



# WESLEY Root and Branch

Issue 7

Autumn/Winter

2010

**Inside:**

The 1st Letter from John (!)	2
Amnesty International	3
Greetings from Basingstoke	6
Methodism, Caribbean style	8
Women's Network	10
Burkina Faso update	11
Treasurer's report	19
So glad I live here	21
University Chaplaincy	21
Thoughts on a years travel	23
Wycombe Homeless Connection	27

# WELCOME TO ROOT & BRANCH

## AUTUMN 2010 — *from the Minister.*

---

Dear Friends,

Those who know how tapestries are worked will know they are worked from the back to the front of the material; and one of the ways that tapestries used to be constructed was with someone who knew what the picture was supposed to look like standing in front while the other person wove the strands from the back under the instruction of the one watching the picture develop. If the weaver made a mistake, rather than unpick it, the one watching would incorporate it in the overall design. If we were to look at a tapestry in progress from the back it looks, quite frankly, a mess of tangled threads and colours. Dis-jointed and fragmented; often the finished image is completely indefinable.

At this moment in time we could liken Wesley to a piece of tapestry work that is under construction. Because The

Church this side of heaven will never be “the finished article” we may not clearly see how things are going to turn out, but it is helpful for us all to pause and try to view things from a different perspective and to remember that the One who knows the design is looking at it from the front and weaving everything together ... even the parts that sometimes seem a mistake!

We are conscious that in becoming your new Ministers we make up short pieces of the thread, which are being added to your tapestry. As we are getting to know you all, we are finding out about the rich variety of strands which are being woven together to make up the picture here at Wesley.

All of the people who gather at Wesley are part of the overall picture whether they recognised this or not. But we see also that Wesley is part of an even larger tapestry, which God is weaving among

the various peoples of High Wycombe Town Centre and beyond.

This may not be a perfect analogy as, on one level, Wesley needs to be always "under construction" - grappling with new ideas and fresh ways of working and engaging with the wider community - and so perhaps we will always

have some areas which seem messy or fragmented. But overall, the ways in which we are seeing the work in progress brings an air of excitement in us that God is in the process of creating something truly beautiful with and through the people of Wesley. May God Bless You

John & Ruth Richey

---

## **Amnesty International: 'protecting the human'**

I was an armchair activist - I didn't have a passion for furniture, but I would set the world to rights arguing with the radio and TV. The media news pulls at our emotions, and I was worried that my rather passive sympathy was becoming a substitute for action.

In the face of daily - even hourly - reports of injustice, neglect and abuse, it's little wonder we often hide behind the notions that "I can't make a difference" or "injustice will always happen". Many of these stories are from distant places that we only become dimly aware of through the media, so it's hardly surprising if we feel that we can only shake our heads in dismay.

Of course, we can and do pray about these issues. I believe that prayer is a means to allow God's spirit to work through us ("your will be done"), and not a means of throwing responsibility onto God. (It's precisely this misunderstanding that is often thrown back at believers - where is God when you need Him, when disaster strikes? Answer: He's always here, but we need to recognize Him and let Him into our lives.) In any case, most of the world's problems are

man-made - the lack of respect and dignity we allow each other and to the gift of nature.

It was with these and similar thoughts in mind as I approached New Year 2008/09 when I at last found some resolve. This was the time that Israel was bombing Gaza, and I went on my first demonstration, a march from Hyde Park. Shortly after this I started attending meetings of the local group of Amnesty International, and by April 2009 I was asked if I would take on the role of chairing the group. I'd been supporting Amnesty for several years, but hadn't even really been aware of the network of local groups of volunteers that support their work.

Amnesty International was founded by a Quaker and a Catholic in the early 1960s, essentially as an organization that aimed to hold institutions - especially Governments - to account. The United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, setting out the foundation principles for responsible government and their citizens with the revelations of the holocaust still fresh in people's minds. Most of the world's governments have signed up to the treaties that followed from this Declaration, including prohibitions on the use of torture, slave labour, and commitments to 'positive' rights allowing free speech, membership of unions, adequate standards of living, free primary education, health provision and such like. Governments don't always keep their promises, though, so Amnesty is there to draw attention, increasingly using public opinion as much as international law to keep politicians (mainly) to their word.

