

NORNEWS



The Magazine of
NORTON METHODIST CHURCH
Letchworth Garden City
Spring 2008

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The magazine of *NORTON METHODIST CHURCH* Letchworth

MINISTER

Rev. Andrew Maguire

EDITORS

Myrle & Peter Cannell

EDITORIAL

This issue of Nornues should have been distributed soon after Easter but I did myself an injury at the end of February, which put me out of action for a while. So here, with apologies, is our somewhat late spring offering.

The last few months have been a mixture of both great rejoicing and great sadness for all of us at Norton Methodist Church.

In March we celebrated 100 years in the life of our Church, which started in a hut at the corner of Cashio Lane and Norton Road. But we'll let Shirley, who was one of those who arranged the exhibition, tell us all about the weekend starting on page 10.

We have all been much saddened by the passing of four church members, although we rejoice in the love and friendship we enjoyed with them over the years. Tom Mealing who faced a long and distressing illness with courage and fortitude, Helen Parker resident at Trembaths but still a member at Norton, Hilda Matthews who had worshipped with us for some years and was a former member of the Sisterhood and, suddenly and unexpectedly and last of all, Reg Warner a loyal member for many years.

We thank God for their lives and for the service they gave to our church and to their Lord and Master. Our love and prayers go out to their families and friends as they pick up the threads of their lives. More tributes are paid to them in this magazine.

“Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in human
love”

Myrle.

MINISTER'S LETTER How well do you perform? It is a question and a pressure that many people have to cope with these days. It has nothing to do with ability at playing a musical instrument, or singing, or even performing on stage. It has everything to do with how well you are succeeding at work, at school, or wherever. We are keen to make sure that everybody is keeping up to the mark. Schools have had league tables for some time now - we need to be sure that teachers and pupils are performing well. Surgeons in our hospitals have data kept about how people fare after operations (if you have access to such information and you are "going in for an op" it might give you hope or anxiety!). Records are kept of how many 999 calls are being answered within 10 minutes - and so it is possible to compare the performance of the emergency services in different areas. Most companies these days have annual appraisals for members of their workforce. In some companies this will be an occasion for encouraging staff and developing skills: in others it might be an occasion when "underperforming" members of staff are identified for the Alan Sugar Apprentice treatment. If you are not performing sufficiently well, then you are out! This kind of attitude seems to be getting pretty pervasive - if you don't perform adequately, then beware.

I react to this initially in two ways. On the one hand part of me says that it is great to encourage the highest possible standards. Yet another part of me wonders whether this approach can actually become inhuman, and I have to recognise that there is an enormous amount of truth in the verse of scripture which says that we have all fallen short. If we don't come to terms with a degree of human frailty then we will simply make ourselves nervous wrecks. Then I sometimes go on to wonder just what kind of "performance indicators" could or should be applied to the church. You might, like me, have reservations about applying these kinds of criteria at all to church life. But then I guess that lots of people do. People will look for a church with the style of music or preaching that they like (I am told a number of good pulpit guides are published to go alongside the good restaurant guides!).

People will look for a church that is "Biblical" or "charismatic" or whatever it is that they are seeking. I am suspicious of all these kind of criteria when people apply them in a sectarian spirit. But perhaps there are some areas where we should take care that we are keeping up to the mark. Jesus once said "By their fruit you will recognise them". At this season of Pentecost we turn our thoughts to the "fruit of the spirit". Paul said that the fruit of the spirit is "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." Note that love is first in the list.

If we are to apply any kind of performance indicators to the church, then I think that these are the ones that would have my backing.

Andrew Maguire

HOPE08 and Re:Act Overview

Re:Act is a short-term mission for your people of 14+ to equip and encourage local churches to reach to their community. 30-40 young people have three days of training and then go to six towns in six days, running two events in each town. They are provided with accommodation and food each night by the local churches. They end with a day of reflection and thanksgiving for what they have seen God do through them.

Re:Act is organised by Urban Saints (formally Crusaders), an inter-denominational youth organisation, and has been running in two or three areas of Southern England for some years. This year, Urban Saints are working with Hope 2008 to expand the work.

