



Y's RETIRED OF THE UK
Affiliated to the World Fellowship of YMCA Retirees



**Greetings from
the President**

NOVEMBER 2008

Dear Colleagues,

How quickly time flies! Last December 2007 we were alerted to the imminent closure of the Y's Retired of the UK. Now in November 2008 we are looking forward with that 'spring in our step' due to your overwhelming support. A new spirit has breathed life through all our affairs awakening us to new development, not least in the excellent production of the first Newsletter by Editor, David Smith. Many of you have been in touch sharing your compliments for both the Newsletter and for those who have taken up the challenge to give time and effort in ensuring our future. Reflected in this progress and most encouraging is the fact that annual subscriptions and donations to Secours Speciaux have increased. This support has given rise to your committee **agreeing** to a bi-monthly issue of the Newsletter with a review as to progress at the end of the year. Here we thank the CEO and Board of the Central Herts YMCA for their valued contribution in its production and circulation. This leads me to dwell on further decisions made at the inaugural meeting of your new committee held on 4th September 2008.

The committee viewed all relevant items in a most positive manner. We recognised the excellent progress and process of Y's Retired over the years and of how through the advent of Information Technology (IT) mainly email we were now able to move forward into a new era. At present approximately one third of our members are 'on line' using email as reflected for the first time in the circulation of the September Newsletter.

That members using email would increase was a certainty. It was with this in mind that it was **agreed** that to further enhance development we should try for one year a Y's Retired website recording the number of 'hits', checking out security and constantly reviewing progress. To further summarise:

- **Finance** - As at 31st July 2008 a credit balance of £3,788.85 was recorded. Noted £711 was subscriptions over the year. **Agreed** expenditure for anti-virus software over two years of £65; One off cost of £176 for Adobe Acrobat Standard, Website £60, Secours Speciaux annual donation £100 and World Federation £110.
- **Membership Subscriptions - Agreed** to raise from £2 to **at least £5** noting that this would cover estimated expenditure. A suggestion of £10 by direct debit was discounted.
- **Management - Agreed** that the executive consist of the President (Jim Lamb), Secretary (Reg Wake), Treasurer (Geoffrey Harris) and Editor (David Smith). The Support Group for consultation Col Mawby, Sam Johnston & Rupert George.
- **Inter-Com - Agreed** that Col Mawby should consider two lists, email and telephone contact leading to a revised system expediting spread of information. Members asked in the first instance to contact Reg Wake with news of the death of a retired colleague.
- **Secours Speciaux** - Recent contact with the SS Committee indicated an urgent need for funds. As reported we have risen to the occasion.
- **Indian Fellowship of YMCA Retirees** - Rupert George reported nine retired colleagues living in London linked to the Indian Student Hostel



**ANTI CHRISTIAN VIOLENCE
IN INDIA COULD GET WORSE**
A Christian girl reads the Bible in one of the camps



Brutality directed against Christians in Orissa in North East India has brought the underlying violence in that country into public view. About two thirds of the 115,000 Christians in the Kandhamal District are reported to have been displaced, some twenty thousand into camps and the rest hiding in forests. In the worst cases, mobs have ranged through villages attacking Christian houses, burning them and sometimes hacking their occupants to pieces or throwing them into the burning properties. The authorities say 20 people have been killed but the communities, Roman Catholic and Evangelical say it is nearer 50. The President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference has called for stronger action. **The YMCA Relief Camp in Bhubaneswar, Orissa, gave sanctuary to nearly 500 Christians who had fled the violence – a floor to sleep on and warm food to eat.** The reasons for the rising tide of violence may be two-fold:-

- 1] the greater the inequalities in society the higher the level of violence . Assuming the boom in India continues and inequalities rise even further, unhappiness and violence are likely to do the same.
- 2] Elections are due in India next year therefore the BJP appear to see inter community strife as one of their main weapons.

From Church Times 10th October 2008

“When One Door Closes Another Opens” by Roy Weaver



‘I’ve got a job for you to do’ – an out of the blue comment from an office colleague caused me to ask what it was. Much to my surprise he handed to me a news paper, containing an advert by the YMCA, seeking applications to train as YMCA Secretaries. Those words spoken, could have been the words spoken by someone else. The advert remained in my wallet for more than a year. At a time of personal Christian renewal and in seeking guidance for the future, I became increasingly confronted by those letters ‘YMCA’, a movement I knew little about. A visit to meet members of the NPC (National Personnel Committee) resulted in me being asked to give help to the local YMCA youth club and during that time, a series of ‘happenings’ left me feeling that I had no alternative but to travel down that road. The call had become a reality.

