms. Upstairs at New Roots

there is a flat where 27 people - in twos and threes - have lived over the past three decades while working for the shop. John said: "I think the striking thing is, really, her effect on generations of undergraduates who became volunteers in the shop."

In 2001 the couple founded the Burngreave Ashram, a complex of shops and community spaces on Spital Hill, before Grace stepped back from her

day-to-day involvement in New Roots in 2013. "It's totally run by students now," John added.

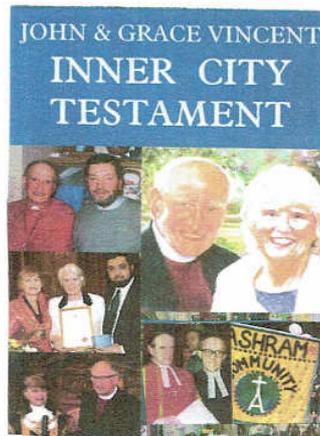
Grace died of pancreatic cancer, having only been diagnosed with the condition in May. A celebration of her life was held at Pitsmoor Methodist Church, where more than 150 people attended. John said she 'refused to allow anything of religion, God, or an afterlife' to be spoken of at the funeral. "That was not what being a Christian meant for her - it was the idea of heaven in the present, on Earth."

Read more at:

<http://www.thestar.co.uk/news/remembering-founder-of-sheffield-shop-with-a-sense-of-social-justice-1-8605887>



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Marjorie Bonehill 1941-2017

(Andrew helped Marjorie to tell the story of her life when she developed dementia)

My name is Marjorie Bonehill. I was born on the 17th May 1941 in the family house in South Kirkby, Yorkshire, a coal mining village.

My mother was called Mary and my father Harry. My father was a miner and worked at South Kirkby Colliery until he retired due to ill health.

I had three brothers and one sister. Herbert (Bert), Sylvia, then me and after me came Ronald (Ron) and then Wilfred (Wilf). Me and my sister and brothers attended Mill Lane Methodist Mission.

Bethany project meets tremendous need

In the first week in which the new Mission Hostel for homeless women and girls and their children came into operation, it accommodated some 45 women and 30 children. This pattern has been repeated week after week, revealing what the Mission has known for years, a tremendous need to provide emergency accommodation for women and children who are homeless.

The Mission Deaconess, Sister Marjorie James, who runs Bethany, is on a 24-hour a day job, with a special telephone service, and the assistance of four young lady students from the Mission's Social Study Centre. She takes cases from the various welfare and statutory services of the Inner London Boroughs, particularly that of Tower Hamlets, together with cases from the Police, Probation Service and other welfare agencies. The mission has allocated seven rooms, with kitchen, bathroom and toilet facilities, together with its kindergarten, to the residents. The residents do a great deal of the domestic work themselves, cooking and cleaning, and the Kindergarten is kept busy in looking after the children at all hours of the day.

Although receiving some payments from Local Authorities who call upon its service, The Mission relies heavily on subscriptions from its friends to help this service.

After leaving school in 1956 I attended Wakefield College of Arts and Crafts (full-time) to study Domestic Science.

In 1958 I started work as an Apprentice Catering Assistant at Pinderfields General Hospital and attended Leeds College of Technology (part-time). I obtained my City and Guilds in Catering Trades and Hotel Management.

Whilst working as an assistant catering officer I was still an active member of my local Methodist church and became a local preacher. I later made the decision to train to be a deaconess and in 1965 I began a training course for the Wesley Deaconess Order at Ilkley College. I was ordained in 1968 and the graduation took place at Coventry Cathedral.

In 1970 I went to work at the East End Mission in Stepney, London. My main work was to develop a therapeutic residential unit, the Bethany Women's Hostel, for homeless women needing rehabilitation



At the Bethany Women's Hostel

back into the community.

My developing interest in working with people resulted in me in starting a two year Social Work training course at Chiswick Polytechnic in 1972. During this time I went to live as a lodger with Mrs. Olive McCall in Twickenham and worked part-time as a youth worker in Fulham.

After qualifying as a Social Worker in 1974 I left London and moved to Manchester to start work with Manchester Social Services. Initially I worked in Area 2 and my office was in Beswick. There I met Margaret Short and we became good friends. Margaret is married has two children Dawn and Clare.

I later transferred to the Area 6 office, based in Civic Centre, Wythenshawe. I also moved to a flat in Handforth. Initially I worked on the Child and Family Team but then I took up apost as a Volunteers Organizer.

In 1980 I met Andrew Bonehill, who lived in Wythenshawe, when he applied to be a volunteer. On 30.07.1983 we married at St. Mary's Methodist Church in Handforth. Andrew qualified as a Social Worker the same year and started work with Stockport M.B.C.

In 1985 we moved to our first house at 3, Wensley Drive, Withington, Manchester.

I took early retirement from Manchester Social Services in 1993 and later that year went to work, as a Social Worker, at Dr. Kershaw's Hospice in Royton, Oldham. In 1997 Andrew and I moved to Marple, Stockport.

In 2000 I retired from Dr. Kershaw's Hospice and became more actively involved in voluntary work as a volunteer Hospital Chaplain at Stepping Hill Hospital and assisted at the luncheon club at Marple United Reformed Church in Marple. I also acted as a Traidcraft representative and was involved in the Ashram community. I was also active in the Methodist church in Marple.

In 2009 I was diagnosed with Mild Cognitive Impairment and in 2011 I was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease.