God willing, multiple teams of young people, evangelists and bands will be trained and made available to villages, towns and cities all over the UK, to work alongside local churches in putting on two great events in the summer of 2008:

1. Family Fun Day

A friendly atmosphere, great activities, high levels of fun, all of which (including a barbeque and outdoor café) are free of charge. This is a truly fantastic opportunity for churches in your locality to join together in demonstrating God's amazing unconditional love, acceptance and generosity towards people in your community.

Following the Family Fun Day, guests are invited to stay on to Church Outdoors. A short gap between the two events, plus clear communication as to what is happening next, allows guests to opt in or out.

2. Church Outdoors

Taking the church service outdoors and presenting the good news of Jesus in a high quality and fun way, relevant and sensitive to seekers; challenging, yet life-changing to those who respond. A pre-planned local follow-up strategy will be implemented to assist new Christians and seekers in their personal faith journey.

Watch out for more details! It should be a great event for the HOPE08 year.

THE GOOD FRIDAY WALK

This year the annual Good Friday walk on 21st March started from High Street Methodist Church, Stevenage. It took walkers past St. Nicholas' Church, passing Chesfield and Damask Green finishing back at the Church for refreshments.

Gavin and Gordon from Norton joined the walkers and between them raised £155.

Well done! Both of you.

AN ENJOYABLE WALK Gordon Whitfield

The Good Friday walk this year was from the Methodist Church in Stevenage Old Town and it was over the area known as Forster country. The area is known for its beauty and covers from north of the old town up to Weston and back down to Graveley before turning South, back to the Church where welcome refreshments had been laid out on the tables. It was the area in which the author E M Forster and the Composer Elizabeth Poston lived and both families had spent part of the time at Rooks Nest before and after the 1939 War. The area has had a certain amount of fame attached to it since then and is now looked after by a Preservation Society whose aim is to see that it does not alter.

There were just over 70 walkers and after a brief word and prayer from Andrew Maguire we all set off. The walk is always very enjoyable and the distance is no problem when everyone gets engaged in conversation with fellow walkers and a most friendly spirit soon covers those walking. This year I palled up with Sarah and Roger Harrison for some of the way and they told me about their recent holiday to Argentina. For them it was a three-week adventure and they just travelled around doing their own thing - and how I would have liked to have been with them!

But the walk does have a purpose and that is to raise much needed money for worthy charities and this year the Garden House Hospice in Letchworth and the Al Shurooq School for blind children in Bethlehem should, with a bit of luck, share around £3000.

This year was my best year for sponsors and I would like to thank again all those kind people who supported me, many from North Avenue Methodist Church.

From Gavin Hassall

This year the walk took place from High Street in Stevenage back to High Street and was 8¼ miles long.

The walk was mainly through fields and up hills and was mostly quite easy although I thought going up the hills was rather hard. Most of the ground through the fields was wet and was slippery and it started to rain and hail towards the end of the walk. There was a lot of wind too. But it wasn't that bad.

After the walk there were sandwiches on a table and you could have some chicken or tomato soup.

The well-deserved winner of the cup this year was a 4½ year-old girl who had done the entire walk.

SUNRISE ON EASTER MORNING

Eleven of us gathered at Radwell Meadows for the 6 o'clock sunrise service.

It was a crisp, frosty morning but fairly bright when we arrived, but as we sang the first hymn,

"Christ is alive, let Christians sing, His cross stands empty to the skies",

it began to snow!

So there we were as Andrew prayed and read the resurrection story from Luke 24, a gentle flurry of snow fell all around us.

Not quite the sunrise we had hoped for but none the less a joyful celebration of Our Lord's triumph over sin and death. We closed with the hymn,

I know that my redeemer lives,

what joy that blest assurance gives"

As we returned to our cars the snow got heavier and by the time we went to the 9:30 service at Norton there was quite a covering on the ground.

Audrey Blatch

DO YOU FEED THE BIRDS? – THIS IS A PROBLEM I DOUBT YOU'LL HAVE.

Spring has finally started here at the 'top end' of New Jersey. We started feeding the birds over the winter in earnest last year. So over last weekend Pam and I filled the bird feeders as usual. We have three that need two huge bags to fill. One of the feeders is a three-column monster...the birds love it... and two cages, which we fill with some sort of goo with nuts for the woodpeckers.