After preliminary training at Leeds and then onto the Durham Course 1956 I found myself appointed as an Assistant at Hornsey YMCA. Over the next seven years, I was truly blessed as having as my mentor three Harry’s. First **Harry Edwards** at Hornsey then **Harry Stevenson** and **Harry Smith** at London Central. Their deep Christian commitment and service to the movement left a mark on my years of service. It was a privilege to having worked with them. It was in November 1958 that I commenced work at London Central YMCA; first as a Membership Secretary and later largely responsible for the Hostel. CentYMCA, as it was known, was then the flagship of the movement over 4000 members from 52 nationalities and 30 activities in its programme.

At its heart was the Christian message, made clear in word and deed. The transient nature of members and residents made it difficult to achieve our Christian purpose but by introducing the “Leaven in the Lump” method, amongst the residents something more was accomplished. I recruited a number of more mature Christians to live amongst us and to introduce the younger residents to Christian fellowship. The bedroom bible studies must have resembled those held at Hitchcocks and Rogers. They commenced with a series of monthly evangelistic meetings with well known speakers of the day. One such occasion enabled **Dr William Barclay** who was staying with us, to hear **Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones**. To be reminded, many years later that I had welcomed young people away from home for the first time and what it had meant to them was a rewarding experience indeed!

July 1963 brought about a move to pastures new. Becoming General Secretary at Rotherham YMCA, in succession to **Frank Beardsell**, who had served there for more than 40 years. The YMCA had very recently moved into new purpose built premises, but without the revenue producing assets that they had previously enjoyed. Furthermore, the building was almost a replica of the old. Little thought had gone into it as far as future needs were concerned. Its long term future was precarious.

A highlight to remember was the highly successful walks which began in 1966 and continued on for several years raising money for YMCA World Service and later for Christian Aid. The first occasion saw 500 young people engaged in a 30 mile overnight walk and the second year, involved more than 1,000 covering 20 miles from Woodhead to Hope in Derbyshire. Seeing the light from a long trail of torches over Derbyshire tracks was a sight indeed. These operations required almost military precision with support from the police, St John Ambulance and a small army of volunteers, with our own Women’s Auxiliary setting up and providing refreshments both in the wilderness and at journeys end. Mercifully, no-one was injured and only one, who fell asleep en route was lost and eventually found. These days such ventures cannot be contemplated.

In 1968 we moved to Cambridge. The YMCA building had been purpose built in 1870. A hundred years later it was ready for replacement. A new development was envisaged, but a new site was at first not available and certainly no finance to bring about such a dream.

Indeed, financially the Association was ‘in the red’ and had survived on an ever increasing overdraft. In the providence of God my predecessor **Mervyn Moorehead** had brought on board just one or two Christian men with faith and a vision and together with God’s blessing we witnessed the start of new work.

The new site was better than we could have ever dreamed of – all in God’s good time. After much prayer the site was provided freehold without a penny being given by the YMCA. A prestigious building, we believed would cost £400,000. A large sum by the standards of 1970. The only finance that could be accounted for would be £30,000 compensation from the compulsory purchase of the old premises. Government funding had not yet been introduced so we relied on a public appeal. There were those who were sceptical. Nevertheless our efforts were richly rewarded, so that with a loan, the new development was completed – erected to the glory of God and to His faithfulness.

Relatively short periods of service followed at Cardiff where a new site was purchased and the foundations laid for new work, and so to Lincoln. Sometimes seemingly insignificant events can have real significance. An instant at Cardiff brings to mind what the real work of the YMCA is all about. One evening whilst at home I received a call to tell me that the kitchen had been broken into. I went to investigate and learnt that the culprit had been found. A young man who had booked in for one night’s accommodation. Unfortunately, the police had been called so the next morning I accompanied the lad to court. The matter was quickly dealt with and the event had given me the opportunity to learn more about the young man. He had come a long way from his home in Aberdeen, attracted by a young lady from whom he had parted. I spoke to him of his real need and gave to him a New Testament. Next day he went on his way.

Exactly a year later a letter with a Scottish stamp arrived. Yes, it was from the same young man. It was, he said, the anniversary of his conversion. He had returned home, joined a local church and was training as a nurse. For several years I continued to hear from him, his engagement, his marriage – and always requests for prayer for some matter; no-one knows what a brief stay in a YMCA can lead to.

