



ACT TOGETHER

Ashram Community Trust

Issue 86

Autumn 2018

Ashram Community Trust is a Registered Charity – Charitable Co. No: 1099164 www.ashram.org.uk



Contents

Page 1. Konathu John – Ashram's Missioner in reverse , Aleykutty
 John's urgent appeal for help for Daliths after the Keralan floods
 and Kerala appeal update.....David Turner

Page 4. 50th anniversaries.....Linda Marshall

Page 5. Refugee Stories.....Euan McPhee

Page 6. Some Stuff We Do.....Nona Wright

Page 7. Minister's letter.....Ian Parker

Page 8. Holiday in Ennerdale.....Linda Marshall

Page 11. Traidcraft plc's closure and the coffee price crash.....Jenny Medhurst

Page 12. Bringing justice and hope to Malawi rice farmersJenny medhurst

Page 13. Frank Medhurst- obituary.....John Vincent

Page 13. Frank's life and festival.....Jenny Medhurst

Page 15. A Place for Everyone in John's ministry.....Dan Hayes,The Sheffield Star

Page 16. Sheffield Summer School.....John Vincent

Page 17. A Story of Happy Happenings.....Nirmal Fernando

Page 19. Community information and calendar

Konathu John – our 1978 Missioner in reverse, and Aleykutty John's urgent appeal for Daliths in Kerala

In Kerala flood waters are receding, and with them so does coverage of the crisis in our mainstream media. Since I lived in Kerala in the mid 80s there have been very few occasions that events there made the UK news, let alone led it for two or three nights running - as it did recently. During my time, lack of rain in monsoon seasons was the concern, shortage of water in the hydro electric schemes leading to long power cuts later in the year. Hydro power engineers in Kerala obviously have a tightrope to walk in making decisions about rainfall harvesting. I guess they erred on the side of maximised capacity and minimised power cuts. This year they were caught out, failing to anticipate a continuing monsoon deluge late into August (37% above average rainfall), failing to release dam water early

enough and then being forced to do so by overtopping when the country below was already saturated.



Normal flooding at Kavalam

The whole of Kerala was awash. It is a big place. Only a couple of districts evaded huge problems (Kasargod & Palghat). In the hills there were many landslides and numerous low lying areas were inundated for several days. The tragic result - hundreds dead and hundreds of thousands displaced. In the vast Kuttanad rice paddy district (part of the well-known Kerala Backwaters that are normally serenely patrolled by luxury tourist laden house boats) flooding is a yearly occurrence. But not like this.

Left is a picture of Kavalam St Mark's CSI church in Kuttanad, posted on Facebook on July 24th, by friends who



Abnormal flooding near Tiruvalla

lived there. It didn't raise any particular alarm at that time. Most buildings, even the poorest, are sufficiently stepped up to keep them above the average monsoon season danger level. You can see the steps up to the church door. The flooding in Kuttanad during the second week of August pushed the water much higher. Facebook images showed me pictures of a Kerala Triratna Buddhist Community activist sitting in his kitchen with water up to his knees. Then Kerala came on the TV news - helicopters pulling people off rooftops, colourful fishing boats from the coast now working far in land to rescue folk. On Facebook and YouTube I saw people making desperate pleas for help, evacuation, food, medicine and clean water. The towns mentioned were close to home in Kerala for me. Villages I knew completely cut off for several days. Near Chengannur, the worst - a few miles down the road from Tiruvalla where I lived.

I got on the phone to my friend Aleyamma . There was no answer for three days before I got through. Power was in and out so people were having trouble charging mobiles. No-one in my closest circle of Kerala family was at immediate risk though some had got held up coming home from other parts of South India. Aleyamma herself was looking after her daughter & vicar husband's church house, safe on high ground.

Aleyamma, her friends and family call her Alleykutty, is a big personality in my life. She belongs to the Dalith Christian Charrmar (Pulayan) community. Her husband Reverend John became known to us in 1978 when he was Ashram Community's 'Missionary in Reverse'. Ashram worked out that the patronising colonial era relationships between the rich of the north and the poor of the south needed to be turned upside down, that we needed to hear and learn from the oppressed. KJ John came to stay in our houses and told us about his life, his community and their struggle. He had been born into a family of landless labourers. He worked the paddy fields as a young man but also got himself educated. He was employed as a catechist by the Anglican

Church of South India. A very bright, energetic, principled man, he was ordained and then selected to run the Diocesan social development programme. He went for training abroad and made contacts with church connected development aid agencies that led to the establishment of a big programme - the Social & Economics Development Society (SEDS) to help CSI Dalith Christians in the CSI Central Kerala Diocese.

"Dalith" refers to out-caste and/or tribal people across India, they see themselves as the aboriginal people, the first human arrivals in the sub-continent who were subjugated by succeeding waves of migration, pushed to the bottom of the social structure, a structure later solidified and legitimised by Brahminical caste Hinduism. Kerala in particular was a "madhouse of caste" - the most extreme forms of caste practise; beyond untouchability - unapproachability; effective slavery of caste communities like the Pulayans in rice fields and plantations.

In the 19th Century European missionary churches gave many outcaste dalith people chance to check out of caste Hinduism, conversion to Christianity representing political liberation as well as access to education, health care and social prospects. Other liberation movements with a religious and/or political aspects including Marxism followed, right up to the modern day where Ambedkarite Buddhists offer a modern alternative to continuing oppressive caste manifestations in Kerala society as well as the Buddha Dharma as a religious expression.

In the Christian community caste mentality persists, between converted dalith Christians and the ancient affluent Kerala Christian communities, the 'Syrians' - Orthodox or Catholic or Orthodox/Catholic; and between dalith Christians and other converts who are a bit less dalith but sometimes refer to themselves as 'Syrian', or are sarcastically called 'Syrian' by the daliths. Caste issues in Kerala are ever present in all communities and are very complicated. Aleyamma and Rev. Konathu John were involved at the sharp end - contending for dalith Christian

inclusion in the Church, church hierarchies and the society as a whole.

SEDS became a political project as well as a social development programme and in cash terms a bigger institution than the Central Kerala Diocese itself. This led to a world of conflict as the Diocesan leadership tried to rein SEDS in - which John was not having. The stress of this conflict, and the pressure of defending the financial integrity of SEDS against those from his own community that would seek to exploit it, took a heavy toll. I kept in close touch with them after my return to the UK, and after Konathu John's death in 1996 with Aleyamma. She remains one of my closest friends.

Ashram's connections with Kerala came to extend much wider than Reverend Konathu John. We had visits from Aleyamma, from various female SEDS workers such as Anneyamaal, Rachel and Elsamma Matthew who came to study at Manchester University, though this did not bear fruit as she was unable to step up to leadership and initiative as we hoped. Many of us went to visit Kerala and were welcomed there so warmly. Fresh out of university and wanting to really start learning I was able to go and live with John & Aleyamma and family for more than three years. I typed up project proposals, reports and conducted evaluations some of which might have reduced the burden on KJ and helped a bit. Mostly I had the privilege of spending very extensive periods in their communities. These experiences shape my life today.