Amnesty is well-known for supporting prisoners of conscience, and one action that local groups take is to write to those responsible for their detention - sometimes to the prisoners themselves - in their support. We also raise funds on behalf of Amnesty through street collections and other events, and we campaign on specific issues. This year, we aim to draw attention to issues about the death penalty, about political repression in Burma, and about the

treatment of Roma, Gypsies and Travelers in Europe.

It's uncomfortable, but necessary, to recognize that abuses don't just happen abroad, and that the public can also be culpable. The Burmese democratic opposition has asked people not to holiday in Burma both because this supports the economy of the regime and specifically as prisoners are used for slave labour on infrastructure (building hotels etc) for tourist resorts. Yet there's a travel company in Beaconsfield that specializes in travel to Burma.

We've all heard the reports about Roma being deported from France. You may be less aware of violence inflicted on Roma in Italy that has been politically encouraged, or the call by a Hungarian MEP for Roma across Europe to be interred. Their rights are systematically abused, not least in Eastern Europe where Roma children are routinely classified as 'special needs' and given an impoverished education, reinforcing the structural poverty in which the Roma find themselves. When forcibly evicted, they have found themselves encamped by sewage works and in other inadequate and degrading environments.

Closer to home, treatment of Roma, Gypsies and Travelers is often poor, and in decline. They are perfectly willing to assimilate, whilst retaining their own culture, but are often unable due to the use of planning regulations: 90% of applications by Roma are routinely rejected, and the planning process is prohibitively expensive for many. Sites for Travelers are not maintained, often run down or even barred, whilst officials working on behalf of the Council harass them with the mantle of authority and a thick book of petty regulation. Without secure residence, it's difficult to find regular work and support their children's education. They are treated differently, as resident aliens, and often face verbal and sometimes physical abuse and threats. Is it any wonder that they often distrust authority and its institutions, and that their sense of community and cultural difference is something they therefore hold on to all the more. I'm describing here the situation in Buckinghamshire,

but it's repeated across the country.

I still get angry at the TV and radio. But I also pray and ask for God's support in the small but practical work that Amnesty and the High Wycombe group does. If you'd like to be involved, drop me a line: [edwardj.mckeon1@homecall.co.uk](mailto:edwardj.mckeon1@homecall.co.uk)

**Ed McKeon**

(See the centre page for a photograph and story about the treatment of Roma families in our area.)

---

---

## **Greetings from Basingstoke!**

We have now been here for 2 months and our manse is taking shape. We still have a few tasks to complete as well as two outstanding maintenance jobs which the circuit have in hand. I'm enjoying the garden (my domain!) which contains fruit trees and bushes and has been thoughtfully planted and looked after. In fact we have new raspberries coming still (as we write).

We are beginning to find our way around the town and have visited a few places in the surrounding area. We're glad there's a nice National Trust house and garden nearby (The Vyne) and we have started to look at walks in the area. Mind you, it took us a while to find our local supermarkets and the best way to church, so it could be a few months before we have found nice places to take visiting friends and family!

The shop I have taken over is going to be a tough ride as it has had a lot of managers in a short space of time. I have recently taken on new staff and look at getting them into shape before Christmas! You know me - I like a challenge! If you are in town it can be found

opposite M&S in the Festival Place shopping centre. The joy of the place is it's only a 15 minute walk to work.

Ruth is starting to get to know the church and the estate where she is working. She has got her guitar out and has been strumming along at a Friday morning 'Sing and Play' with the Children's Centre and has been singing her home-written songs to me for approval... (they sound somewhat repetitive to me, but there you go... I'm not 3 years old!).

St Andrew's Church (who Ruth is working with) have still to begin the redevelopment of their church building and site. They're waiting for some planning application issues to be resolved. Work probably won't start now until next Spring. The congregation at the church are very welcoming to us both, and there is great potential for them and the new project. While we wait for the rebuild, Ruth is out and about getting to know the community. She is also working on her MA.

We both think of our churches in High Wycombe often and the many people who became our friends. We still have many happy memories of our wedding amongst you and have lots of photos up from that happy day including, in pride of place in our hall, the large photo of almost everyone at the service!

We plan to keep in touch with you, and would love to hear any news from High Wycombe, so please drop us a line when you have the time.