Roy Weaver continued

1979 saw the commencement of 11 years with the National Council General Service Department. Initially, largely responsible for the 18 'industrial' hostels managed by the YMCA on behalf of industry, education and commerce.

Varying in both style and size, from catering for more than 200 in Ministry of Defence establishments, down to the half a dozen young trainee gardeners employed by the Queen at Windsor. Gradually over the years changing policies by sponsors, to save money and less parental concern for younger trainees and employees brought about a demise of this work, with a subsequent loss of income from management fees or the Council.

When one door closes another opens. The YMCA may perhaps have been best known for its residential work, but up to that time there had been no unifying and supporting work offered by National Council to local Associations. Advice on housing matters then became available.

Almost by accident the Council, who had become a registered but inactive Housing Association years earlier, found that it had acquired a derelict property in Crewe. This was to become a prototype scheme which opened the way for residential schemes in places where previously no YMCA residential schemes existed. Others followed such as King's Lynn, Bury St Edmunds, Bedford, Ripon, High Wycombe and Exeter. At Bedford I was honoured when the new Association named their first building 'Weaver House'.

The newly formed YMCA Housing Department had come into being. Retirement in 1990 was not quite the end of my service. For the next two years I was able to give part time assistance to the Met and Eastern Counties Regions in the absence of Regional Secretaries.

For almost 15 years **Rosamunde** and I have enjoyed our time of retirement in Llandudno, often asking if it is retirement? For eight years we have been active volunteers helping the Abbeyfield Society and throughout the years much involved with our local Church, where I serve as an Elder and Treasurer.

I began referring to a call I had received, now more than 50 years ago. I am glad that God's grace alone has sustained it so that through times of sunshine and shadow He has brought us through.

THE GARDEN OF ENGLAND



This past month saw Mervyn and Beryl Moorehead in the garden of England, (Dartford, to be precise, which is supposed to be 'the dust heap of Kent'). That was what we were told, when we first arrived in 1983, to help run and direct the then YMCA premises in Dartford West.

A beautiful sultry autumnal day, belied that latter title, which was earned by the former lime pits and cement works, now the site of the Bluewater shopping conglomerate.

The outdoor market was alive, with sights sounds, colour and scents, the harvest fruits and vegetables in profusion. The little stream behind Holy Trinity, the ancient Parish church rippled happily, the ducks swam peaceably, the path of St Saviours walk strewn with conkers and fallen leaves provided a perfect rural setting for a very happy event, in the hub of the community.

The old 'Y' is now demolished, including its historical Martyrs hall, which we grieved over, and it is now an office block, but the new 'Y' is the reason for the visit.

The other side of the stream, at the pinnacle of Dartford's West Hill it stands tall and strong, proclaiming its setting just opposite the very first building to open one hundred and twenty five years ago, which is still there, tottering chimney and roof tiles and all.

The new 'Y' was opened by the Duke of Kent in 2000, and has all the facilities which a vibrant and energetic youth community needs. The celebrations of its 125 year inception were magnificently organised to provide for a very happy occasion.

Many warm memories were kindled, by a photographic display. The Duke of Kent was there for its hundred year celebration and then it coincided with the newly opened Orchard theatre's presentation of Don Giovanni.

Some of us who were present at that time can remember deriving more entertainment from watching his bald pate, nodding enthusiastically in tune with the music, than we did from the opera, which was very heavy going and written in Italian!

The food was superb, a continuous supply of refreshments and wonderful hot evening buffet. There were soft drinks and Pimms No 3, which some of us trying it for the first time found it to be alcoholic. All added to the general merriment and euphoric glow of the occasion. Music was provided by a heavy metal band, and the film of the centre's activities focussed our attention on things present, as well as on things past.

The 'Y' provides a valuable, practical Christian service for the ever pressing present needs of today's youth. There are excellent hostel facilities, a childcare service, an advisory service, and it extends way beyond Dartford. The boundaries reach out as far as Greenwich, with its student population, and Gravesend.

We were thrilled to have played a small part in an expanding and growing concern, not a little sad however, to see again the remnants of a stalwart branch of the Ladies Auxiliary, who felt they were redundant! There was no longer a place for them in a current setting or so they felt.

They would grace any setting anywhere however, their badges of office gleaming in the sunlight. What a wonderful bunch they were, and still are, caring for one another's needs, and reaching out with a helping hand, and grandmotherly concern, in an age where so many young folk need a grandmotherly figure. I should like to salute them.

On that note, being grandparents ourselves, we would conclude - Happy days - happy memories!



Prince Harry's godfather Gerald Ward has died after suffering a heart attack at Sunningdale Golf Club.