A couple of days ago I made another call to Aleyamma. She had returned to her own home just north of Kottayam. There are hundreds of emergency camps. Aleyamma was cooking food and taking it to the local one (I do get a sense of cross community mobilisation in the face of the great challenges). Aleyamma has had time to communicate with her network of contacts amongst the dalith community in the worst effected areas. As you can imagine the impact she reports is extremely severe. Aleyamma said damage to people's houses has been extensive.

Being generally the poorest, dalith communities live in the least secure locations, in buildings least capable of withstanding floods. We have seen film of people winched off rooftops from well constructed two storey concrete houses where the ground floor flooded. At least such people had chance to move property upstairs as the water levels rose. Over the road, down the hill, in wooden houses with coconut leaf thatched roofs there was little chance to preserve property. People are without the basics right now. Aleyamma mentioned clothes, shoes, cooking pots, food & cash. Looking further down the road it is obvious to me that the economic impact has to be significant. How many acres of cultivation have been drowned? How many cows, goats and pigs are lost? Have grain stores for food and reseeded been lost? At rice harvest time labourers are usually paid in grain. How many employments are lost or disrupted now? How many day labouring opportunities gone? I could go on.

So the need is overwhelming and Aleyamma has called for help to provide some financial support to some of their people most badly effected. Help from me, from my network of friends in the UK, and from Aleyamma & Rev. Konathu John's friends too. I will be channelling whatever cash I can gather to her via Western Union. There are appeals for Kerala from established aid agencies but working with Aleyamma has obvious benefits. Every penny given will go to people in the greatest need. Aleyamma and her family are OK, they don't need anything. Aleyamma has a lifetime of activism in her community, and experience working alongside her husband in social development programmes. She is smart and tough minded enough to decide priorities knowing that whatever we send will be the proverbial drop in the flood waters. We have agreed that the amounts will be carefully accounted on both sides - "every paisa".

Please contact me if you would like to know how to send money. Thank you.

David Turner
davidjohnturner1960@gmail.com

Postscript

David has sent more than £4200 to Alekutty as a result of this appeal to Ashram members and NW friends. He writes: I have been in regular contact with Aleyamma in the last few weeks and she has outlined her plan to distribute the funds which her friends in the UK have provided with such kindness. She has identified three areas where she is most well connected with the local communities - Manjadikarry one of the first SEDS project areas identified by Rev. KJ John, Kavalam where her daughter Dolly & Jonny were living until earlier this year and finally Karumadi, the location of Karumadikuttan, an ancient Buddha statue that is a focus for Triratna Buddhist Community dalith events in the area. Aleyamma is not rushing this process. As stated before needs will outstrip the resources we have sent. She is taking care to be in dialogue with the communities & identify the most appropriate recipients. There are other agencies and individuals active in response to this crisis and part of her task is to see who is misses out. This will not be easy. She has said that people are asking for money to buy building materials, to cover lost wages as a whole rice growing cycle has been lost, and medicines for the most elderly. She has a fund of nearly £ 5000 to work with.

David Turner

50th Anniversaries

It was only a year ago that we were celebrating the fiftieth year of the Ashram Community. Not wanting to be outdone, Peter Gwyn Marshall and I (Linda Marshall née Hout) managed to organise a small gathering this year in Hull to celebrate our fiftieth wedding anniversary, followed by a nostalgia trip around the north of England.

The weekend began on the Friday, 27th July, which was the date of the wedding, when we met with the organist who played for the ceremony in 1968 and still plays occasionally at St Ninian's and St Andrew's URC, despite now suffering from Parkinson's disease. As you might guess, the church was originally Presbyterian, to which my Anglican/Methodist parents had defected in about 1949 when I grew impatient on the waiting list for the Methodist Sunday School. (There really was a waiting list – I was part of the post-war bulge.)

On the Saturday, still in Kingston-upon-Hull, that noted city of fishing or culture, depending on your point of view, we welcomed a dozen relatives and friends for a meal in a fairly new restaurant in a former fruit and veg. warehouse in the poetically-named Humber Street, now lined with art galleries and such like (the "Arts Quarter"?) Despite the modest number of guests, they had gathered from all directions – Streatham, Sheffield, Belper, Milton Keynes, Noisy-le-Grand, and even Cottingham, on the outskirts of Hull.

Ashram was represented by Liz Urben, whose home in the London Ashram Flat in Kennington our two sons had visited once a month for many years for an agape, even before they were born, and David Dale, who called in unannounced to admire our first grandchild in Belper soon after she was born.



On the Sunday we combined Ashram with culture when we followed part of the Larkin Trail around Newland Park, the street near the University where he had lived for some time and ran over the hedgehog with his lawn mower; but more importantly, we needed to check out that no substantial changes had been made to West Garth, the house where London Ashram member Ian Mackrill was born, which he bought some 70 years later when he finally retired back to Hull, and where he died on 3rd March 2013.

The next nostalgia stop was a few days in the small seaside town of Hornsea, where I spent all my childhood holidays. On a day out from there to Flamborough Head our younger son and his daughter swam in the sea and found themselves in the company of seals.

Our final destination was across the Pennines to Manchester, where we had met as students in the Presby-Cong. Soc. and where we lived for the first two years of our marriage. I suppose you could say it was where we had our honeymoon, as we went straight there after the wedding, but did treat ourselves to a day out in the Lake District, to be built on fifty years later by this year's Ashram Holiday in Ennerdale. The one regret of our weekend was that we were unable to attend the celebration of Frank Medhurst's life as it took place on the same day as our anniversary meal. (As the photographer for our event was one half of the anniversary couple, the photograph does not show both of us together, but I assure you, he was present.)

Linda Marshall

REFUGEE ENCOUNTERS

A few weeks ago, I joined a handful of Christians from various denominations in a walk of reflection about the plight of refugees across the world. It was a brilliantly warm, sunny afternoon as we wandered around Kimberley Park in the centre of Falmouth and thought about those who have had to flee their homes because of war, persecution, famine – and climate change. At the start of our walk, we shared the following prayer, which seems like a very appropriate prayer for us as followers of Jesus:-

*God of mercy, with every step we make today,
We pray your love will fill our hearts and move us deeply.*

Open our eyes to see the face of Christ in all we meet along the way. Amen.

At the beginning of July, I volunteered to help out with the aid effort for refugees in Calais. I went over to All Saints Highertown in Truro and loaded up my campervan with half a ton of food (mostly



tinned food left over from the foodbank, plus 30 x 10kg cases of dried apricots which had been donated!)

and headed to Dover. In Calais, I joined a small group that had also journeyed from Cornwall and we spent several days working with Care4Calais. The mornings were spent at the Care4Calais warehouse, sorting essential items for the refugees – spare clothing, toiletries, bags of snack food, etc. and making up over 200 individual carrier bags to give out. After a sandwich lunch, we loaded up the vans and drove out to one of the areas where refugees were known to be. Since the clearance of the Jungle, refugees are now



dispersed around the edges of Calais but are still in as much need as ever.