Sister Marjorie James was sent as a Wesley Deaconess as my colleague at the Rochdale Mission, Champness Hall in Sept 1968. She brought with her vivacity and a deep love of people. She immediately became the champion of the 50 older women in the Sisterhood.

Marjorie became a real friend to Grace and myself and to our three children. She joined the Ashram Community and worked with us in opening the first Ashram Community House in January 1970 in King Street South, Rochdale.

When she moved on from Rochdale to the East End London Mission in September 1971, she worked with us, organising a London Branch of the Ashram Community, and she arranged events in London for a number of years. In later decades she was an active member of community meetings and in the Greater Manchester branch, always supported so lovingly by Andrew who she married in 1980.

Always her own person, original, often controversial, Marjorie had openness, intense humanity and deep understanding. She had an instinct for reality, a devastating sense of humour, and an ability to speak out against insincerity, injustice or unfairness, and then get her hands dirty and put them right. She's a true child of Jesus' Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Heaven only knows what she's up to now!

John Vincent



Arms Fair Protest

Our wonderful photographer of 'yet more protests', Peter Marshall, spotted me outside the EXCeL centre in London where I had gone to support some of the week long protests aimed at stopping the ARMS FAIR, due to take place the following week.(September 2017). The protests involve attempts to prevent the transport of armaments and other goods (one large lorry seemed to be icecreams!) needed by delegates into

the Centre. As he then told Linda who told Jenny; I was then asked to 'write up' something for ACT TOGETHER.

I am glad to do so as I feel part of my presence there involves communicating to others something of what this is about and why it is important to do all in our power to stop it. For the last two FAIRS, Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT) has coordinated a full week of protests the week before with specific themes each day so different Campaign groups take lead on different days. This year the programme ran:

Monday Stop Arming Israel. In 2015 Israel was given a whole 'pavilion' at the Fair. It advertised its weaponry as 'combat proven' ie used in Gaza.

Tuesday No Faith in War.

Wednesday No Nuclear, Arms to renewables.

Thursday Solidarity without borders.

Friday Conference at the gates.

Saturday Big day of action. Art the Arms Fair. (display of art produced then on display in nearby gallery following week.)

Sunday War stops here. Public Education day about the Arms trade.

In addition on the Monday before the start of the Fair there is a candlelit vigil.

I think this is a powerful witness as to how many groups are outraged at this event. I was only able to attend the afternoon of the Tuesday and much of Wednesday daytime action but know some



people had been planning actions of various kinds in detail for long time. Each day is characterised by a mix of drama, song, speeches, poetry and art. Because there is a large police presence only lock-ons and on the Tuesday a few people hanging down from a bridge can effectively stop traffic but if these few very courageous people manage to cause a long blockage then everyone else can support by moving on to the road. Such actions on most days have been successful in causing long delays to the trucks.

On the two days I was there I missed a long lock-on which took place on the No Faith in War day organised by various Faith groups. However in the afternoon there were prayers and singing by various groups, a very gentle approach though witness of a kind at least to police that there is strong feeling in sections of the Faith communities.

The next day organised principally by CND groups and Arms to Renewables was very lively. A highly participative drama transformed a missile into a windmill. Many people made smaller windmills and there was generally enormous amount of creative talent in banners, poetry and singing. Jonathan Bartley, co-leader of the Green Party made a speech very supportive of the protests. He pointed out in terms of jobs all the skills involved in making weaponry are transferable to more benign uses especially the Renewables industry. He said how ashamed he felt to belong to a country which sold more armaments than China and was second only to the USA. He reported the mayor of London was against the Arms Fair. Jonathan argued we needed cross party opposition to the Fair so it could be stopped.



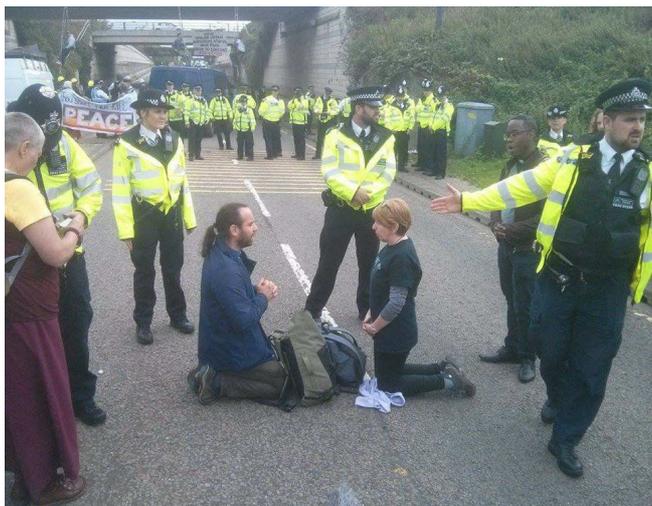
The lock-on in the afternoon was achieved by two people linking their arms in a pull along luggage bag then filled with materials so to separate them special police were needed to break the 'lock'. As they were being kept busy at the only other gate into the centre by 2 other 'lock-ons' we were there for some time. It was rumoured that owing to police cuts there were fewer such specialist teams! On the other hand in more brutal regimes it would be the case that the same degree of care needed to cut people free might not have been exercised. It does take an enormous amount of courage however to make yourself so vulnerable and also skill to escape the surveillance of a lot of police to actually achieve the lock-on.

All the time we were then able to stay in the road was very companionable with conversation, singing and dancing. Another world is possible.