Regards,

**Chris**

Chrisandruth2010@yahoo.co.uk

Chris & Ruth Yorke, Shepherd's Lodge, 18A, Vivian Road, Basingstoke. Hants. RG21 5QB.

## Methodism ..... Caribbean style

Holetown Methodist Church, Barbados is a pretty little stone chapel, similar in looks to one you might see in an English village, except that the bushes and trees in the garden are of hibiscus and coconut palm rather than holly and fir and that the doors stand open all day to the sunshine. (For a picture turn to page 14)

Sunday morning service started at 9am and I was quite surprised that after a few minutes of gospel singing on CD, at 9.10 the choir, dressed in turquoise robes, processed down the aisle singing the introit, preceded by the minister, a young man in a billowing white surplice. I gathered that he was newly ordained and that this was his first church. He seemed very popular judging by the occasional spontaneous rounds of applause.

We used the old Methodist hymnbook and all the hymns were familiar, taken at a cracking pace by the organist. There were various readings and songs mostly from the young folk, and the choir (7 ladies and 1 man —nothing different there!) sang two anthems. Then we came to one of the highlights— a Christening. The child, to be baptized Zion, was a hefty baby, dressed in a white silky garment. The minister, obviously unused to babies, held his arms straight in front of him like a shelf to receive the child. The combination of a robust baby and the slippery silky attire caused him to slide out of the young mans arms towards the stone floor. The congregation gasped but the preacher had quick reflexes and fielded the baby like a rugby ball. Everyone present broke into cheers and applause. He then proceeded to baptize the baby beautifully and sincerely.

By now it was 10.15 and people were still arriving. All the pews had been filled but they had a system whereby someone would give up their seat for a while allowing everyone to sit down for part of the service. Standers leaned against the walls or stood in the porch.

The notices started as they might in any Methodist church: the men's fellowship at nearby Speightstown, a sale of work on the church lawn and then surprisingly as it was March, an announcement about Harvest Festival the following Sunday. I realized of course that they were celebrating gathering in of the sugar cane. The man giving the notices named several people who had birthdays during the week and we sang happy birthday to them individually. Then he asked if there were any visitors and as the only white face I had to stand and say that I came from near London in England and that I was pleased to be visiting their beautiful island whereupon I got a round of applause. As we were about to sing another hymn some emergency vehicles drove by sounding their sirens. A man from the congregation came to the front and said a prayer for "a successful outcome to the negative situation which was occurring"

It was now time for the children's address and the minister gathered the children around him and gave them all a chewy sweet. Once again he showed his inexperience as he took one himself and then found it very difficult to talk. This had the congregation rolling in the aisles, appreciating the joke.

His talk involved an eagle and a chicken but due to a combination of his strong Bajun accent and a mouthful of gum, I couldn't really get to grips with the moral of the story.

I'd agreed to meet the rest of the family for breakfast at 10.30 and by now it was 10.45 and we hadn't even got to the sermon. I crept out, leaving my seat to be taken by one of the standers.

Three quarters of an hour later we passed by to go back to our car and they were still going strong at what was obviously a vital and integral part of Caribbean life.

**Hilary Sheppard**

## Money for the Pastor

A little boy was given a five pound note to put in the collection plate. When the offering came around, he wouldn't put it in. But after the end of the service, when he went to shake the pastor's hand, he pulled out the five pound note and gave it to the pastor. The pastor asked him, "Why are you giving me this money? Why didn't you put it in the offering plate?"

And the boy answered, "Because my mummy told me you're the poorest pastor we've ever had!"

---

---

## Women's Network

The Women's Network of the Methodist Church aims to encourage, enable and equip women to participate fully in the life of the Church and in society.



In The High Wycombe Circuit there is a Circuit Network Committee which meets three times a year. They are responsible for organising the Easter Offering Dedication Service, The Summer Supper, and The Autumn Network Service. Each church in the circuit is invited to send representatives. The representatives from Wesley are Barbara Collett and Cynthia Freeman.

The Easter Offering Dedication Service is where each Church brings its Easter Offering, The Summer Supper with a guest speaker, is an evening meeting. The Autumn Network Service is held during the afternoon. These meetings are held in churches around the circuit and men are also invited to attend. Each year about £2,000 is raised, which is sent to the World Church Fund.