While the goodie bags were distributed from the back of the van, a mobile generator was set up and a large board of 30-40 powerpoints attached, so that the refugees could recharge their mobile phones. Mobile phones are one of the most important belongings for any refugee – it enables them to keep in touch with friends on the road, family back home, or in the UK, as some of their friends or family already live in the UK. Then we served up cup after cup of tea or coffee, nearly all having 2-3 heaped tablespoons of sugar in them!



Whilst none of us had any problems with the French police, they did check what we had in the aid van. When we did a relief run to Dunkirk, they did stop us from going onto a field next to the carpark where the refugees were camped. The week before, a couple of aid workers had been arrested, finger-printed and questioned for several hours before being released. I think the idea is to show the local residents that the police are responding to public pressure, and also to let the aid workers know who was ultimately in charge. That said, I heard stories of individual policemen giving their pack lunch to refugees when they saw their desperate need. Issues, as ever, are complex, and seldom black and white.

What I did in Calais was but a drop in the ocean; nor did it address the larger political issue of responsibility for the thousands of migrants that are pouring into Europe on a daily basis. Much more leadership and compassion needs to be shown by national governments, especially our own. And at a much more fundamental level, the root causes of **why** people are fleeing their countries needs to be addressed. Why is the UK still selling arms to repressive regimes, from which many people are trying to flee? Why are we not taking seriously the impact of climate change, largely fuelled by our consumerist lifestyle, on the

poorer countries of the world? And what are we doing to reduce the huge discrepancy in wealth between the affluent north and the poor south (recognising that we too have our poor within the UK too)?

One of the thoughts that came to me during the walk in Kimberley Park was that we, as followers of Jesus and companions with each other in our attempt to walk gently, are also refugees. We are trying to flee the oppression of consumerism, the dictatorship of the global capitalist enterprise and the social pressures of conformity to modern life. Like many of the refugees we see on our tv screens and newspapers, we too can become objects of fear and hatred, because we challenge the very fabric of the modern western lifestyle. How comfortable are we at seeking to live in this manner?

* * *

Meanwhile, back in Tregonigie Woodland in Falmouth, where I volunteer to help look after the local authority-owned public open space, I find my own form of refuge from daily pressures. And what a joy it is! Tregonigie Woodland is a green oasis surrounded by housing and industrial estates, and is much loved by the local community.

Apart from simply being closer to nature every time I am in the woodland, I find that as a result of my volunteering, I am closer to many more people in the neighbourhood. I would not have become friends with the wonderful people who make up the dedicated band of volunteers helping manage the wood, nor would I have got to know so many folk that walk the woodland regularly. I feel that I have been greatly blessed in all this!

Well, this is probably enough of my ramblings, except to share the words of Wendell Berry, farmer, poet and visionary:-

“To live we must daily break the body and shed the blood of creation. When we do this knowingly, lovingly, skilfully and reverently, it is a sacrament. When we do it ignorantly, greedily, clumsily and destructively it is a desecration. In such desecration we condemn ourselves to spiritual and moral loneliness and others to want.”

(Wendell Berry, *The Gift of Good Land*)

Euan McPhee

SOME STUFF WE DO – NONA AND EUAN

Best wishes to all our Ashram friends. Sorry we don't get to see more of you, more frequently.

One thing it seems we don't do much of is acting together – we are doing different things most of the time. We try to do a diary check every week, so at least we know about each other's plans.

NEW ACTIVITIES TOGETHER THIS PAST YEAR

We have joined an Iona Community family group. There are seven or eight regulars who meet a short bus ride away from us. Iona is much further than Sheffield, but we have happily found like-minded people near to home. We try to go to the annual South West gathering in Exeter, which is very inspiring.

Euan has been co-opted to the Executive of the Falmouth and Penryn Churches Together and I have become a Church rep. So we see each other at some meetings *when we can both be present*.

After a few blips, we restarted the Fairtrade stall in our church, co-operating with the Catholic Church on collection and return of sale goods to a central point.

EUAN

Continues to be involved in the local woodland, as Chair and Chief volunteer. I sometimes describe myself as a Tregonigie widow.

Now a fully accredited Local preacher, he does about five Sundays each quarter, and puts in a massive amount of effort for each engagement, even if there are only seven people in the congregation.

The Campaign for Real Ale in Cornwall relies on his beer tasting ability, as he is on their tasting panel. The tasting cards are very thorough!

Most recently, he is leading a small group who are trying to make our massive old chapel more green. They have devised a plan to go to the next Church Council meeting. He is also on the Cornwall Churches Environment group.

At the moment he is experimenting with the manufacture of rowanberry wine

NONA

Possibly useful: I regularly attend the Churches Together Justice and Peace group, and am part of a team bringing Bible stories to two schools (Open the Book) . Also sometimes help with their weekly coffee morning.

I assist intermittently with a group I call "Singing for the demented" and enjoy the singing.

Do the weekly church notices and have just signed up to help with the elevator rota.

Sign petitions for AVAAZ and 350.org, and write letters for Amnesty's Urgent Action Appeals

Just for fun: handbell ringing, country dancing, and an active over 50s group.

I try to do one thing and only one thing outside the home every day. Doesn't always work!

BIG CHANGE: Our lovely grandson has just started school and it will be more difficult to organize time with him (and our daughter) from now on. We have had so much fun watching him grow up.



Minister's letter

(for Ian's parish magazine, circulated to all the houses in his parish)

My father and one of his work colleagues used to share a private joke. When one of them returned from a holiday the other would enquire. "Did you visit any of our properties?" They meant National Trust properties; because they were both members of the National Trust they considered themselves to be part owners of them. Of course you don't have to be a member of the National Trust to enjoy the wonderful scenery it owns in Cumbria and elsewhere. But if you are a member you can use their car parks in the Lakes, and visit places like Wordsworth House in Cockermouth free of charge. I have been a member of the National Trust since my teens.

Another benefit of membership is the magazine sent several times a year through the post. It now arrives in a wrapper made from potato starch which you can pop into your compost bin. That gave me an idea. I have prepared some slips of paper which read:

"Thank you for your catalogue/magazine. I note that it came in a plastic wrapper. The National Trust now uses wrappers made from home compostable potato starch for its mailings: why don't you do the same? If at the end of six months you have not publicised a timetable for phasing out single use plastic I shall asked to be removed from your mailing list."

I now need to remember to send one of these slips back every time I receive a mailing wrapped in plastic. It is going to be easy when the mailing includes a reply paid envelope!

I don't suppose I will have much effect on my own, but if only 10% of *Contact* readers do the same and each one of them persuades just two people to spread the word, we would have a movement going by Christmas.

Unlike plastic magazine wrappers, other types of plastic are now collected by the Borough Council for recycling along with tins, paper, glass and cardboard. I'm grateful to my neighbours who put their recycling out in good time which reminds me to put mine out before the lorry comes. I am told that there are some households in this parish who never put any recycling out. Can this be true? Is there anyone so obtuse they can't understand the reason for recycling as much as possible? Even if they don't care about the environment, they should understand that the more material Copeland recycles the lower the pressure to increase council tax.