We were warned of storms Wednesday evening, so Thursday morning when we went out and found two bird feeders and one cage all over the lawn, I wasn't too surprised. Except we originally had three feeders and now there were only two and we had two cages and now there was only one..... and ALL the bird feed had gone. Maybe the storm was hungry.

I'm not quite that stupid not to realise that, being spring, it is bear 'wake-up' time and we noted that the only remaining seed cage had been reshaped and was quite elongated. Anyway, we decided to take things in overnight, re-fill the feeders/cages that were left and we hung them out on Friday morning.

Went out this evening, got back at about 9:30 p.m. Complete absence of feeders! Gone! Suspicious prints on the lawn. One cage left. I tipped out the contents on the ground and took what was left of the hardware into the garage. Did a few chores for half an hour and went outside again. The ground was bare!

Somewhere in a cave on the mountain, some *x~*... bear has three bird feeders, one cage and lots of food.

They owe me \$50 for damages.....I'll be up there tomorrow to collect.

Life insurance is paid up.

David Cannell, Montague, New Jersey

PASTOR'S BUSINESS CARD: Kathy Mercer

A new pastor was visiting in the homes of his parishioners. At one house it seemed obvious that someone was at home, but no answer came to his repeated knocks at the door. Therefore, he took out his business card and wrote "Revelation 3:20" on the back of it and stuck it in the door. Revelation 3:20 begins "Behold, I stand at the door and knock."

When the offering was processed the following Sunday, he found that his card had been returned. Added to it was this cryptic message, "Genesis 3:10."

Reaching for his Bible to check out the citation, he broke up in gales of laughter. "Genesis 3:10 reads, "I heard your voice in the garden and I was afraid for I was naked."

"A cheerful heart is good medicine" (Prov. 17:22)

3rd LETCHWORTH RAINBOWS – SPRING REPORT

In December we attended the Christmas Carol Service in which one of our Rainbows did a reading and did it very well. We also went to the Rainbows 20th Birthday Party in Stotfold and ended the term with a Fancy Dress Party.

The spring term was easy to plan and we followed the calendar, thus: Chinese New Year, Pancake Day, St Valentine's Day, Mothers' Day and Easter. This is quite usual but the problem this year was that we also entered the Guide District Arts and Crafts Competition and, with an early Easter, we struggled to fit all the ideas into a short term. However we managed it by celebrating Chinese New Year, Pancake Day (we cheated and bought the pancakes) and St Valentine's Day all on the same evening! Thoroughly enjoyable but very tiring.

We came 2nd in the Arts and Crafts Competition and we were very proud of that. The Easter bonnet that all the girls had a hand in decorating was so beautiful that they took it to Wymondley Wood for display.

We have 16 girls at present and 4 Warranted Guiders now that our ex Young Leader has decided to stay with us after qualifying.

Jillian Shaw

Shirley Hassall

Kay Skingsley

Gemma Baldrick

THOUGHTS FOR TODAY Sylvia Norman

If people from Poland are called Poles, why aren't people from Holland called Holes?

If a pig loses its voice is it disgruntled?

When cheese gets its picture taken what does it say?

Why isn't the number 11 called onety one or even Tenty one?

"I am" is reportedly the shortest sentence in the English language. Could it be that "I do" is the longest sentence?

If lawyers are disbarred and clergymen defrocked, doesn't it follow that electricians can be delighted, musicians denoted, cowboys deranged, models deposed, tree surgeons debarked and dry cleaners depressed?

No one ever says, "It's only a game." When their team is winning.

Ever wonder about those people who spend £2 on those little bottles of Evian water? Try spelling Evian backwards.

Centenary 1908-2008

March 8th, 2008 Norton Methodist Church turned 100. To celebrate, we had an open day on the Saturday with displays and memorabilia exploring the history of Norton and Gipsy Smith, and displays of the groups that use the Community Centre. There were refreshments available and crafts for the children.

The church displayed photographs spanning the beginnings of 'the Mission' at the bottom of Cashio Lane to the present day. We also were very pleased to be able to hear Gipsy Smith singing one of his mission songs that was recorded quite some years ago. There was a PowerPoint slide show running throughout the day showing photos of the early beginnings to the present day.