## HISTORY AND THE FUTURE

The Women's Network of the Methodist Church was formed in 1987. It brought together the two women's movements in the Methodist Church at that time, Women's Work and Women's Fellowship. Women's Work came into being in 1858 as a movement of women supporting training and care for women missionaries, and who raised awareness and money for work overseas.

Women's Fellowship was formed in 1945 out of a concern for the problems created by the Second World War. It focused on welfare issues, fellowship and the training of women for leadership roles. Next July Network will join the British Unit of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women and be re-named Methodist Women in Britain.

**Cynthia Freeman**

### **Bible Lesson**

A Sunday School teacher asked her class why Joseph and Mary took Jesus with them to Jerusalem.

A small child replied: "They couldn't get a baby sitter."

## **Burkina Faso update – November 2010**

The following update has been received from Christian Aid.....

In October, churches and groups in the south of England had a unique opportunity to meet a Christian Aid staff member from Burkina Faso. Josiane Kielwasser, Christian Aid's business system manager in Burkina Faso, spoke about Partnership Scheme projects at meetings in Colchester, Oxford, High Wycombe, London, Whitstable, Southampton and Chichester, among other places. Josiane also joined supporters at the lobby of Parliament on 20 October, shown in the picture with Penny Haynes from Christian Aid's South-

ampton office. This update contains some of the stories Josiane shared during her visit.

### **Mayor thanks Christian Aid for support**

Mathias Ouedraogo, mayor of Bassi, a small town to the northeast of Gourcy in Zondoma province, expressed his gratitude for the help given to his community at a meeting with Christian Aid staff in September.

'All your actions enabled my community to start a real fight against food insecurity,' he said. 'In the name of my community, please accept our sincere thanks.'

Mayor Ouedraogo was particularly grateful for the work that has been done to retain soils by building rock lines, to generate income through market gardening and animal husbandry, and to improve child nutrition.

However he added: 'The benefits are so numerous that a

whole day will not be enough to list them all!'

### **'Thank you for saving our lives'**

Community members from a small village in Zondoma province also expressed their thanks for Christian Aid support, which has had a profound effect on their lives. Karim Ouedraogo spoke for his community.

'During the rainy season, our village [Ouetigué] was facing a permanent danger. We were threatened by floods every time it rained because the village is crossed by large gullies. When it was raining nobody slept at night because we were afraid our houses may fall upon us.

'Also, because the soils could not retain water, our food production was meagre and poor.

'Then the programme arrived with very simple techniques that really saved our lives. We were taught how to make rock lines using local materials and



Harvest Supper 2010

We raised £480 for  
Water Aid



Tuesday Group  
picnic



Methodist Church  
Holetown



Chris and Ruths  
Wedding

Some bailiffs were trying to evict [the Roma families] this afternoon from some council land without a court order, on the basis that common law gave them the right to do so.

I managed to argue that this country has signed up to the European Charter of Human Rights (which is a higher authority) and as such the rights of the people needed to be respected.

Reluctantly the police agree and the eviction will have to wait until the court order is ready.

I took the photo after the police left, although the bailiffs were threatening to break my camera if I took photographs.

The two tow trucks and cars of the bailiffs are on the left and the four families are camped on unused ground to the right of the photo.

## Ed McKeon



See the article on Burkina Faso on page 11



Josianne Kielwasser at the lobby of Parliament on 20 October

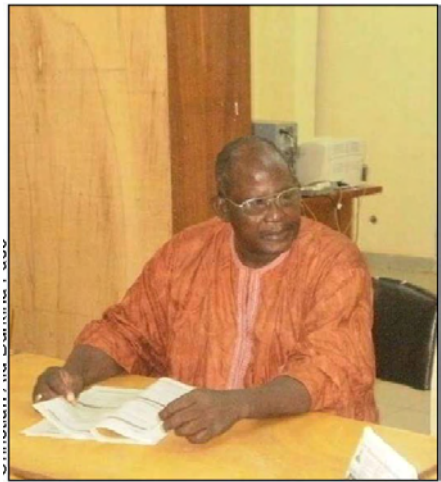
Salamata Ouedraogo



Community members inspect the rice harvest



Karim Ouedraogo



Mathias Ouedraogo

simple techniques. Thanks to these rock lines, we were able to restore our soils. Now, our houses are protected during the rainy season and the water does not sweep away all the soil nutrients. The result is big and rich crops for us.