In recent years the church has designated the period between the 1st of September and the 4th of October as 'Creation Time' when churchgoers are encouraged to give thanks for the goodness of the natural world and reflect on what they might do to protect it from plastic and other threats. The National Trust is doing its bit; will you do yours?.

Ian Parker



Ashram Holiday in the Lake District

Far Moor End – the name says it all – is a luxuriously appointed former farmhouse and barn, about a mile from one end of Ennerdale Water and a mile or so in the other direction from the confusingly-named *Rectory* in *Vicarage* Road at Ennerdale Bridge, where Ian Parker is currently living rent-free in exchange for preaching the odd sermon around the district when he isn't walking the fells. But before you start assuming that to get there all we non-car-drivers had to do was take a bus to Ennerdale Bridge, let me explain the process in more detail, in case any of the readers are tempted by the delights I shall soon be describing.

We left Staines Station at 9.29 am (fortunately the South Western Railway strike was scheduled for the next day), took the Victoria line to Euston and settled on a Glasgow train which we left at Preston to change onto one that took us to Penrith. There we had a longish wait for the once hourly bus to Cockermouth so I was able to climb over the walls of the ruined castle opposite the station before coming across a notice saying that this was forbidden. The bus-ride, in a double-decker, took well over an hour and gave splendid views along the way. We had instructions to ring Ian and tell him which bus we were on, and he would come

to collect us in his car. This we did, but he was by then, about 3.30pm, already at Far Moor End waiting to greet others as they arrived, so he recommended a tea room not far from the bus stop in Cockermouth which would be closing at five, but should be able to serve us if the bus arrived on time – and it did! We then prepared ourselves to wait in the nearby car park for as long as was necessary,



Ennerdale lake - painting by Maggie

which turned out to be not very long at all. By now there were four of us, but our chauffeur was not fazed by this, and managed to fit all of us, and our luggage, into his electric car to take us on the last stage of our journey, arriving nicely in time for the meal being prepared by David Dale and Maggie Jones.



Wednesday morning lake view

Far Moor End is at the end of a long drive overshadowed by trees and with a cattle grid at the gate that opens onto the space surrounding the house, so there was something of a feel that you were leaving the rest of the world behind as you approach. It has three kitchens, two dishwashers, four fridges, two freezers, a washing machine and tumble dryer and a couple of televisions – but who needs those when you are surrounded by hills with ever-changing colours of sky and clouds and mist. There was a small room with a table-football machine which showed our Leader at his most competitive when he joined in a game one evening. The bedrooms were all quite spacious, and the bathroom attached to our room was about as big as our living room at home. I had to give up for the week on my aspiration to keep to a simple lifestyle.

There were eleven of us for most of the week, rising to twelve for a couple of days, and four cars, so we could go off in different directions and with different companions, courtesy of the very generous drivers. There should, though, be a warning on the booking form about the level of the conversation, particularly at breakfast time. Maybe it was something to do with having three Revs and one local preacher/Quaker round the table, but there were always in depth, and indeed often incomprehensible discussions, citing theologians and biblical scholars, with lots of biblical references, over the muesli and toast. The first morning I went into the kitchen at about 7 o'clock with the intention of making a cup of tea to take back to bed with me, but John was already there and shared some of what he had just been working on for his latest book. On Sunday morning there was a lively discussion over breakfast about a passage in Mark's gospel – I think it was from chapter 7 – and when half-a-dozen of us went to the morning service at Cleator Moor Methodist Church we were treated to a sermon on the

very same passage. Not that theology was the only subject under review. We also dealt with the chemistry of burnt pans and clinical psychology, not to mention politics (i.e. jointly bemoaning the current state of the world).

Having got all that out of the way we needed a weather forecast and for this Ian was again the person to call upon as he had his radio tuned to Radio Cumbria, which does a general weather forecast for the county, followed at the end by the "fells forecast", because the fells (i.e. hills) do their own thing, and that's not quite always cloud and rain. It worked pretty well because I don't recall anyone coming back to the house drenched to the skin, as we could plan our activities accordingly.

Some of the group had come with specific aspirations. Jenny was keen to visit the *Theatre by the Lake* at Keswick and managed, with some difficulty in an area with poor mobile phone and wifi coverage, to book four seats for Alan Bennett's *Single Spies* on the Saturday evening. Later in the week two others were grateful for a lift to one of Keswick's other attractions, the *Pencil Museum*. David Jones had brought his bike with him (in the car) and went out on some pretty challenging rides while Maggie stayed at the house and did some drawing, as you can see.

Guided by the weather forecast, two car loads spent the Monday in Whitehaven, once the third largest port in Britain. Its heyday was in the Georgian era; its decline after that meant that its rows of handsome if still in places rather run-down Georgian houses had not been interfered with by the Victorians. Particularly well preserved is the church of St James, set on a hill overlooking the town, with an entry in Simon Jenkins' *England's 1000 best churches* describing its "sumptuous Georgian interior" as well as the modern engraved glass doors that open automatically from the porch into the nave. Apparently the engravings are of Buddhist symbols, in honour of a Sri Lankan vicar who served there from 1984-94, but as the doors slide open when you approach them it's not easy to admire them.

On Tuesday our local guide offered to take any who felt up to it on a walk right around our local lake, Ennerdale Water. "It's only about seven miles", he said, "you can do it in a morning if you start reasonably early, or you can take it at your leisure, with a picnic lunch at the half-way stage". Not



Walk round Ennerdale Water

surprisingly we elected for the second option, and just as well, as far as I was concerned. I had been expecting 'round the lake' to be a walk on the level, just like the Thames Path, which is also right next to some water. Apparently lakes are different; in places the hillside rises straight up at an alarming angle, with the 'path' at about 45°. Particularly coming from Hull, this was quite a challenge for me till Maggie kindly lent me one of her pair of walking sticks; we were even allowed to have our picnic lunch before we had reached the official half-way point.

Ian was obviously worried by the effect his walk had had on me and offered a scenic drive around the wider area the following day, an offer taken up by my husband and by John, and including afternoon tea and a visit to the neolithic and atmospheric Castlerigg Stone Circle (conveniently provided with a 21st century ice-cream van just across the road).

I've already mentioned a number of treats in the form of cakes and ice-cream, but not the very first one on the Saturday morning when Ian treated us all to drinks and home-made cakes at *The Gather*, the community centre and café in Ennerdale Bridge itself where he volunteers once a week, which caters both for passing walkers and local residents, with an exhibition space and gift shop as well as the café. (See: <https://thegatherennerdale.com>) Some of our group went back there for lunch later in the week.