Some of the home made banners had profound messages. On the roundabout which all truck drivers needed to use on way in and out of the Centre was one which read: 'THIS IS A DEAD END. THERE IS ANOTHER WAY. GO IN THE WAY OF PEACE'. Individual ones included: 'SPIRITUALITY PUTS A SPANNER IN THE WORKS'. 'DON'T MAKE A LIVING OUT OF KILLING'. On the two portable loos: 'MORE TOILETS, FEWER BOMBS'. '2 BILLION PEOPLE DON'T HAVE ACCESS TO A TOILET. WHY DO WE NEED MORE WEAPONS?'

If you look on the CAAT website you may still be able to find videos and accounts of all the actions on the different days, all very imaginative with clear messages made in totally non-violent though sometimes very courageous ways.

I have been focussing this year since my greater involvement with the Quakers on the issues of



Chris Howson has support in prayerful protest

militarisation and weaponry. At the Quaker Yearly Meeting I went to sessions on these issues and this included a workshop preparing people for the protests. It was impressive to see the commitment of so many young people who also were outraged at the way the Army is now encouraged to go into schools. If you are interested in finding out more about the increasing militarisation of our society the FORCES WATCH website contains a wealth of material. I also met with a member of an interesting group called VETERANS FOR PEACE, also involved in the protests at the Arms Fair. Whether you are pacifist or not the way the minds of young people in particular are being

habituated to the idea that military solutions are the norm rather than exceptions is deeply disturbing. I also do not think anyone in Ashram can be anything but horrified at the huge, obscene amount of money spent on increasingly sophisticated weaponry and the devastating effects around the world on communities that results from its use. I was given a book recently by a Quaker friend, 'Active hope' by Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone. It starts by outlining what it calls the 'Three stories of our time'. Essentially these are BUSINESS AS USUAL, THE GREAT UNRAVELLING, AND THE GREAT TURNING. They are all real stories by which people live. The first leads to apathy, the second to despair but the third to active hope whose essence is practice. If we choose to live by working for the change we want to see.

My involvement in the protest was an expression of such active hope. This outrageous event should be stopped, whether this year or soon. In the meanwhile the protests generated real experience of the truth another world is possible. We became a compassionate community, sharing food, experiences and ideas, encouraging creativity, courage, and humour. I stayed overnight near Tavistock Square. In the beautiful gardens there in central London there is a fine statue of Gandhi, a stone commemorating conscientious objectors, a cherry tree for remembrance events of Hiroshima, and boards telling something of history of the area which was home to the first woman surgeon and in more recent times experienced the horror of the 2005 bomb on a bus in the Square. People were sitting enjoying the gardens, contemplating or walking through. This and the protests for me were signs of the Kingdom, revealed by and to those whose lives are about active hope.



Sandra Dutson

Our Journey through Russia and Korea

Ian and Patricia Hamilton

15 days, chugging through the Russian countryside on the magnificent Trans-Siberian railway, stopping to visit spectacular cities on the way;
Catching ferry from Vladivostok to Donghae on the west coast of South Korea;
And two weeks visiting family and friends in Pyeongtaek, Iksan and Seoul.

Starting in Russia: 4 hour flight from Heathrow to Moscow – a day’s sightseeing in Moscow – a day and night on the train – a day exploring Yekaterinburg – two more nights on the train – visit to Lake Baikal from a two-night stop-over in Irkutsk – our last three nights on the train and arrival in Vladivostok – three days in Vladivostok



Here we are in Red Square, Moscow: Ian, Patricia and Lone my Danish friend and co-traveller. St Basil’s Cathedral behind us was closed but we did visit Lenin in his mausoleum, which I found very moving even though I can understand how his family would prefer him to be properly buried! We also visited Novodevichy Cemetery housing Nikita Khrushchev, Nicolai Gogol, Anton Chekhov and Boris Yeltsin among others; and then the Tretyakov Art Gallery. A fascinating day finishing with a delicious fish dinner in Restoran Byelly (White)

We travelled on 3 different trains. From Moscow to Yekaterinburg we were in a four-bunk kupe with Svetlana, who made us feel at home and translated our questions to the Provodnitsa.



On platform with Provodnitsa

She shared grapes with us and was a lovely person to spend our first day on the train with. We were again in a four-bed kupe from Yekaterinburg to Irkutsk, this time with Oleg who spoke no English at all, and so the dictionary came into its use! I

passed my Russian A-level 50 years ago but had never been to Russia before and had long dreamed of travelling on this railway....

On the last leg, from Irkutsk to Vladivostok we



travelled “platskart”, an open carriage housing 54 people, divided into 6 berth sections with the passage way running through. I liked the openness of it, but the upper bunks (one of which Lone was allotted) were very cramped and uncomfortable.

It was an epic journey, travelling through miles of pretty flat countryside – lots of birch trees and wide open spaces. I loved the gentle constant movement, being suspended from regular life commitment, with time to reflect and read. I must say that we sadly did not spend very much time communicating with fellow passengers and kept very much in our group of three. The Provodnitsa (Tatiana for our first journey) or Provodnik (Dmitri for our second and another

Dmitri for our third journey) looked after the carriage, handing out sheets and towels, checking tickets and making sure everything ran smoothly. The toilets kept blocking in the open carriage, but were soon sorted by Dmitri!

We bought food from Russian supermarkets or on the stations for breakfast and lunch and then made our way to the restaurant car for dinner each evening.

There were 20-30 minute stops at major stations every four or five hours when we were able to get out onto the platforms. There were several 2-minute stops in between just for people to start or end their journey. Very few people travel the full length of the journey, from Moscow to Vladivostok.

