

## Easter 2012 Liverpool District Newsletter

Dear Friends,

What do you do with your old Christmas tree? Ours currently lies alongside our garage wall, shorn of its branches, a sad and sorry remnant of its former glory! I am writing this letter in the period of Lent, when I know that in some of the Churches of the District a Lenten Cross will have been formed of the trunk of last year's Christmas tree, on which will be hung, Sunday by Sunday through Lent, symbols of the journey of our Lord Jesus to betrayal and arrest, torture and crucifixion. Such a Lenten Cross and the journey to the central events of the Christian story at Easter, I have found to be a powerful symbol of that holding together of birth and life and death – and re-birth in the Resurrection of Easter Day – the whole of life, shot through with the glory of God's grace made flesh in the person of Jesus. And for us, as Christ's disciples, it also points us to the fact that discipleship is for the whole of life – its joy and pain, its sorrows and its hope. And that, through it all, we are accompanied in our life's journey by the risen Christ, who was born as we are, knew life as we know it, died our death on the cross and is raised to glory and lives with us in the power of the Spirit. Therein lies our hope and the hope of the world. I pray that you may know your hope in Christ renewed through this Lenten and Easter season.

As I write this, I am about to begin a period of sabbatical. This will be from 1<sup>st</sup> March to 31<sup>st</sup> May and separate to this letter you will have received details of those who will be providing cover for me during these next three months. I am very grateful to each of them for their support of me in this way. This will be my last sabbatical before I am due to retire in 2014. And just as the life of a disciple is a whole life journey so is that of ordained ministry – it does not begin with ordination, nor does it end when, in Methodist parlance, we 'sit down'. I want to do some serious reflection around the future shape of my ministry post-retirement. I also want to build on my last sabbatical, exploring practical applications for Churches and manses of good stewardship of land and environment, combined with some further exploration of Celtic spirituality. I am grateful to the Church for these periods of refreshment and renewal.

Can I also mention one further thing that I would want to encourage you all to support, even though I myself will not be there? On Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> April, our District Synod will meet at Penketh Methodist Church in the Sankey Valley Circuit. The pattern will be to do the business of Synod in the afternoon, with a tea at 5.30pm followed, at 6.30pm, by a District Celebration which will include the Ordinand's Testimony Service. We will have one ordinand going forward to the Plymouth Conference this year – Deacon Flip den Uil. The preacher at the District Celebration will be the Revd Loraine Mellor, now Chair of the Nottingham and Derby District but formerly, of course, superintendent minister of what is now the Sankey Valley Circuit and minister at Penketh. Please do support this day as you are able and pray for Flip as he journeys towards ordination.

May God bless your journey with Him through this period of Lent and may the joy of Easter be yours as we open our hearts and lives to receive the risen Christ.

With every good wish.  
Jim Booth