The Gather



And what about the evening meals? Well as usual we all took our turn to prepare dinner for twelve once during the week, which can be scary when you are used to cooking for just one or two, but we were, as usual, very well served. The menu sounded somewhat 'nouvelle cuisine', with *Hazelnut and courgette loaf* and *Hippy bean stew*, and Ian's Thursday evening left-overs turned into *Artisan boiled potatoes with multi-veg cheese sauce and greens* - but we didn't have to eat any of it off slabs of slate.

As ever, our thanks go to David Dale for organising the holiday from the start, and bringing along his library of books and maps relevant to the area and our interests. But



On the top of Crag Fell 1715ft

this time we also had access to local information from Ian, particularly useful in such a relatively isolated area. He arranged for a Guardian to be delivered each day (there is no newsagent's, or any other shops, in the village), he brought us his kitchen scales when we discovered that this was the one item missing from the otherwise well stocked kitchen, he took away our recycling, which would otherwise have had to go in with all the rest of the rubbish, he could advise where to shop when it was our turn to cook, he knew the times of the local Sunday services (we chose the 11 o'clock one over the 9.30am), he knew the name of most of the Fells, and he took four of us back to a bus stop for the start of our homeward journey, avoiding on the way the Tour of Britain cycle race that was passing through Cumbria that morning. So thank you to both our organisers as well as to all the other holidaymakers who contributed to a memorable week.

Linda Marshall



PS If any of you are wondering why there is no mention of Scrabble in the above report, that's because none was available. Fortunately one couple had taken note of the instructions to bring a game with us for the evenings and they came with not Scrabble but Bananagram, another game that involves making letter tiles into crosswords, but is much livelier and noisier than Scrabble.

Fair Trade News

Difficult news from Traidcraft's CEO

Traidcraft plc's recent trading has been poor, and despite enormous efforts by staff, management and Fair Traders over the last few years to reverse the company's performance we have not yet succeeded. Traidcraft plc's assets remain considerably greater than its liabilities, and while this remains the case the Board of Directors believe it is prudent to close our current loss-making trading operations. Traidcraft plc's mission to put the principles of fair trade into commercial practice is not, in any sense, fulfilled but we appreciate that it is time to consider new approaches.

Traidcraft plc has entered a period of consultation with staff, as all roles (except that of CEO) would end under the Plc's proposals to cease its current trading operations on 31st December 2018. No final decisions have been taken nor will they be until this consultation period is completed.

We are very much aware of the impact that this will have on our producer friends. Over the years we have built up personal and trusting relationships with many organisations and we deeply regret that these will be coming to an end. We are communicating with all our partners to see if we can help them transfer their business to other organisations.

Traidcraft plc will continue to trade as usual through the autumn and to the end of 2018. We are proud that our final autumn craft collection is one of the best we have produced. Artisans throughout the world have contributed to the range and we have placed great focus on quality and design. We look forward to working with all our supporters right through the season, and we would like to invite our customers to help us end our current trading operations with our best season ever. All products can be purchased online at www.traidcraftshop.co.uk.

This proposal will, of course, be met with great sadness by many supporters, shareholders and friends. We invite any stakeholders who wish to contribute to the thinking about our future mission to send their thoughts to lovetraidcraft@traidcraft.co.uk. Many supporters have already offered encouragement, support and offers of investment in any new model. We are immensely grateful for this feedback and we wish to capture all of it. It is unusual for a company to consult publicly with its supporters, but Traidcraft plc is not a normal company: we embody a mission shared by thousands. Although we believe our current model is not sustainable, we remain passionate about fair trade and are considering other models for the future that will help us continue making the case for trade that is just.

Traidcraft Exchange, our sister charity, is not directly affected by these developments. Traidcraft Exchange continues to work with farmers, workers and artisans in Africa and South Asia to help them get a better deal from trade, and to lobby and campaign in the UK for better trade rules. It's the support of Fair Traders – donating their surpluses, running Big Brews, handing out campaign postcards and much more – that helps Traidcraft Exchange speak out against injustice in trade so effectively. We see Traidcraft Exchange's work as an integral part of our mission, and we thank all our supporters and donors for their continuing support of both Traidcraft plc and Traidcraft Exchange.

We will continue to keep you informed throughout the coming months and hope that you will continue to support us as we progress our plans.

Robin Roth

I've been with Traidcraft since it started in 1979 and I am devastated by this news- most especially for our producers. So I will be trying to have a really successful Autumn season, and another Christmas shop if landlords can be persuaded.

Jenny Medhurst

Coffee Price Crash

The price of arabica coffee on the world coffee market crashed this week to below the cost of production - under \$1/lb (it was \$1.55/lb at the end of 2016), jeopardising the lives of 25 million coffee farming families who could be facing the loss of \$11 billion/yr in income.

Only 10% of the total value of coffee stays in the country that produces it, big coffee companies regard any talk of a 'decent coffee price' as taboo and such low prices lead to poverty, child labour, poor working conditions and

environmental damage. This is not sustainable.

The guaranteed Fairtrade minimum coffee price is currently \$1.40/lb - and thankfully a quarter of the UK ground coffee market is Fairtrade. But that means that three quarters of the coffee on supermarket shelves offer no price security for coffee farmers. It's time for coffee companies and supermarkets to act responsibly, and for coffee drinkers to understand the real cost of their coffee.

Bringing Justice and Hope to Smallholder Farmers

Last week I met Howard and Webster, two rice farmers from Malawi who grow the 'Great Taste Award' Kilombero rice that I sell. They were on a tour of the UK to celebrate their ten year partnership with Just Trading Scotland which imports and sells their rice in the UK. Despite the rich soil in north Malawi they used to struggle to feed their families and were



often defrauded by traders with inaccurate scales. They grew the rice entirely by hand - from tilling the field to planting, harvesting, threshing and winnowing-

(Howard thinks in Britain we don't have farmers, but 'machine operators'!)

Helped by a start-up grant from the Scottish Government the farmers received certified seed, ox carts to help carry 50kg sacks to market, and tarpaulins on which to thresh the rice. By careful seed multiplication and sale of the carts on a rotating basis they have been able to increase the seed and equipment they own by £150,000, and grow the number of farmers benefitting from 2,500 to 7,000 (with a waiting list!). Asked what was the greatest benefit of this partnership Howard said it was the more productive seed – with yields increased by 30-40%. Ploughs have enabled them to farm more land and wells are being dug so that they are more resilient to climate change.



Most importantly they have the funds to send their children to secondary school. Secondary education isn't free and less than one in three families can afford to pay the school fees, but if a farmer sells 90Kg of



rice he can send a child to school for a year. So many rice farmers can now do this that communities are building schools and teacher accommodation so that their children don't have a long journey to school every day.