The Toddlers Group displayed photos of the children and parents enjoying their time at the Toddlers and had a colouring picture of the original church logo as their craft.

The Jr. Church made a lovely collage in the shape of a cross which has on it pictures and drawings from the children of the history of the church. Also included are pictures of the children and former and present Jr. Church teachers. It will remain in the church. Anyone who missed it on the day can still come and have a look at the celebration cross. The children who attended the open day made covenant boxes with the Jr. Church teachers.

We had a special drawing of the church fire done by one of our gifted congregation members, Janet Spicer. We do thank her for her artistic interpretation of that event.

A prayer board was up for people who wished to pray about those things that were on their hearts and it was used in the Sunday morning worship.

Methodist Homes – Trembaths put up a display, which not only had information about Methodist Homes, but also some wonderful photos of the residents on outings and special events at the home.

Friends of Udobo displayed photos of the children as well as information about the school and how people can get involved in supporting this outreach programme.

In the Community Centre, several of the groups put up displays. The MS Society had large variety of information booklets ranging from what MS is to how to cope with it. The National Childbirth Trust displayed variety of information about the trust and information for new-to-be moms. The Letchworth Arcadians put up a display of photos from the past 40 or so years. They also had a good selection of costumes on display. Third Letchworth Rainbows displayed photos of the Rainbows out and about and making crafts. They also had information on Girl Guiding. Children were invited to make Rainbow plates as their craft.

Everyone looked forward to the weekend's events and they went tremendously well. We were busy up until 1pm. Then about 2pm it picked up again until 4pm when it was time to close in order to get ready for our Sunday morning service. We had two photographers at the event: one from the Comet newspaper and the other from the Heritage Foundation.

It was a wonderful experience for everyone to hear and share memories of their church life with old and new friends.

On Sunday we celebrated our 100 years through worship with Rev. David Woodward, who was a former minister at Norton. The morning service was themed: 'The house of God'. The displays were used as a focus point for the prayers.

The evening service with Central Choir was wonderful and we had a special guest appearance by none other than Gipsy Smith giving us one of his two-minute talks. Rev. Woodward theme was 'As the clay is in the potter's hand so are you in my hand'. He took the Methodist Church Mission statement and went through it illustrating to us how things have changed and are going to change within the church and not to be afraid of those changes that take place in church which are making it relevant to the people of today.

It was a great experience to meet Rev. David Woodward and his wife Kathy. They are both full of enthusiasm and have a deep love for, and commitment to, the Lord.

Special thanks go out to all those who contributed with photographs and special memories and those who worked hard in the kitchen making tea, coffee, cakes and cream teas. I would like to give a great big thank you to Audrey, Sylvia and Jean. Each contributed extra time and used their gifts to help make this day a success.

I would also like to say that Myrle's idea of putting the photos up on the trestle table legs with cardboard was a brilliant idea; I just wished that she had not got hurt in the process of getting the cardboard. We are all delighted that she has recovered so well from her injuries.

Most of all I would like to thank all those who attended both the open day and the services on Sunday and those who sent Anniversary cards. You really made the day a fabulous success.

The following was a prayer that was written by Audrey especially for the day:

*Thank you Father
for your faithfulness
to us over the past 100 years.
May your spirit guide us in the future
so that we will keep faithful to you.*

Shirley Hassall.
Church Council Secretary

HELEN PARKER – A full and varied life

Born in Yarmouth, before the First World War Helen spent her childhood there. In the early 1930s she married Revd William Parker and settled down to the life of a typical minister's wife and became mother to two little girls. Tragedy came early into her life when her husband, her beloved Bill, died suddenly following an emergency operation for a burst appendix, leaving Helen a widow with a young family to support.

During those years she ran a Methodist Guest House in Ilfracombe, her daughters remember the house as their family home. Later she worked in a nursery for babies in care and then nursed her own mother in her dying years.