In Yekaterinburg we visited the Church of the Blood which stands on the spot where the last Tsar, Nicholai II, and his family were killed by the Bolsheviks in 1918. Boris Yeltsin grew up in Yekaterinburg and is quite the hero there; a new museum has opened in his honour – giving us some interesting background to late 20th century history.

From Irkutsk we went on a day trip to Lake



Lake Baikal

Baikal, the largest freshwater lake by volume in the world. Our guide Nelly was a Buryat, the local ethnic group and she had wonderful stories to tell of the Lake's history and folklore...

Finally, Vladivostok, a very Russian city at the end of our journey, where we stayed 3 nights waiting for our ferry to Korea - it was good to have 3 days there. We found the Methodist church after much searching. It was closed when we visited but we did find Eduard in the Lutheran church which has a very active



Church in Vladivostok

ministry led by Manfred Brockman. In the evenings we ate out in both a North Korean and a South Korean restaurant after a final meal with Lone in Republic (a Russian pub) before she flew



back to Denmark on the 2nd morning.

And so to Korea: to meet with family and friends, to deliver a prayer shawl from our church in Wigan and to make a special journey to the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea.

**Miyeon, our daughter-in-law's family has a fruit shop business in Pyeongtaek, from which they also run market stalls on twelve days of each month. We had a lovely time hanging out with them in the shop and being served delicious Korean meals.

**we travelled south on the train to Iksan to meet with Revd Lee Suk In's parents and to visit the farm where he grew up. Suk-In, now a URC minister in New Malden, and his wife Hye-Jong and children came to worship with us at St George's Cable Street in the early 1990's and

have stayed good friends.

**in Seoul we met with Pang Hye-Kyong who looked after Richard and Chris as babies and is Chris' godfather; with Syn Keum Sun the wife of the minister who invited Ian to work with the Korean Methodist Church in 1980; with Marion Kim an American who has lived and worked for 50 years in Korea and is married to Kim Yong-Bock; and with Chon Hye-Eun, the daughter of Richard's godfather and now training to be a Methodist minister herself....



The Prayer Shawl ministry at Standish Methodist church asked us to take a shawl with us to Korea. On our last Sunday morning we worshipped at Chong Dong First Methodist Church where Ian was ordained in 1982 and we handed over the prayer shawl for one of their members suffering from cancer.

Finally, here is a picture of Ian looking over to North Korea on our trip to the demilitarized zone.



May there be peaceful reunification of this divided nation.

Post-journey thoughts on Korea today

Korea has become a much freer society since we were there under the dictatorship of Chun Doo Hwan. There isn't the presence of the military everywhere on the streets of Seoul. After the corruption scandal which brought down President Park Geun-hye, there seems hope for the future under President Moon Jae-In.

Seoul and other cities have developed beyond recognition. Buildings have grown up into the sky and there is a lot more traffic on the roads. There is much wealth in the cities although not everyone has access to it and there is poverty still, especially in the rural areas

There were large choirs and large congregations in the services we attended with all the enthusiasm they create....lots of singing and loud exhortations by the leaders of worship, but also a truly striking deep devotion. When we were in Korea, we tried to avoid the huge churches and were members of the Little Church, which emphasized the importance of children, but was also smaller in number but not in devotion.

I expressed concern about the current situation in Korea to our daughter-in-law, Miyeon, and asked if she was worried for her family. She said that they are not affected like we would expect and that they do not get as much news broadcast as we do in the UK. I must say that I am myself anxious about their holiday in Korea in October, although I did not have any worry for ourselves when we were there in July!

Statement on the January 6 North Korean Nuclear Test (so-called Hydrogen Bomb Test) God's Peace cannot be achieved through force

Since the proclamation of the "Declaration of the Churches of Korea on National Unification and Peace" in 1988, the NCKC has continuously made clear its principle of denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and the whole world. But amidst rising military tension due to North Korea's nuclear test on January 6, we claim the following with deep concern.

1. Peace cannot be built through nuclear weapons and an arms race.

We have clearly observed through historical experiences, especially the Korean War, that peace and unification in the Korean peninsula cannot be achieved through force. The North has several times proposed that they would cease nuclear testing in exchange for the suspension of the Korea-US joint military drills, but the proposals have been ignored. The US is reacting quickly to this test as they have just flown over the Korean peninsula one of their high-tech strategic weapons: the B-52 Stratofortress, capable of delivering nuclear bombs. They are also considering deploying more weapons such as nuclear submarines and the F-22 stealth fighters scheduled to arrive next month. Accordingly, Japan has convened an immediate National Security Council and is struggling to stipulate a strong military response. A few members of the ruling party in South Korea are proposing the "nuclear armament of South Korea".

The NCKC urges North and South Korea to faithfully implement the 1992 "Joint Declaration of South and North Korea on the Denuclearization of the Korean

peninsula", and also asks the US and other states with nuclear arms to complete global denuclearization.

The NCKC further asks South Korea and the US government to stop the joint military drills on the Korean peninsula.

Moreover, we urge that South and North Korea along with the US and China immediately convene a "peace treaty" negotiation to establish a peace system in the Korean peninsula.

2. North and South Korea as well as surrounding countries including the US must stop actions of provocation and begin dialogue.

In August last year the South and the North were almost led to the brink of war by the land-mine explosion and the anti-North loudspeaker broadcasts that followed. But through the dialogue of four consecutive days, the two governments escaped the crisis and opened a new chapter of exchange and cooperation. Provoked by the nuclear test, on January 9 the South reactivated the loudspeaker broadcasts and the North also began broadcasts. Military tension has risen again in the Korean peninsula. Words of provocation and antagonistic rhetoric are the prelude to violence and war.