How we can help

- We need people to buy more delicious **Kilombero rice**. It's available from Fair Trade shops, online from Traidcraft, and in Co-op stores in Scotland. Community groups like congregations, churches together and schools, can take 'the 90 Kg Challenge' and collectively buy enough rice from JTS to send a child to school (it comes in 1Kg packets with a Harvest liturgy, leaflets, posters a resource pack)
- A third of the farmers are women, some of whom have been widowed by AIDs, others abandoned in a polygamous marriage. They have land which they aren't able to farm, and can't afford to buy a plough. It has been suggested that friends could hold a **Ploughwoman's supper**, by sharing a nice, perhaps rice-based, dinner in their home, and then putting the cost of a restaurant supper into a hat. (A plough costs £60)
- JTS is already supporting 45 orphaned children through secondary education, college and university, through a **school bursary fund** and would love to help more children. Some of the first students are now serving their communities as trained engineers and nurses.
- As Fairtrade rice is paid for as soon as it leaves Malawi, JTS is trying to build a working capital fund to reduce the cost of borrowing money. **Interest free loans** from individual supporters would help them approach grant giving bodies by showing they have strong individual support.

Jenny Medhurst

For more information contact me or info@jts.co.uk

Franklin Medhurst

The passing of Frank Medhurst on 14th July came as a great sorrow to us all. He had been at the 7th July Community meeting in Hazel Grove. As always he talked to everyone with his usual warmth and loving friendliness. He and I talked about current politics and the state of the country- always on his mind.

Without sharing a Christian or church commitment he joined Ashram community as a member, and served as a trustee from 2005-2010. He was happy to come to Ashram events, and contributed greatly in many ways to the open, wide-ranging and generous attitude which Ashram members take for granted and encourage.

He was a unique and very special person. On occasions he would seek me out and offer some sympathetic comment or wise suggestion. We will all miss his loving and caring contributions to our life together. We thank God for every remembrance of him.

John Vincent

Frank was born in Bristol in April 1920, left school at 14yrs and joined the RAF at the outbreak of war as an air gunner and wireless operator (only grammar school boys were pilots). He flew in Coastal Command to defend Britain, not bomb Germans, saw the world, was awarded a DFC, but suffered serious damage to his hearing. He got an ex-serviceman's grant to study architecture and planning. His first job was in 1953 working on the design of London's South Bank, then he worked on the Pembrokeshire Coastal path, and in N. Ireland, before becoming a lecturer at Manchester University's School of Planning and director of the Civic Trust for the North West, publishing his first book 'Urban Decay'.

In 1965 he became Director of the Teesside Survey and Plan, a 25 year regional plan for 400 sq miles around Teesside.

He became Head of the School of Planning at Leeds Poly 1969-1975, and worked as an architect on Teesside mainly for housing associations, one of which he helped set up. He founded and directed CLEAR (Cleveland Environmental Advice and Resource Centre in 1986. His last job before retiring in 1992 was his local surgery. Frank met Jenny in 1981 through WDM, they married in 1982 and visited Konathu John in Kerala on their honeymoon, having asked for goats and sewing machines for Kerala for wedding presents. They campaigned together on global issues and Frank helped Jenny get a Traidcraft shop in 1985, the first of 32 Christmas shops where he was a huge support .

With Jenny he helped to set up and run Ashram House in Stockton which became a home for destitute asylum seekers from 2001-2005.

A keen cyclist from his youth he campaigned for local cycle routes, and enjoyed cycling and walking holidays, and got an OU degree in Politics. Encouraged by friends to write about Poulson's destruction of Stockton's High Street he wrote about the Teesside Survey, its dreams and the outcome, in 'A Quiet Catastrophe'. He followed this with 'War and Liberty' which tells his war story and the imperative of peace building.

In 1996 he obtained a grant from Tees Forest to plant 3000 trees in the 8 acre field adjacent to Greystone, and with a second hand verge cutter spent the next twenty years, even after his amputation, cutting the hay that at first threatened to engulf them.

He had five children from his first marriage, 11 grand-children, 11 great grandchildren and a great, great grandson. A hundred family and friends came to his wood in July to celebrate his life in a circle, sharing food, and stories and wonderful tributes. Below is one of the poems.

Frank Medhurst was a Really Good Bloke

Frank Medhurst was a really good bloke,
Made a lot of sense whenever he spoke.
So much experience from a life lived well
Abundant wisdom as we all could tell.

In the dark days when fascism was on the advance
And the Nazi's were jubilant with the fall of France
A young Frank Medhurst answered the call
And he played his part in Hitler's downfall.

The RAF put him through his paces
And he served in many far off places.
He was decorated as radar operator
Hunting submarines in a Liberator.

His architecture career brought him to Teesside
But the corruption and destruction he could not abide.
The powers that be he did oppose
Which brought that employment to a close.

But he kept the planners on their toes
Awkward questions he would pose.
A slight irritation they would nurse
Some even called him Medling Frankhurst.

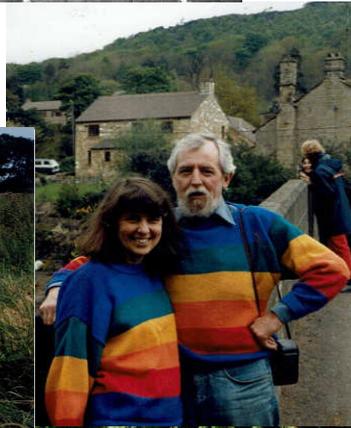
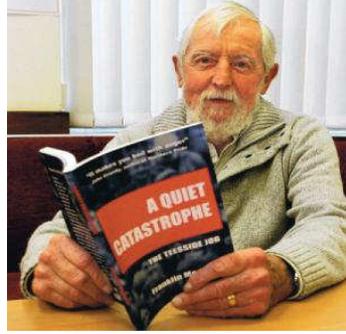
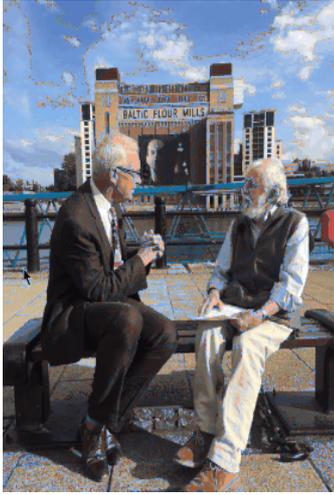
He first met Jenny through WDM
And they had many happy years the two of them.
Working for justice and promoting fair trade
A supportive union together they made.

Frank was worried about leaving the EU
And he wrote to the Guardian with his point of view.
He then went on to appear on the box
And his views were re-tweeted by the much- missed Jo Cox.

But sadly his opinion did not prevail
And now we've got Brexit, a right sorry tale.
A threat to the peace that he worked so hard for,
More than most he knew the cost of waging war.

Frank leaves a legacy for all to see
The books he wrote, these magnificent trees.
Goodness and insight to this life he brought
Inspired us all with the causes he fought.

So for us who counted Frank as our mate
His rich life we've come to celebrate.
He wanted us to party and enjoy a joke
'Cos Frank Medhurst was a really good bloke. *Andy Welford*



On the last page-Jon Snow C4 interview on the Referendum, Newcastle,; starting the Jo Cox memorial bike ride; one man went to mow – 8 acres and 3000 saplings in there somewhere, 1996; 10Km run 1984; planning the Journey course at Greystone Feb 2001; Entrust carving on the shores of Derwentwater to celebrate the birth of the National Trust, 2012; with Alekuty John at Greystone 2001; Abbeyfield Rd Ashram weekend; cycling to our wedding March 1982; breakfast in the garden with Sandra. Last photo-Midsummer party June 2018 by the bonfire with Gladys from Cameroon.