But what about the Helen we came to know and love at Norton Methodist Church? In the 1980s Revd David Hewitt called on me to say that two friends had moved into an apartment at Norton Hall Farm, they were Methodists and would like to worship at Norton. David also said it would be nice if one of the congregation would visit and personally invite them to the service the following Sunday morning. I went along and met Mrs Helen Parker and Mr Jimmy Stack. What a privilege to know them both.

Helen and Jimmy soon became loyal and supportive members attending all services, Bible study sessions, church meetings and later, part of the original team of Toddler Group helpers. They were obviously not young when they first came to live in Letchworth and sadly their health deteriorated, Helen became a resident at Trembaths and Jimmy unable to cope alone moved out of the area into more intensive care.

While living in Trembaths Helen continued to worship with us playing a full part in the services at Norton and was instrumental in maintaining the bond between our church and the nursing home. She will always be remembered for the deep and moving prayers that enriched our worship at both places. She continued to be part of the bible study group, meeting with us in various people's homes and encouraging other Trembaths residents to join her. Later when fewer and fewer residents could come out in the evenings, she arranged for the group to meet in the lounge at Trembaths still ensuring that fellow residents were brought down to join us. For a time the North Avenue Sisterhood met in the Trembaths lounge with Helen's help and encouragement and she also wrote Trembaths notes for this magazine.

For the last few years Helen spent all her time in the nursing home, no one could have been more appreciative of the love and care she received there. In December she left this life and entered into the joy of her Lord, she was ready to go. Those of us who knew her will never forget how she enriched the life of our church and of Trembaths.

Thank you Helen.

Myrle Cannell

HILDA MATTHEWS – A gentle lady of faith

Hilda Matthews was born in Church Lane in Norton in 1917. The family moved to Campers Avenue when she was three, and then moved to Stotfold when she was 12 years old where she attended Sunday School at the Methodist church.

When she left school she cycled back and forth to Letchworth every day to work at the British Tabulating Machine Company (TAB). After her marriage to Bertram Goodwin in 1935 the couple moved to Monklands in Letchworth and, after a couple of years there, they moved to Common View where Hilda lived for 66 years.

There were three children Maurice, Audrey and Colin.

Hilda began attending the Elim Church with her Mother in Law and soon developed a Christian conviction. She continued to worship at Elim until she became too frail to go on her own after she had a minor stroke and also suffered from arthritis. This is when she began to come to Norton where she felt very much at home, as she already knew some of the ladies, having been a member of the Sisterhood for some time.

Hilda's faith in God was a major part of her life. She loved to sing at the Sisterhood and was in the choir at the Salvation Army Silver Circle. Her family was also very important to her and she kept them all well fed and clothed although money was always tight. Bert was a carpenter with the Council after his brief spell in the army during the Second World War. He died of Lung Cancer at the age of 61. When she retired from her job at Fermarks, which she had started when Colin went away to College, Hilda joined the Over Sixty's Club at Howard Gardens where she later met Sidney Matthews who was also widowed.

They married at the Elim Church and Hilda gained 3 lovely stepsons and daughters in law plus more grandchildren to add to her own ten. They were together for 17 years until Sidney died at the age of 89.

Their daughter, Audrey, with her husband Bob and their son Chris moved in with her as she couldn't cope on her own. They lived happily but later moved to Broadwater Avenue because of Bob's illness. Hilda died peacefully in January of a massive stroke, confident of her Saviours love and of her place in eternity with him.

We will always remember Hilda for her lovely smile and her kindly gentle manner.

Audrey Blatch

TOM MEALING – A man of many talents.

Tom was born in Hawarden, Chester. At 11+ he won a County Grammar School place and so when at the age of 15 his family moved to Letchworth he was offered a place at Letchworth Grammar School. He was then called on by his father to make a decision – to keep on at school or to take an apprenticeship and study part time at the Technical College. He opted for the latter and became a toolmaker with NICO, Locksmiths, and remained a toolmaker all his working life, all be it with several different companies, until he retired at 68.

As he was settling into his new surroundings on arrival in Letchworth (he was living with his grandmother in Glebe Road) he was exploring the neighbourhood and looked through a window of the hall at "The Mission" as Norton Methodist Church was known then. A friendly voice said, "Would you like a cup of tea?" "Yes please" replied Tom to Edith Chapman, who was helping to run the Youth Club there. He joined the Youth Club and that was his first introduction to our church. It was not however an unbroken connection.