'We are so proud now when we watch the fruit of our efforts. We are confident that our soils will not betray us anymore. Thank you for saving our lives.'

#### **'Now things have changed'**

By helping the community retain and improve the quality of their soils, the Partnership Scheme projects have enabled women to increase their contribution to family food production significantly and they have seen a big difference in the health of their families. Salamata Ouedraogo from Tougouya Koko is one of the beneficiaries.

'Food insecurity is a worse thing that can happen in a community. In the past we were too poor and unable to meet our families' needs. We had dreams and hopes but no strength or means. We were just surviving.

'Sending our children to school was the last of our concerns.

'Now things have changed for me. Now that our soils are getting better, it has an impact on the harvest. With my savings from last year, my family has food to eat every day now. I can offer clothes to my children and I meet their school needs without much difficulty.

#### **'We feel so proud'**

Working together as a community has made it possible for villagers to significantly increase the quantity and variety of food produced, as Adama Sawadogo from the village of Rimdimbo explains.

'Before the programme's arrival, we were only working on our individual fields. We were working in a very archaic way and our harvests were very poor. During the hunger gap, we could not provide more than one meal per day to our families. And we ate the same thing all the year long. Only the more privileged could offer rice to their families.

'Children were going to school hungry because we only ate at night.

'With the programme's support, we set up a rice field. Around 60 persons - including women - are farming this 10-hectare plot. Since we started harvesting this field, no one has bought rice in the market. This is a real change in our lives. We can now save the small amount of money we have to ensure that our families will have food to eat all the year long.

'We feel so proud to be able to provide enough food for our families. Actually we don't know how to thank enough the people who are supporting us.'

And our own fund raising for the project has now reached over £12,000, following the splendid total of £1,500 raised at the Circuit Auction of Promises.

On February 18th there is a Goodwill Supper at Flackwell Heath.

### **Church Announcement**

There is the story of a preacher who got up one Sunday and announced to his congregation: "I have good news and bad news. The good news is, we have enough money to pay for our new building program. The bad news is, it's still out there in your pockets."

### **Instruction About Church**

A Sunday school teacher asked the children just before she dismissed them to go to church, "And why is it necessary to be quiet in church?"

Annie replied, "Because people are sleeping."

## Treasurer's Report

Firstly a big thankyou to everyone who has given so generously over the past year.

However, I need to report that the Church finances are starting to be a real cause for concern. We have a deficit for the financial year of over £4,000 and that is without having had any major project spends or making any significant donations as a Church body.

Two things have happened during the year which show how we are overly dependent on our lettings income. Firstly, the pre school closed in October 2009 from which we were receiving annual income of £4,500. Secondly, the new owners of 5 Castle Street made alterations to their car park and no longer wish to use their right of way over our land which means we have lost annual lease income of £3,300. The effect of these two events this year was a reduction of £4,650 in our annual income. Next year's finances will reflect a full year's impact

from losing these income sources of almost £8,000.

It costs £65,000 per annum just to run the Church and keep it going. That is £1,250 per week. But we don't want to just stand still and fire-fight. We want to be able to do more than that. We want to be able to grow as a Church and really reach out to the wider community.

Our receipts from collections and donations has remained at about £32,000 each year for at least the last 5 years. Expenses have steadily risen over that time - insurance, utilities, upkeep. If the level of giving remains at the current level then we will over-spend each year from now on and our reserves will last maybe 10 to 15 years, depending on what building repairs arise. We are currently obtaining quotes to have some of the stonework repaired - it costs money to keep the buildings in a good state of repair.

This Church currently has about 120 members on the pastoral roll. To tick over and cover costs without the need for any lettings income would mean a contribution of £10 per member per week. To really grow we would be looking at £11 or £12 per week. I know that that amount is not in everyone's reach and we do appreciate every penny we receive, but if every member could increase their giving by only £1 per week then that would raise an incredible £6,240 each year.

Did you know that we have to pay £37,800 annually from Wesley for the Circuit assessment - that is £315 per member and that is about 60% of our outgoings. We are the largest Church in the Circuit by membership and we have to pay a fair share.