WE ARE
SHEFFIELD
★The Star

EX-DONKEYE
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John Vincent has spent more than half his life ministering in Sheffield.

However, by his own admission, the 88-year-old did not originally want to come here. He was sent to South Yorkshire by his church in his early 40s at a time when his radical views marked him out as one of the most "terrible" of Methodists. But since being persuaded to stay in the city by – among others – a young David Blunkett, he has devoted himself to caring for the people of an adopted home, particularly those in Burgrave and

Pilsworth, where he still lives today.

John's beliefs came from a desire to take what he considered to be the real meaning of his faith and applying it to everyday life.

"I didn't think Christianity presented the true message of Jesus," says John.

"Many people regarded it as gobbledygook and rubbish."

"We wanted to find a secular and world view of spreading our Christian message based on the actual activities and practices of Jesus himself."

"Every thing else arose out of this."

From the Pilsworth Action Group of the late 60s to the Urban Technology Unit which followed and eventually the Ashram Community of today,

place for everyone in John's ministry

John has avoided doctrinal dogma in favour of an approach which welcomes people from all faiths and none.

The Ashram Community Trust he founded now runs a series of houses, shops and other community resources in Burgrave and beyond.

Of these, the best known is the Burgrave Ashram on Spital Hill, which has now been going for 10 years.

There, every week, around 30 people attend a free meal where Christians of all denominations come together with Muslims and Hindus to give food away.

"It is a beautiful meal where everybody is welcome," says John.

"Even rich people – no-

THE STAR 16 APR 2018

body will ask the many questions."

"There is a Muslim lady who cooks for us every fortnight – that means two days work for her for nothing."

As John speaks, he is frequently clucked up by the words he says.

"Just believe in this stuff," he explains.

John says he feels "privileged" to live and work in the "rich, multi-faith" inner-city suburb of Burgrave – despite the negative headlines the area sometimes attracts.

"Every time Burgrave is mentioned in the news it is some shooting, scandal or conflict," he says.

"But that is not my experience of the people who live there."

"I am not accusing The

Star – you have to reflect it times."

"But I am looking for good news."

As well as the Burgrave centre, the community runs the New Woods shop for justice' in Bramhall, where dozens of Sheffield University graduates have lived and worked since the 1980s.

They also operate four community houses in Sheffield where people – including John – live in accordance with Ashram's charitable objectives and ethos.

And they are currently looking for residents from other parts of Sheffield – particularly women – to help them set up their fifth.

■ To find out more, visit www.ashram.org.uk or 0114 2436688.

SUMMER SCHOOL “OUTWORKINGS”

By John Vincent

Each second week of July, theologians and practitioners connected with the Urban Theology Union and the Ashram Community meet together for a Summer School.

The residential part of it is arranged by Ashram Community. We meet at 5pm on the Monday at Burngreave Ashram, have a meal at 5.30pm, and then share 2 sessions from 6.30pm to 8.30pm. Then we return to Burngreave Ashram for a similar programme from 5.30pm to 8.30pm on the Tuesday. People needing overnight accommodation are guests in Ashram Houses.

The daytime programme runs on the Tuesday and Wednesday at the UTU site at Victoria Hall, Sheffield, from 9.30am to 3.30pm each day, including tea/coffee breaks and a Midday shared meal. 8 to 12 sessions, are led by members who concentrate on the current agreed Theme. And of course, we have a great time getting to know each other in between sessions as well as during them.

The Summer School developed from the Institute for Socio-Biblical Studies, which Prof. John W. Rogerson brought to UTU in 1995, mainly on Old Testament themes. I brought New Testament people, so we regularly had a day for each.

In doing several weeks' work, off and on, at St. Deiniol's Library, Hawarden, in 2000-2001, I perceived that the way in which people, especially in smaller or urban churches, worked, they saw themselves as “putting into practice” pieces of Gospel stories. So in the Report on our work together, Faithfulness in the City (Monad Press, 2003), I developed the idea of “Practice Interpretation”

This came to be the line we pursued in the Summer School, particularly as I was not the only one who saw themselves as both “New Testament scholar” and also “city missionary”. The theory for it had been argued in Outworkings: Gospel Practice and Interpretation (UTU 2005).

So the July meetings of 2009 and 2010 had a group of us looking at what Practice we got out of a single story and then published the result.

By then, Deo Publishing had got interested. Its owner, Dr David Orton, had previously run Sheffield Academic Press. But “practice” now attracted his interest.

So each July we work at the volume that will then get published, after a fair amount of work by us all, and myself as editor. The volumes so far are:

1. Stilling the Storm, ed. J.J. Vincent. 2011
2. Acts in Practice, ed. J.J. Vincent. 2012
3. Leviticus in Practice, ed. J.W. Rogerson. 2013
4. The Farewell Discourses in Practice, ed. J.J. Vincent. 2015
5. Three Mountains to Freedom, by J.D. Davies. 2016
6. The Servant of God in Practice, ed. J.W. Rogerson & J.J. Vincent. 2017
7. Discipleship in the New Testament and Today, ed. J.J. Vincent. 2018
8. Discipleship in Mark 1-6 in Practice by J.J. Vincent. 2019

Copies can be inspected and purchased at the UTU Bookstall at Victoria Hall, Sheffield. Publication details are available from Deo Publishing, PO Box 6284, Blandford Forum, Dorset DT11 1AQ.

Ashram Community's share in the work is intended to be an invitation to any other group or individual who sees their own vocation and work, and /or that of their local community or church along the lines of being an “Outworking” of something they see Jesus and/or his disciples doing. The prime interest is not in some “lesson” that could be learned, but in some action, or campaign, or policy, or commitment, that the individual or group might see themselves getting into which were to them the same kind of thing that the Gospels record.

Join us, and tell us what “Outworking” has come from your “Practice Interpretation”.

The 2019 Summer School will be: Monday 8th July, 50th Anniversary Reunion of Urban Theology Union, with a “Living History” by everyone who comes. Tues 9th July: Review and Study and Planning of current “Practice Interpretation” volumes, i.e. those named above for 2018 and 2019. All welcome!

A STORY OF HAPPY HAPPENINGS



When I was leaving our Ashram Community House at Rock Street Sheffield a few days before this joint international 'Biblical' conference of the US based Society of Biblical Literature and the European Association of Biblical Studies based in Germany, Chris Bullock wished me well for my presentation. I said that that was one thing, but the other, perhaps more important was to make friends at Helsinki.

I arrived at my accommodation quite late in the evening having lost my way on the tram. Quite relaxed on a swing was a black man with unkempt grey hair and beard, wearing just boxer shorts – more than enough in temperature around 29°. His piercing eyes stared at me; there was no smile on his face. When I booked in, my loud voice had conveyed to his sharp ears that I was in Helsinki for the conference. Thirst made me take a drink which I took outside to also smoke my pipe. He then gave a broad inviting smile; I introduced myself.