Tom was living in another part of Letchworth when he met and married June and their first son Keith was christened at St. Paul's Church. When their second son was born they were living on Grange Estate and Tom said he would like Barry to be christened at the "Mission". June agreed and thus began their many years worshipping at what is now known as Norton Methodist Church.

Tom and June were delighted to welcome a third son, Glenn, into the family, but life was not always simple for the young couple. Sadly Keith, their eldest son, an asthma sufferer died suddenly at the age of 11. It was a test of their faith and to the admiration of their many friends they came through, although it was a tragedy that would always be part of them.

It is impossible to mention all the ways in which Tom worked for the Church at Norton without missing something out and I hope family and friends will forgive any omissions. At one time he ran a Youth Club there piling eight youngsters from the Heathermere area into his car to form a nucleus of the group. Youth Club work has never been easy and it wasn't then, and it finally had to close when the local jobs made it impossible for young people to attend.

Tom was a Sunday School teacher and he was one of a group of church members who supervised the scholars at the swimming pool on Sunday mornings and then brought them back to the church for breakfast. How they ate those sausages and bacon and beans after a chilly swim! And how the congregation used to drool during the service with the all permeating smell of a good fry-up!!

Tom was Senior Church Steward for 13 years and was always around on special occasions making posters, arranging flowers, lumping chairs and tables about, washing up. You name it, he did it.

He was also a server at the monthly communion service at Trembaths and was a faithful member of the Bible Study group also at Trembaths and always had something to contribute to the discussion.

Tom liked people, and they liked him, which led him to be active in the life of Letchworth. He belonged to the North Herts. Bowls Club; he gave over 50 pints of blood to the Blood Donor Service for which he was presented with an award at a special ceremony; he helped to make scenery for the Scout Gang Show; he was secretary of the "26" Club and arranged many day trips to places such as Blenheim, Audley End and Bressingham.

Tom was always keen to learn new skills and when he retired he set up a workshop in his garage and taught himself to carve in wood. He made many toys, notably a rocking horse to be sent to Croatia and was honorary repairer of toys for our Toddler group. I called on him one day and met a friend of his who invented 'one off' gadgets for disabled children. The friend said to me, "I design them and Tom makes them up for me." At the time they were working together on a page turning device so that a little girl could read normal books without needing someone to be with her all the time.

Tom would work with his garage door open when the weather was suitable and people would stop and talk to him. His carving skills became known leading to requests to make signs for various people and places including those for Wymondley Wood Guide and Scout Activity Centre. Then he would get a message saying if he could arrange collection there were pieces of oak and other valuable wood he could have. That may have been what inspired him to execute six wonderful carvings depicting scenes from the bible. They were first displayed at Norton Methodist Church on the open day to celebrate 100 years of Letchworth Garden City and now have a permanent home in our church.

Family life was very important to Tom; he welcomed with pride and delight the birth of his five grandchildren. He loved all children and they loved him and often followed him around as if he were the Pied Piper.

Tom's last illness was long and distressing, he never stopped praising the skill and devotion of the doctors and nurses attending him. We his friends honour June for her patient care for him.

The church was full to overflowing for his funeral, evidence of the love everyone from far and wide felt for him and the esteem in which he was held.

He is sadly missed by his family and all who knew him.

Myrle Cannell

June writes:

Tom was a wonderful husband, father and grandfather, a good friend to all who knew him and we miss him terribly. But life has to go on and we, the family, are trying to pick up the pieces.

REG WARNER – Doorkeeper in the House of the Lord.

It was a shock to all of us at Norton Methodist Church when we heard Reg had been admitted to Lister Hospital even though we knew he had been far from well. Somehow he was always THERE doing the jobs he had undertaken. On the day he passed away we were stunned and I realised how little I knew of Reg's life before I met him at North Avenue.