If you are not in one of the planned giving schemes already, would you consider either joining the envelope scheme or setting up a standing order? If you are a UK taxpayer, have you completed a gift aid declaration so the Church can recover the tax on your giving or alterna-

tively do you use the blue gift aid envelopes which are available at the back of the Church? If you don't and put cash into the plate each week, we are losing out on 28p in every £1 you give because this giving is not gift-aided. All these are simple ways in which you can benefit the Church. Please speak to any of the Church Stewards, Ann Higginbottom (Gift Aid Secretary) or myself, any of whom will be very pleased to help you.

We are going to continue highlighting this financial need over the coming months. We are very grateful to those of you who have already responded to the letter which was sent to every member in the summer. Grateful thanks to those of you who have amended your standing orders or envelope giving, and to the new people who have joined the envelope scheme or the standing order scheme. If giving does not increase significantly then as a Church we will seriously need to look into organising regular fundraising events.

Many thanks,

**Charlotte Bridges**

## **So glad I live here**

As I looked across the hills late on Sunday afternoon, the sheer beauty of the valley and hills of the Chilterns made me think about something I had never thought about before. I wouldn't change what I do or where I live for anything. Yesterday morning I woke up and peeped out of my window to find cobwebs all over the neighbours' bushes glistening in the morning sun.

They were like jewels resting upon fine lace. The garden has woods just out the back, and often we see all kinds of wildlife; red kites, squirrels, and the occasional fox.

When my sister and I were younger we went out into the woods to play on the trees and collect conkers.

Just remembering makes me happy. I am so glad that I live here - in good old Bucks.

**Ellen Abbi**

(Taken from the Bucks Free Press, November 2010)

---

---

## **The Chaplaincy is busier than ever!**

(a report from Karen Johnstone University Chaplaincy Coordinator)

A major change has been our location...albeit sideways to a slightly larger desk space, with an extra cupboard. We are also about to acquire a new, larger prayer room which is on the same floor as our desk so will be more accessible. Thank you to all who have added their prayers to this cause!

We are doubling our weekly expenditure on hospitality to students, as demand was so high at the end of last year. A new initiative this year came when the Students Union asked us to help them recycle goods abandoned by students in Halls at the end of term. During

August I have managed to clean huge amounts of kitchenware, plus kettles, toasters etc which have been PAT (Safety) tested by the BNU and are now ready to be distributed amongst new students on Moving In Day.

As the BNU is in the process of forming a revised multi faith chaplaincy, there are lots of meetings and paperwork to be implemented over the coming months. As the Chaplaincy co-ordinator this will involve some changes to my roles, which are yet to be fully identified. I have been asked (by David Scott) to be part of the Enabling Committee for Churches Together in Bucks, which I have agreed to do but with the understanding that I have limited time available. I have already begun familiarising myself with other faiths through attendance at conferences, courses, Wycombe Sharing of Faith events, and the Faith Leaders Forum.

I would once again like to make a plea for cakes or biscuits during the months of November when we trawl around halls meeting students and giving them edibles! (For convenience these can be made in advance and I can store them in Naphill church freezer.)

After Harvest we will again be collecting consumables to give to students who are short of money towards the end of term. Please get in touch if this is something you would like to help with. A huge thank you to all who have supported practically and prayerfully, your contributions have been invaluable. To quote one Hindu student who regularly visited us last term...

'You don't just serve tea and coffee do you....you minister to people'

You are all helping to perpetuate that ministry...thank you.

---

---

### **Hymns for special People:**

The Dentist—Crown him with many crowns

The Estate Agent—How lovely is thy dwelling place

The Lady Chiroprapist—Anne did those feet in ancient times

## Thoughts on a years travel...

In the last few weeks I have begun the mammoth task of sorting through 7000 photos from a years worth of travel in order to start compiling photo albums. The best part of this task is that it reminds me of all the amazing things I have seen and done and it seems impossible that it only ended 5 months ago!

It began in October 2009, when my friend from university, Gemma, and I left Heathrow for Singapore. After several difficult days (where I realised quite how far we had travelled and wondered whether I had done the right thing) and several incredibly jet lagged nights we left for New Zealand.