The NCKC urges both governments to immediately halt the loudspeaker broadcasts and begin dialogue without any conditions as they did last August.

Furthermore we urge the surrounding countries including the US to not lead the crisis into catastrophe with the increased

arms race and sanctions. Rather they should cooperate together to peacefully resolve the crisis.

3. Sanctions against the North must be lifted and exchanges must be extensively promoted.

Ever since the 1950s, the sanctions against the North have only stimulated further conflict. Sanctions through isolationist policies have only threatened the North Korean people's right to live, and they have been a great obstacle to the exchange and cooperation between the North and the South. Civil exchange is the seed for peace and reconciliation as well as a must for national reunification.

The NCKC urges the South, the US, and the international community to lift the sanctions against the North including the 5.24 Measure and the UN sanctions, and demands that these parties provide more opportunities in which civil exchanges are guaranteed and promoted to the fullest.

The NCKC, together with all the churches and peace-loving people, continues to pray and act in order to realize peace in the world as we are determined to participate together in the "Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace" proclaimed in the 10th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches.

January 11, 2016

***Reunification Committee National
Council of Churches in Korea***

Emergency Letter To President Moon Jae-In Urging Immediate Dialogue

August 10, 2017

Dear President Moon Jae In,

May God's peace be always with you Mr. President.

Upon your inauguration, you have put great effort in supporting the socially marginalized groups and also in ridding the society of its malpractices. We sincerely appreciate your hard work in realizing the desires of the candle light revolution and thus opening a new era for South Korea.

The Reconciliation and Reunification Committee of the NCK has hoped to see the nation's long-cherished wish of a peaceful reunification finally come true with your leadership. Recently, however, North Korea has reinforced its nuclear tests and ICBM launches and accordingly, South Korea has made the deployment of THAAD a fait accompli, developed N-subs, strengthened ballistic missiles and intensified KOR-US joint military exercises. This tension has risen within the peninsula, which has caused grave concern to us all. To make matters worse, President Trump has declared that "North Korea would face fire and fury, one never witnessed by the world". Against such harsh words, North Korea immediately responded by announcing that it will strike Guam and Seoul with its Hwasung-12.

Military tension is at its height in the Korean peninsula and there is fear of war spreading among the people. We understand that you are also deeply concerned, but the lives of the people in South Korea should not be threatened by the provocative acts of the US and North Korea.

The road to peace is a difficult one, but the harder it gets the more important it is that we keep the principle. Dialogue is meant to resolve such extreme situation, which is why its affect is so highly valued. We cannot start sincere dialogues when we place blame for the opponent's extreme actions or when we insist various pre-conditions for dialogue.

We sincerely ask of the President that you swiftly take matters into hand. We ask that through unconditional dialogues, the two Koreas pave way to independently resolve the neo-Cold War crisis in the Korean peninsula. The NCK is ready to take active participation.

In order to transform the present crisis into an opportunity and open the door for dialogue, we humbly ask you to immediately dispatch a special envoy to North Korea.

Our prayers will be with you always, as you are desperately struggling for a better future of our country.

**Rev. Kim Young Ju
General Secretary**

**Rev. Rah Haek Jib
Chair of the Reconciliation and Reunification, National Council of Churches in Korea**

Holiday in the Cotswolds – one perspective



The Cotswolds are pretty, they are picturesque, it is like spending a week in a chocolate box (those ones with an idyllic country scene on the top). There are lots of villages, all with creamy-coloured stone cottages and a beautifully preserved church, most with a pub and usually an “Old Post Office”, some with an “Old Chapel” (usually Baptist in this area) and one with an actual working bakery and shop. There are so many villages that the original inhabitants ran out of names, so there is Upper Slaughter and Lower Slaughter, quite separate from each other; there is Upper Swell, Lower Swell and Nether Swell, Guiting Power and Temple Guiting, Bourton-on-the-Water and Bourton-on-the-Hill, and so on.

This year’s holidaying group consisted at its height of 12 Ashram members and family members, two of them trying it out for the first time, and was served by four very accommodating car drivers at different times during the week. Somewhat unusually, we all decided to do the same thing on the first day, when three car loads set off – though not in convoy – to Kelmscott Manor, the country retreat of William Morris and Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

One member of the group was most disapproving of these wealthy middle-class ‘socialists’ who created an idealised view of women, as well as some very expensive wallpaper. My favourite impression came from the guidance notes that led us round the house. There were two pastel portraits by Rossetti of the Morris daughters, aged 10 and 9, and Rossetti is quoted as calling them “dear little things...able to amuse themselves all day long without needing to be thought about by their elders”. Then there was a very steep staircase leading to the large attic space with roughly-cut beams to bang your head on or, as Morris said, “a fine place for children to play in”. Not so much an experience of art and architecture, then, more an example of the best way to bring up children – just let them look after themselves. On the way back

to base two car-loads stopped off to admire the amazingly large and somewhat ecclesiastical-looking Great Coxwell Tithe Barn while the others went on ahead to get the dinner ready.

That’s obviously the best aspect of the holiday – someone else preparing most of the meals so that you and your partner only need to spend one day chopping anxiously: will this curry be too hot, too mild? Obviously, ‘just right’ is never considered. One day we were given a choice of a medium or a mild version. On another day we were told, “This is very hot,” and if we couldn’t cope we could smother it with soured cream or yoghurt. The meal I had planned was very cheap as almost all the ingredients came from our garden, making my rucksack very heavy on the outward journey and teaching me that frozen blackberries defrost rather rapidly, spreading their juice far and wide before you reach your destination.

