

MINISTER'S LETTER Aug-Sept 2011

Dear Friends

Many centuries ago, a great king prayed: "You, Lord God, have done many wonderful things, and you have planned marvellous things for us. No one is like you! I would never be able to tell all you have done." (Psalm 40:5 CEV) The apostle Paul echoed this when he said: 'But it is just as the Scriptures say, "What God has planned for people who love him is more than eyes have seen or ears have heard. It has never even entered our minds!"' (1 Corinthians 2:9, CEV)

A review meeting of our local organising team recently took time to share reflections on the Sharing God's Love weekend. Overall, we felt the weekend had been a memorable time, which had brought together very many people from both churches in times of fellowship, food, prayer and worship. Many people experienced the presence of God in a new way, were renewed in their faith and commitment to Christ, and were blessed by the visiting team and the worship. It is clear that different people gained from different aspects of the weekend's programme (and also of the prayer vigil), and that not everything helped everyone. (Elsewhere in this newsletter, you will read just a few of the responses to the weekend.) However, now, the most important priority is to build on the strengths of the weekend's experience, so that as individual Christian disciples, and as Methodist churches in Caversham, we continue to grow in grace and faith.

Thank you, all those who completed the green response cards (and it's not too late to send one in!). It was good to read that many of you made a deeper commitment to Christ at the weekend. Based on those responses, and other feedback about the weekend, we identified many possible ways forward, and summarised them all in four areas of church life that we need to develop further:

Prayer - particularly opportunities for people to join together for prayer

Fellowship at a deeper level - opportunities for conversation about things that really matter

Worship - greater variety and creativity in worship

Social events - more opportunities to meet in a relaxed way

You will read elsewhere of the creative worship team being set up at Caversham Heights. In the coming weeks and months, I hope you will take to heart the words of scripture at the beginning of this letter, so that together, we will indeed discover what marvellous things God has planned for us. Each of us will need to be willing to take new steps, and maybe a few risks of faith. As we affirmed at the Sunday evening (Pentecost) service at the end of the weekend:

"Nothing but fire kindles fire." (Brooks)

"If you want to set someone on fire, you have to burn a little bit yourself." (Fosdick)

"A burning heart will soon find for itself a flaming tongue." (Spurgeon)

I must also say a public big thank you to Viv Emerson for his considerable commitment to the local co-ordinating role, and to Myra Emerson and David Herbert for close support. Many other people contributed to the weekend – thank you, everyone.

Shalom, Jenny