We spent the first 6 weeks exploring New Zealand on a hop off, hop on bus meeting lots of people of many different nationalities. Having wished I had paid more attention in language classes at school I was relieved to find everyone we met spoke English. Something we later found was great when you wanted to communicate but not so good when you wanted a private discussion.

New Zealand is one of the most stunningly beautiful places on the planet with amazing geographical contrasts of geothermal activity, fjords and glaciers, mountains and huge lakes! South Island was the more striking, but it was Rotorua in the North that I most enjoyed, with its boiling mud pools, and bubbling creeks. It was in Rotorua that we had the greatest experience of the Maori culture. We witnessed the Haka, which when you are 5 metres from a scantily clothed Maori man wielding a weapon, is truly terrifying.

In the South we had some brilliant experiences including an over night cruise on the Milford Sound, and jumping in the freezing water, kayaking in Abel Tasman National Park (and later applying these skills on our own resulting in us obliviously paddling through a ferry terminal), getting lost on numerous bike rides and having very

close encounters with wild seals, dolphins, and penguins.

After 6 amazing weeks, having met lots of lovely people, we headed from the land of the sheep to the land of the kangaroo and home to our old Minister and family. Meleane and Tevita met us at Melbourne Airport. It was so lovely to see familiar faces after a month and a half without seeing anyone we knew. We had a lovely stay. Luisa had finished school and was waiting for her University results and Netane having done exceedingly well in his degree was also at home for the holidays. They were both much taller than me, and had Australian accents, but were very much the same people. The following day Gemma and I donning formal dresses headed out with the whole family, minus Taulama, to see Luisa graduate from high school. It was an incredibly formal affair and the students entered the hall to the school bag pipe band!!! It was really special to be part of something that is clearly such a huge part of growing up in Australia, and of course watching a very glamorous Luisa shine.

After a week with the family, where we fed and got cornered by rather large kangaroos, went to the cinema, swam, listened to Taulama play the guitar and piano with amazing talent and were generally really spoiled, Meleane, Tevita and Luisa drove us into Melbourne for us to try and set up some sort of normal life.

After a day of flat hunting and job interviews, we found ourselves with a posh apartment right in the middle of Melbourne and became fully fledged waitresses! We moved in with a Brazilian couple who had moved to Australia to try and learn English. After many evenings of charades we found that we not only understood each other but had similar senses of humour, something that was tested a lot in my role as a waitress. (not something in which I excelled!!)

After we had an interesting but special Christmas, where I waited on 150 homeless people in connection with my restaurant and the Salvation Army and shared a Brazilian Christmas eve with 8 Brazilians, we decided it was time to leave Melbourne and fly to Sydney.

Starting all over again proved a real challenge, made worse by our new choice of housemates. After several panic phone calls to Meleane, her nieces picked us up and we stayed with them while we sorted ourselves out. They also found me a temporary reception job and soon we were back on our feet, living in a somewhat dubious hostel, where the people were a little unusual but harmless. I found myself moved from temporary receptionist to a member of the manufacturing team!! I am really not sure how this year would have panned out without Meleane's continual help and guidance!

In Dulwich Hill, Sydney, I was incredibly lucky in finding a fantastic Salvation Army church down the road from where we were staying. The church was so warm and friendly and really reminded me of Wesley, its amazing how quickly you can feel a sense of belonging. At my first service, a lovely lady called Jackie asked what I was doing and we soon became good friends. We went on several fun day trips, a particularly memorable one to the Blue Mountains where we got a flat tyre on the way home, and were assisted by some Salvation Army people and a man from Somerset! Several of you may have met Jackie about a month ago when she came to church with me, having stopped off in London on her own world trip!

After 2 months and probably quite a lot of financial damage to the company later (I had the responsibility of ordering in huge quantities of materials and on several occasions accidentally made the quantities even huger!) we had saved up enough money to finance a 5 week trip up the East Coast from Sydney to Cape Tribulation.

The trip was brilliant, we greyhounded all the way up and had so many amazing experiences, including 4 wheel driving and bush camping on Fraser Island with wild Dingoes, a 2 day sailing trip around the Whitsunday Islands on a racing yacht, swimming in a dormant volcano, finding a platypus, visiting Steve Irwin's zoo, scuba diving on the Great Barrier Reef, and holding several snakes, and a Koala called Barney. After all of this we flew back from Cairns to Sydney, where we stayed with Luisa before flying to Durban .