Our accommodation was one of several holiday lets on the site of a farm, but we didn’t have to plough any fields or tend any sheep. The house had three staircases, each leading to a different section of the first floor, unconnected to the other two – quite confusing for the likes of me. Even worse, the kitchen, as usual, had no scales or measuring jugs, leading in my case to some very soggy butter cream. We were about two and a half miles from any shops, but the car drivers were very willing to take orders for the ingredients we needed for the meals, and also deliver us to the starting point of a walk and pick us up on our return. The isolated location also had its advantages. On several cloudless nights we could see a sky full of stars which the mainly urban dwellers amongst us had forgotten even existed.

Returning to the week’s activities in chronological order, two car-loads attended the morning service at Chipping Norton Methodist Church to hear John preach a fiery sermon in a Victorian building with an impressive façade, in keeping with the style of the rest of the town centre (and, alas, with a foodbank donations box in the entrance hall, even in the Cotswolds). It is the quirky things that tend to stick in my mind, such as the excitement of the drivers when they discovered that they could park free for as long as they liked in the nearby car park, and my sense of approval when a member of the congregation came late into the service carrying a mug of tea, and no-one batted an eyelid. Back to base for lunch, and six of us then walked via Upper Swell to Stow-on-the-Wold, past the old stocks to a tea room that was still open after 4 o’clock (afternoon tea no.1).



St Edward's Church, Stow-on-the-Wold

For the Bank Holiday Monday Ian planned a 10 mile circular walk for three of us, following parts of the many named long-distance paths that criss-cross the area, including part of a Roman road marked as unsuitable for motor vehicles where we were passed by the occasional motorcyclist but only one other walker. This changed once we had gone through Upper Slaughter (from Old English *slohtre* meaning a marshy place, cf Slough) when the path was busy with people walking on the way to its Lower partner, which was holding its Summer Fair, with model boat races in the river, stalls, refreshments in the Village Hall (afternoon tea no.2) and bunting everywhere. Quirky memory for today – one of the houses had used ties, dozens of them, to make their bunting. Had someone worn them all at some time or another, we wondered. The rest of the walk took us through two of the Swells, after which Ian and I took a scenic short cut through the grounds of a brewery, despite many notices warning us of the consequences of trespassing. Had we been challenged, my plan was to reply in French to indicate that I couldn't understand the warning notices, but no-one seemed to be doing any brewing on the August bank holiday.

While we were walking, two of the party were cooking, John was visiting relatives in Cheltenham and the rest went to Northleach, with its museum of mechanical musical instruments and the Cotswolds

Discovery Centre (and café!), housed in the old prison (and they probably had an afternoon tea).

On Tuesday morning four of us walked into Stow in order to catch the 11.10 bus to Bourton-on-the-Water, which has a vast number of teashops and a model village, a reproduction of the actual village, but one-ninth the size. We resisted the teashops but enjoyed tiptoeing round the village, then found a quiet spot by the River Windrush to eat our sandwiches. (Till then I had thought the Windrush was just a ship that delivered bus drivers to Britain from Jamaica after the Second World War.) Quirky memory of the day – before setting off on the next stage of our walk I visited a public toilet which was housed in a former church hall of some kind, which meant that the words “LAUS DEO” were engraved above the doorway, a sentiment that often comes to mind when such facilities are finally located after a long walk along lonely country roads. Our way back to the ‘farm’ took us through Lower Slaughter, where it started to spit with rain so we visited the small museum in the old mill and rewarded ourselves with afternoon tea no.3 in the tiny café upstairs.

On Wednesday morning David drove three of us to the village of Naunton, where John had attended a family wedding a while ago. As we went to look in at the church we were greeted by the sound of a toddler group singing “The wheels on the bus”, not quite what we were expecting in a medieval building. But this church was ideal for the purpose, said one of the mothers, because it has a toilet! It also had a very impressive polished wood sink unit in a side chapel which had a lid enabling it to be converted into a sort of altar table once the Lego had been cleared away. The village also had a very elegant (former) Baptist chapel with burial ground, from 1850, and a large preserved dove cote, possibly as much as 500 years old.

After lunch back at the farm, six of us went in two cars to see the Rollright Stones, a scattering of



megalithic monuments on each side of the A44 just west of Chipping Norton. Apparently no-one

knows why they are there. After admiring the Whispering Knights burial plot we spent some time puzzling over the sentence carved on a bench nearby, given to the site in memory of a local learned person: ORE STABIT FORTIS ARARE PLACET ORE STAT. There's a packet of Traidcraft's best biscuits waiting for the first person not on the holiday to work out what this says.

On the way back David took his two passengers on a diversion to Adlestrop, a village right off the beaten track, whose church has associations with Jane Austen and whose thatched-roof post office is still not 'old', though the opening hours were interesting: Monday and Friday 4pm – 5pm, Thursday 9.30am – 11.30am and 4pm – 5pm. It seems from Adlestrop that if you have a post office in the Cotswolds you are not allowed a pub as well.

Thursday brought us to the last day of the holiday, and as I still hadn't visited the tiny village of Condicote, closest to where we were staying, I took a pre-breakfast walk to check it out, finding that the church was open to visitors even before 8 o'clock in the morning. After breakfast four of us embarked on another round walk while the rest went further afield to a rather eccentric sounding National Trust Arts and Crafts Garden at Hidcote Manor, about which they

enthusied as we ate our delicious evening meal of baked potatoes with leftovers.