Having no fears whatsoever of passive smoking, he asked that I sit beside him on the swing. He is emeritus professor John Tracey Greene of Michigan State University, an agnostic who has run a seminar on *'Biblical Characters in Judaism, Christianity and Islam'* for some twenty years at this annual meeting. Over our evening to night conversations, I came to realise that he was by far the most knowledgeable I had met. Having done his first degree at Harvard majoring in German alongside philosophy and religion, encouraged by his professors he studied Hebrew, Greek, Arabic, Coptic, Latin, Farsi and Sanskrit both at Harvard and at Boston University, resulting in being sent to Israel and the Middle east to decipher and edit various papyri surfacing in then ongoing archaeological digs. His ability to answer and discuss, quoting by memory in the original languages of texts of these quite different languages was something I had never witnessed before. After the conference he boarded a cruiser to St Petersburg having made sure that he had all my contact details although I had promised to contact him soon by email.

The various seminars within this 'Biblical' focussed conference at the University of Helsinki had a wide range of researched presentations from various disciplines such as archaeology, anthropology, history, sociology, psychology, linguistics, medicine, biology, cultural and evolutionary approaches, visual and popular culture, and theology, within a vertical from ancient Judaism to modern day and a horizontal spanning all continents. For instance, there was a paper on *Recited History and Social Memory in the Ancient Mediterranean* on the one hand, and *Rehab and the Raid on Jericho Beyond Denial in the Context of Prostitution in Buenos Aires*, and *Finnish Catholic Struggles with Paul and Justification: Thoughts on Scott Hahn's New Romans Commentary*, on the other. It is therefore not surprising that over 800 papers were presented over the week in some 240 sessions with about 1500 attending.

The scholars from various continents were mostly lay with or without identifying with a faith, with a relatively small number of clerics and monastics attending. I made many contacts from various countries and also made some friends, including Rev Dr Sakari Häkkinen, a Diocesan Dean of the Lutheran Church Finland who was particularly interested in my paper, and some young doctoral researchers from various universities. An English born again Christian woman from the University of Gloucestershire who is now my friend, said I'll go to hell because I smoke and drink. She tried to convert Greene and 'succeeded' in making us, along with her, have a humorous conversation.

Using recent archaeological findings and philology, Kings College London's professor of Second Temple Judaism and Christianity, Joan Taylor in her "Two by Two: the Ark-etypal Language of Mark's Apostolic Pairings", in *The Body in Biblical, Christian and Jewish Texts*, 2014, followed up in the BBC Chanel 4 TV documentary '*Did Jesus have Female Disciples?*' (Bond and Taylor, April 2018), made ground-breaking hypotheses including demonstrating that, Jesus had an 'equal' number of women disciples as men; they were 'apostolic mates'; they were sent out on mission "*dýo dýo*" (Mk. 6: 7 – wrongly translated literally as 'two by two', instead of 'couples'); "*dýo dýo*" refers to sexed bodies of female and male pairs also used "distinctively and repeatedly" as such in the LXX; the "going off 'two by two'" could be a couple of different genders or of the same gender; there may have been "fluidity" "in the pattern of 'mates'" "in terms of embodiments" ... "while in actual marriage there is an indissoluble union in accordance with Jesus' teaching", and that "in partnership for apostolic union 'seeding' these could presumably be more flexible". However, Taylor using Jesus' reference to 'eunuchs for the kingdom' (Mt. 19:12) and possible influence of celibacy practiced by some First century sects of Essenes and Therapeutae, hypothesised that Jesus' disciples were celibate in apostolic partnerships.

My presentation in the seminar on 'Biblical World and Cultural Evolution', *Cultural Change in Context: Jesus on Sexuality in Discipleship Community: a *Ius Gentium*?*, dissented with Taylor on the issue of celibacy advocating the counter-hypothesis that the primary purpose of being in a 'Jesus discipleship community' was for a caring and sharing communal lifestyle and for ministry (see Mk. 3: 14) with *agape* (selfless unconditional love) without *epithumia* (possessiveness – wrongly translated as 'lust') and consequently, Sexuality within Community was likewise, much beyond any impositions such as marriage, celibacy, orientation, or gender, left for benign individual self-determination and benign mutual expression. Using the methodologies of exegesis, cultural evolution and jurisprudence, the presentation demonstrated that sexuality in Jesus' discipleship communities was a distinct *ius personarum* (law of persons) within a distinct *ius gentium privatum* (here private law of a micro-social subculture), something clearly recognised in First century Roman jurisprudence which unlike 'modern' states and colonies permitted subcultures within Rome and in colonies to practice their own laws; by far much more progressive than what we have today.

I was also drafted in to the 'Scholars' Corner' launched at the conference with some tasks in the UK including overseeing the New Testament Apocrypha input, and organising video interviews with eminent Biblical scholars in the UK for posting on YouTube.

Helsinki was more than a pleasant experience. My lodging was on the sea coast, where a small group of us participants cooked and ate the evening meal together, with wine and intelligent conversation till well after midnight, despite having 9 am sessions at the Uni about ten minutes by tram. So, I had only about five to six hours sleep each night given that I rise a few hours before for my usual morning routine.

The city is very green, little vehicular and human traffic, and remarkably quiet with hardly any sirens from emergency service vehicles. The people are very relaxed, courteous, friendly, and go out of their way to help. Perhaps most importantly, they take little offence. On the return trip my hand luggage failed the scan at the airport. A young woman security officer then kindly asked me for permission to search the bag, without just imposing her right. When I opened it she saw my teddy and started to giggle, and said "so sweet". The dampness in the sandwiches was the cause - flights within Europe no longer serve free food. I was very touched when she offered to help repack the bag. This type of culture may be a reason for Finland to be high on good health statistics, and have remarkably low cancer incidence and death rates from it, compared to other EU countries.



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

2019

23 Feb General meeting, Sheffield
10-12 May Community weekend, Middleton
8-9 July UTU 50th Anniversary and Ashram/UTU Summer school, Sheffield.
13 July General Meeting
4-6 October Community weekend, Unstone

COMMUNITY

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

Ashram Press: 7 College Court
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

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

HOUSES AND PROJECTS

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

New Roots Shop, Basement Speakeasy and

Residents' flat

347 Glossop Rd Sheffield S10 2HP
Tel: 0114 272 1971

Community Houses: 77 and 79 Rock St Sheffield S3 9JB – Tel: 0114 272 7144
Tel: 0793 201 7929 (Nirmal Fernando)
6 Andover Street Sheffield S3 9EG
Tel: 0791 092 2462
27 Hallcar Street, Sheffield S4 7JY
29 Hallcar Street
80 Spital Hill, Sheffield S4 7LG
86 Spital Hill, Sheffield S4 7LG

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

East – A46- Twice Yearly 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