When we landed it was clear something was about to happen in the country.....and to that event we had recently bought tickets. Much to the envy of most of my Year 11 boys at school we had tickets to a quarter final World Cup game in Cape Town at which there was a chance we would see England (obviously we had been a bit optimistic but at this point we still fancied our chances, as surprisingly did most other nationalities we met.)

We had an amazing 5 weeks travelling from Durban to Cape Town, along the Garden Route. The country was breathtakingly beautiful and the people we met were so friendly and so so proud of their country. We spent a few days in a township in Hermanus with the children in the pre school and youth centre which daily saw 150 children coming through its doors and was the work of a retired Christian man who had felt that God had called him to provide this for the local township. The work he had done was phenomenal. He had 5 boys who came along to the centre into the South African National Youth Choir and had a further 7 boys competing internationally at Judo. When you saw the limited materials they had to work with it really was very humbling yet amazing at the same time.

After this we arrived in Cape Town. I really loved Sydney but there was something special about Cape Town. The city really has everything; stunning views, an amazing mountain, vineyards, gorgeous beaches and a bustling city life. World Cup fever was at its height and we were so excited to be part of it. Whilst there we climbed Table Mountain, which felt like a real achievement and we were also lucky enough to stay with Damian, Rebecca Hickman's boyfriend, who amazingly enough had been in England about the time I had accidentally tumble dried and melted my whole purse, including all of my cards so he was able to hand deliver them to me.

Such coincidences that happened constantly throughout this year only served to strengthen my faith in a very real God who protected and cared for me and gave me constant reminders of his presence. It also made me realise the magnitude of his love as it

followed me around the world. To hide from God, I believe as Jonah found...would be an impossible task, for as big as the world seemed to me this year, it really is only a little ball in his hand.

Nicola Formby

---

---

## Why Wycombe Homeless Connection?

Wycombe Winter Night Shelter became operational in January 2008 as a grass roots ecumenical project using church halls to provide food, a bed for the night and a warm welcome to homeless adults. Very soon it became clear that homelessness was a sign of severe life problems and these needed to be addressed if our guests were to rebuild their lives.

Working with Wycombe Council homelessness department, the probation service, health care and housing providers, employment centres and Bucks Adult Learning our staff have developed a year round support and signposting, advocacy [and with volunteers] a mentoring scheme to enable guests to move on. We hold weekly two evenings and one afternoon drop-in session to engage with the needs of our homeless guests.

It is because more homeless people contact us during the months that we have no night shelter that we decided to change the name to Wycombe Homeless Connection.



Wycombe Homeless Connection continues to provide, with the vital support of churches, a night shelter for three winter months and through support and mentoring a bridge back to a better life.

Church venues for the night shelter this year are:

The King's Church; Trinity URC; All Saint's;  
Oakridge Road Baptist; Union Baptist; Wesley;  
and St Mary and St George.



Michael Bowker



## Dates for your diary

Sunday 5th December	10:30am	Wesley	Gift Service
Tuesday 7th December	7.30pm	Avenue	Preachers Meeting
Sunday 19th December	5:00pm	Wesley	Carol Service
Sunday 26th December	10.30pm	Trinity	United Service No service at Wesley
Sunday 2nd January	10:30am	Wesley	Covenant Service
Sunday 16th January	3:30pm	Trinity	Week of Prayer for Christian Unity ser- vice
Tuesday 18th January	7:30pm	Wesley	Church Council
Wednesday 16th Feb- ruary	7:30pm	Avenue	Preachers Meeting
Friday 18th February	7:45pm	Flackwell Heath	Goodwill Supper in aid of the Burkina Faso project.
Wednesday 2nd March	7.30pm		Treasurers Meeting
Tuesday 8th March	8:00pm		Wesley Property Committee
Wednesday 16th March	7:30pm	Marlow	Circuit Meeting
Saturday 7th May	10.00am	John Hampden	Spring Synod
Thursday 26th May	7:30pm	Avenue	Preachers Meeting
Thursday 7th July	7:30pm	Naphill	Circuit Meeting
Saturday 10th Septem- ber	10:00am		Autumn Synod
Tuesday 20th Septem- ber	7:30pm	Holmer Green	Circuit Meeting