The four walkers had passed through the field where the final battle of the English Civil War was fought, and reached Stow-on-the-Wold in time to do the official town trail and visit a tea shop recommended by a friend, for its coffee! (afternoon tea no.4) The main fact I remember from the trail guide is that the imposing Victorian St Edward's Hall in the Market Square was built at a cost of some £4,000, provided largely from unclaimed balances when a local bank closed. Leaving the town afterwards along the A429 we were passed by a car with someone waving out of the window yelling "Hello Peter!" (Peter thinks he has now worked out who it must have been.)

So ended a week of interesting conversations, especially with the first-timers, of meals eaten at a long table that gave it the feel of a banqueting chamber, of negotiating with the dishwasher, of peaceful evenings sitting comfortably reading in the lounge (no Scrabble or card games this year), of trying to remember to get out of bed on the right side to avoid banging your head on the sloping ceiling, of withdrawing to the games room across the courtyard to connect to the internet – and all arranged for us so sensitively by David Dale.

Linda Marshall



Problems of Life in a Wheelchair

After about three years using a wheelchair I now know so much more than I did about the difficulties facing those of us who have to rely on a wheelchair to

move around. Fortunately there have been many improvements in recent years, but I have been surprised to find so many still needed.

Probably the first thing that springs to mind is steps. It's fairly obvious that more than one step presents an obstacle. My own house can only be entered via five steps from the drive. I am at present resident in a nursing home, although still the owner of my house, and some time ago when I wished to go into it, my son and my daughter lifted the wheelchair,

with me in it, up the steps. When we bought the house, fifty years ago, it didn't occur to us that one day we might need wheelchair access. Something similar occurred when I was invited to a birthday celebration at a restaurant in the city centre. I was assured by the person who had made the booking that they were told that there was wheelchair access. However, when we arrived it was to find there were several narrow steps to be negotiated. This time it took three men to lift me in.

On another occasion my daughter and I decided to go for lunch to a tearoom which was part of a large hotel on the sea front. Not only were there steps but the second two were at right angles to the first two. Then there was a door which needed someone to hold it open while I was wheeled in. Happily, one of the customers came to our assistance.

Another problem connected with eating out is that there is seldom enough room for a wheelchair to be near enough to the table. This can sometimes be addressed by removing one

of the chairs, but there may still be a table leg in the way. This can mean that the wheelchair has to be placed side on to the table, thus leaving the wheelchair occupant open to the embarrassment of dropping food or drink on themselves or the floor. Here I must put in a good word for one cafe visited (not in my home city of Sunderland I'm afraid) where several tables had a section cut away from under the table top, thus allowing the wheelchair to move nearer.

Some roads have small sections of dropped pavements with corresponding sections on the other side of the road - these are really useful when

wanting to cross over. All is not well, however, as usually there is a car parked over them! I'm sure this is just through thoughtlessness - more education and publicity needed, I think.

I always seem to be complaining about something, so let's end on a happier note. Since I've been confined to a wheelchair, whenever someone takes me out, usually to a park or the sea front where there are always dogs and their owners, the dogs always come across to me and want to be friendly - sometimes I'm sure they are smiling at me! (I think it's because I'm on their level.

Valerie Boyd

Memories of Mental Distress

Looking back I now think
My delusions appeared
Because I was ill at ease;
Unhappy with my life and my routines.
Unable to acknowledge this reality
My mind created other,
Far more terrifying reasons
For the growing fears I sheltered.

Thoughts are distorted
Time warped
Yet it still moves relentlessly on.

Like a balloon squeezed
Displacing the air
Moving the tight bulges
From one spot to another.
So our minds can create explanations
For our disturbing feelings
Reasons that may turn to delusions
Redoubling our fears.

Thoughts are distorted
Time warped
Yet it still moves relentlessly on.

Everyday memories -
Walking a hospital corridor
Pushing a pushchair.
Passing from the realm of the psychiatric ward
To the realm of home
And back again.
Feeling frozen in time,
Trapped there yet also frightened
At the thought of one day being free.

Thoughts are distorted
Time warped

Yet it still moves relentlessly on.

The loss of autonomy
As, assisted in reluctantly buying Christmas gifts
I end up with one for my child
That I never would have chosen.
It sits there, reminding me how low I have fallen.

Thoughts are distorted
Time warped.
Yet it still moves relentlessly on.

And yet, the slow, slow move
Is towards recovery.
Time ticks by
And I move through each day,
Roles and responsibilities increasing
Giving purpose; a meaning to my days.
The relentless move of time
Becomes instead a progression.
A process through which I am repaired
Somehow restored; more now
Than when I first began.
No longer a balloon, squeezed and distorted
Or floating up until lost or deflated and discarded.
Instead a kite, soaring playfully in the air
Yet safe under my own loving guidance.

Thoughts settle
Time untangles
Both now progressing forward together.
Here is hope.

Alice McGregor

Sainsbury's: don't ditch Fairtrade

Sainsbury's has dropped the Fairtrade Mark on their own-brand tea and replaced it with their own label 'Fairly Traded'.

It's a step in the wrong direction. It will take away power from farmers, undermine standards and damage hard-won consumer trust.

But we can do something about this. Sainsbury's will only go ahead with their plan if their customers are happy with it. **So, let's prove them wrong!**



 **TRAIDCRAFT** dontditchfairtrade.com

Bring back Fairtrade!