He was born in 1923, one of a pair of twins, Phyllis weighing 2lbs and Reg 1lb 15ozs. This was before the days of premature baby units as we know them today; their first cots were shoe boxes and they were fed every two hours with fountain pen fillers. What wonderful parents they must have had to rear them at all. Reg grew up with two older sisters as well as Phyllis, going to school in Colchester and playing in the street on light summer evenings, hopscotch, hoops, roller skates etc, just as all children did. At the age of 12 Reg joined the 1st Colchester Boys Brigade and stayed with them for 4 years. These years must have sown the seeds for his future involvement as an officer in the B.B.

The family moved to Letchworth in 1940 presumably to escape the bombing. After a spell in the Home Guard, Reg was called up for National Service in the army where, after training in various parts of the U.K. he was posted to Bombay and afterwards to Burma.

After the war Reg came home to Letchworth and met Anne, a friend of his twin sister Phyllis. Anne and Reg became more than friends, fell in love and in 1950 married. They had two daughters, Susan who had two sons Rick and Carl and Daphne who had Heidi and Daniel. Anne and Daniel then had 4 grandchildren, Samantha, Karen, Skye and Ryan. Reg and Anne were always close to their family.

We are not quite sure of the dates but Reg spent some years running the Boys' Brigade at North Avenue with Bill Sibley. But of course he also went back to civilian work after the war with Kryne and Laye in Letchworth. Unfortunately while he was working there he suffered an eye injury and, after two operations, he was found to be unable to continue to work there. After a spell with Kaysor Bondor he went to work at Shelvoke and Drewery and spent his years immediately prior to retirement in the Engineering Dept at Hitchin College.

When I first came to Letchworth in 1970 Reg was part of the congregation at North Avenue Methodist Church as we were called then and invariably collected and presented the offering. He also collected up the hymnbooks after morning service. I was told that he had volunteered this form of service and was completely reliable in his duties accepting help when necessary but never minding when he did it alone.

He continued to serve, faithfully and without fuss, for the rest of his life.

That was Reg.

When we started a second Toddler Group session, many years ago now, we asked for additional help and he was one of the first volunteers. We said what we really needed was someone to help put the toys away. From then on, apart from illness and holidays, he was there by 11 a.m. on Thursday mornings first helping in the kitchen and afterwards stacking the toys and furniture away.

Again faithfully and without fuss.

He used to be what I can only describe as 'door keeper' at Trembaths; the door there is kept locked for security reasons and Reg would always be there early, he would watch for people arriving at the Bible Study meeting or the monthly Sunday morning service and let them in with his usual cheery greeting. Again so faithfully and without fuss.

How we miss him.

Myrle Cannell

I cannot do better than end with this tribute from his and Anne's grandchildren

REMARKABLE to have come into this world in 1923 and surviving weighing less than 2lbs.

EAGER to always help others whether it would be lending a hand, giving advice or knowledge, and supporting the church.

MAKING us laugh, especially when he used to tease Nan. Always full of fun.

ADMIRED by all who knew him.

RELIABLE in every way, he was always there for us.

KNOWLEDGEABLE about everything. Ask him a question – he knew the answer, especially about war and history.

A FAMILY MAN.

BOOK WORM He read forever and ever and ever and ever.

LOVABLE Granddad loved animals and animals loved him.

ENTHUSIASTIC gardener, he loved growing his fruit and veg.

This remarkable man our Granddad will be sadly missed by all.

We love you Granddad very, very much. XXXX

TODDLERS

For some time now we have been told at intervals by the media that the birth rate is going down.

There is certainly evidence for this locally. In the past few years we have lost another secondary school in Letchworth and unless public opinion has its way we are to lose a Primary school. Until very recently we have not noticed any effect on TODDLER membership and it is among very young children that it would show first. What we have noticed is that we have shorter waiting lists and it is easier to keep attendance down to smaller numbers.

No, we are not embarking on a recruiting campaign. In fact 20 – 25 families each Wednesday and Thursday is a nice number comfortable for everybody and it is lovely that for the first time in years we have been able to admit 3 or 4 new families in the first half of the term instead of having to say the starting date must be “next term”. This is particularly pleasing because a number of those asking to join are new families having just moved into Letchworth and there is no better way to help them settle down and integrate in their new environment. It was always distressing to have to ask such families to wait for several weeks before they could be admitted.