*If you want to get Sainsbury's to reconsider their decision, we've come up with some exciting ideas of **actions online and in your local Sainsbury's shop.***

Together with other organisations, we've created resources for you and your local community. **We hope you'll find them useful!**



Get involved in the campaign

1. Go to the Don't Ditch Fairtrade website and read about the campaign; www.dontditchfairtrade.com or call us 020 3752 5718 and we'll send material
2. Download or order the resources you need for your action (like flyers, a mug prop, and letter to your local Sainsbury's)
3. Plan and execute your action!

Whatever you do, small or large, please let us know!

Email us at campaign@traidcraft.org

Tag us on Twitter @traidcraft

Or send us a letter to
2.12 The Foundry,
17-19 Oval Way,
London, SE11 5RR.

How to stop Sainsbury's tea 'pilot' scheme marking the beginning of the end for Fairtrade

Sainsbury's announcement in the Spring that it was dropping the independently verified Fairtrade Mark on its own brand teas has sounded alarm bells among Fairtrade supporters and brought anguished protests from its East African tea producers. They feel betrayed - no longer treated as partners but disempowered under a new colonialism.

Sainsbury's used to be proud to describe itself as the world's biggest Fairtrade retailer, but there is now concern that the bananas, sugar, chocolate and dozens of other Fairtrade lines sold in its 2,100 stores will also eventually be withdrawn from Fairtrade. Other supermarkets may follow their lead - Tesco is already dropping the Fairtrade Mark from its own label teas and coffees in favour of Rainforest Alliance certification that does not ensure that farmers get a fair price for their crop; meanwhile Costa, Starbucks and McDonalds have all devised their own schemes.

There is also a worry that shoppers will be confused and may assume that Sainsbury's new "Fairly Traded" teas are indeed Fairtrade.

Action

1. While the Fairtrade Foundation continues to talk to Sainsbury's and hopes their own brand will return to being Fairtrade certified, please add your name to the list of nearly 100,000 people who have petitioned Sainsbury's to change their minds
<https://www.change.org/dontditchfairtrade>
If you scroll down the page you can read Sainsbury's, and the petitioner's responses.

2. Download a model letter to Sainsbury's from the [dontditchfairtrade](http://dontditchfairtrade.com) website which you can encourage your friends, colleagues, and congregation to sign. Explain to them that "Fairly Traded" doesn't mean Fairtrade

3. Buy a packet of "Fairly Traded" tea and then take it to the customer service desk and ask for a refund- explaining that you wanted Fairtrade tea. You could also take a picture of yourself and your receipt and put it on facebook - we need many more customers to know what is happening.

4. Join us in the national day of action on **October 28th**- see the same website for details.

Growing christian groups and activities alongside church

This is a joint invitation from the Ashram Community and the Association Of Building Bridges Churches (ABBC) aiming to gather people for sharing and reflecting on the stories of our adventures with God in growing Christian communities on the margins of church and society.

What kinds of stories are we interested in?

If you are involved in pioneering or growing a group and activities inspired by the gospel alongside or beyond the Church then we are interested in hearing your story. In discussion we identified some of the characteristics/marks that the stories might include:

- Involving people who are marginal to society and/or church
- Small communities (maybe 5-10) intentional members
- Communities for a minority of people (not for all)
- Subversive presence and action that calls people to be outside Church
- Be Jesus centred
- Involve doing things with the local community responding to the local situation
- Has a self determined organisational structure
- Leadership functions are shared amongst members

Outline Programme

1. We want to gather participants for sharing stories - 11am to 3pm on 11th November 2017 at Burngreave Ashram in Sheffield with bring and share lunch;
2. We hope participants will prepare their stories for sharing by writing a short paper (2 sides of A4 at most) using the following headings as a guide:
 - Describe the context/situation - the location, any buildings or other assets, the issues being faced etc
 - Who is involved in developing the group, activity or community?
 - What has happened? Describe the story so far, the original stated purpose and values and key points on your journey
 - What functions or activities take place as a result?
 - How have you reached beyond the church and found new people?
 - What have you learned about being Christian in community?
 - How does your story relate to the gospel and the Way of Jesus? What aspects of the gospel are expressed by your group?
3. A programme for the day will include:
 - Sharing stories (bring 1-2 pages A4 as a draft contribution)
 - Reflecting on stories together (in groups?)
 - Plenary: what are we learning about the characteristics of incarnational, intentional, Christian community building.
4. We then hope to write up and publish some stories and reflections in agree formats/channels



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
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

2018

16 Feb General Meeting, Sheffield
11-13 May Community Weekend, Middleton
7 July General Meeting
9-11 July Summer School UTU
5-7 October Community Weekend, Unstone

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
Tel: 0793 201 7929 (Nirmal)

COMMUNITY

Community Office: John Vincent
7 College Court, Sheffield S4 7FN
T: 0114 243 6688
E: ashramcommunity@hotmail.com

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

Ashram Press: As above
See Website www.ashram.org.uk for publications

Ashram Community Trust is a Registered Charity
Registered Charity No: 1099164
Charitable Company No: 4779914
Website www.ashram.org.uk
administrator: kathclements@ymail.com

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 bi-monthly 11-2 at Luther King House
Restaurant, Brighton Grove, Rusholme

Sheffield – Tamara Donaldson– 0791 092 2462
Gatherings - second and fourth Mons,
5.30 – 7:30pm in member's homes or Community
Houses. See 'Burngreave Ashram News',
quarterly

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

Act Together editor: Jenny Medhurst
medhurst@phonecoop.coop Articles for the
Spring 2018 edition needed by April 15th
Contributions from members/associates who do
not attend national Community events especially
welcomed!

HOUSES AND PROJECTS

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