Before ending these notes, I would like to write a big “THANK YOU” to all those members and friends of the church who stepped in to help when I injured my leg. That put me out of action for several weeks – and Don and Win went to Australia at about the same time so Win was not around either.

In the end, thanks to all those who helped, we did not have to miss a single session. I have been told by some of you who were new to Norton Methodist Toddlers, that you felt that you were the ones to benefit, “just looking at the happy faces of the children as they come in is reward enough”.

THANKS AGAIN.

Myrle

The UDOBO SCHOOL Report

For those who regularly support the school in Durban, South Africa, you will have recently received the latest reports in the twenty page April Newsletter and this NorNews report summarises some of the content of the newsletter. A few copies remain of the newsletter and, if anyone reading this would like to know more and receive a copy, let me know.

First come, first served!

Since Kathy and Mirriam visited us in the UK last autumn, life has been interesting at the school. When the new school year started in January, a new class opened and there are now over one hundred children in five classes. A bit of a change from the hesitant start in 2004 with one class and three children!

Much building and facility work has been paid for by donors in the UK during and since the visit and so now the school has canopies all round to shelter the staff and children from both the rain and the sun. The outdoor junglegym has been given a makeover with many improvements. Then just before the April newsletter was printed, we were able to contribute well over £10,000 from English benefactors, which will enable the school and Montclair Methodist Church to purchase a much-needed minibus. Many of the children travel many kilometres to get to school using very unreliable public transport and the minibus will enable the children to travel safely. It will also be used by the church for its social and outreach programme.

All that, and much more, is in the newsletter – with pictures in colour thanks to the excellent printing facility at Archway Methodist Church, which is now available to enhance our UK Friends of Udobo work.

The school has indeed been blessed with some very generous one-off donations recently but the bedrock of the giving continues to be the faithful regular monthly contributions being made by an increasing number of faithful folk. This work is a major part of the outreach from Norton, in conjunction with other churches in this circuit and elsewhere. So, if you are not already a contributor, this appeal is made to you to take this opportunity to make a real difference to some of God's very disadvantaged little ones that depend on us for not only their education but also, in some cases, their very lives.

Peter

FOR THE WANT OF A NAIL Peter Cannell

a war was lost. Or so the saying goes.

More to the point, as this true story from the second great war illustrates, you could say that having the right nail, in the right place, at the right time ensured that the war was won.

Let me introduce you to the late Geoffrey Tandy - and his strange but true story.

In the early part of the Second World War, Geoffrey was an academic, a seaweed expert working at London's Natural History Museum. To his great surprise and considerable concern, he suddenly found himself called up to war work and posted to Bletchley Park, the then highly secret 'German code-busting' operation where he was really a fish (or seaweed) out of water and totally bemused by all that was going on.....And feeling quite useless.

The reason for his posting was that the bureaucrats in the MOD were looking for experts in cryptograms, which are coded messages and which require skills in complex mathematics. Geoffrey had listed his expertise as the study of cryptogams, and a cryptogam is a plant that does not produce seeds and includes mosses and seaweed!

Presumably the bureaucrats didn't think that the little 'r' made any difference!!

So poor old Geoffrey, the seedless moss and seaweed expert, went to Bletchley Park. He mooched around amongst the mathematical geniuses trying to make himself useful but really feeling like a bit of seaweed in a desert.

But then, one day, some sodden and disintegrating secret German notebooks, written in code and recovered from a sunken submarine, were brought to Bletchley Park. Immediately Geoffrey knew precisely what to do to salvage the books and preserve the writing by treating them like seaweed being studied in the laboratory. After carefully separating and washing the sheets to remove the salt and dirt, he laid them out on the right sort of absorbent paper to dry and stabilise them. Thus with his expert treatment, the sheets were salvaged and preserved and vital information could be read.

Geoffrey's seaweed preservation skills were the key to ensuring that the codebooks were made readable again. The mathematical experts were then able to apply their skills, the information was fed to the Enigma machines, which then got cracking - and the war was won.

And good Old English bureaucracy triumphed again.

The work done at Bletchley Park was so secret that it was many years after the war ended before we had any idea of the vital part the work there played in the war effort. In his later years, Churchill said of Bletchley Park that "*It was the goose that laid the golden egg - and never once squawked*".