From an article by Tom Peterkin of the Telegraph:-

Mr Ward, 70, a close friend of the Prince of Wales, collapsed on the first tee of the famous course while taking part in a charity tournament. An air ambulance flew to the scene but Mr Ward, a former army officer, was pronounced dead at Sunningdale, which is near his family estate at Hungerford, Berkshire. Mr Ward's playing partners abandoned their match, but other golfers continued to play saying that it was what the father-of-two would have wanted.

He was part of a foursome and had just driven when he fell clutching his chest. Golf club staff and other players attempted to resuscitate him, but it was too late. News of his death was broken to the young Prince after he had finished exercises with his Blues and Royals Battalion. Mr Ward had taken a close interest in his godson's military career and like the Prince, was an Old Etonian as well as a former officer in the Household Cavalry.

Last year he criticised the MoD for releasing details of Prince Harry's aborted Iraq tour saying it was "naive" to "spell out the type of work he may do and the type of vehicles he may drive".

Mr Ward has moved in Royal circles for many years. He was with Prince Charles when he first met his second wife the then Camilla Shand in Annabel's nightclub in 1972.

At one time he was regarded as a suitable suitor for the Princess Royal. His second wife Amanda is now very friendly with the Duchess of Cornwall.

With his wife, Mr Ward used to holiday with the Royal couple sharing a love of horses and country sports. He leaves two daughters Sarah, 40, and Lucy, 38, from his first marriage to Rosalinde.

And Val Wallis was quoted in the Newbury Today Newspaper:-

YMCA Vice President Val Wallis said Mr Ward had been involved in the Movement for 40 years, serving as Treasurer, Vice Chairman and organiser of the charity's 150th anniversary celebrations in 1994.

She said: "Apart from his love and work for the Movement and a tremendous sense of humour, he had an extraordinary commitment to young people."

"He was a man of great standing, yet could communicate with young people as if he'd known them all his life. They were never shy in his presence, because he was able to communicate with them so well."

Clyde Binfield writes of Gerald.....

"He was of course the National Chairman, whilst I was Vice Chairman for much of the 1980s. We then introduced the role of Vice Presidents and he agreed to take up this position.

He insisted that he did so for three years, and was very firm about this, which I think was a shame. He didn't want to do it for a long time. He was a very interesting, transitional person.

He came from a background of voluntary service, this was an ethos installed into him through his upbringing in Eton and Sandhurst. He would describe himself as an industrialist and a farmer, and took this very seriously.

He was also serious about the YMCA. It was a time when the YMCA was particularly close to the establishment and he was very actively involved with the YMCA and also with the Boy Scouts.

He was part of tradition. I first met him at a meeting of the World Alliance of YMCAs. He came via relatives in the United States and flew in by Concord, I think. We stayed at the Sheraton Hotel, and he put his shoes outside his room as a gentleman does, to be cleaned. In the morning they were gone, stolen.

The rest of us, clearly not gentlemen, didn't put our shoes outside. He had a certain panache.

He also had an up-to-date side. He wasn't just a Committee Chairman, but a National Chairman. During his time of office, Y Care International (YMCAs International Development Charity) started, as did the special projects, which later became YMCA Training.

He brought the YMCA right up to the mark, it was a time of social renewal for the YMCA and he is someone the YMCA should remember for we have much to commemorate."

His life is a lesson relevant still today.



Colonel William Gerard Leigh, who has died aged 93,

served in the Life Guards throughout the Second World War and beyond and was a popular and respected figure in the polo world.

From 1974 to 1981, Gerard Leigh was Chairman of the National Council of YMCAs. He was appointed MVO in 1962, CBE in 1981 and CVO in 1983.

He was educated at Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge, where he read History and was Master of the Draghounds and a member of the University's polo team. In 1937 he joined the Life Guards. During the winter he kept a private hunter, along with two Life Guards chargers at home, and hunted with the Quorn, Cottesmore and Belvoir, earning a reputation as "a bold man to hounds"

In 1955 Gerard Leigh had succeeded his old school friend and brother-officer in IHCR, Valerian Douro, as Chairman of the Household Brigade Polo Club. Now playing off a 3 handicap, he joined the Duke of Edinburgh's medium-goal Windsor Park team and in 1962 accompanied the Duke on a polo-playing trip around some of the South American clubs while the Duke was promoting British industry.

In 1966, at the invitation of the Argentine Polo Association, an English squad flew out to take on the United States and Argentina for a "three-cornered" tournament. Gerard Leigh accompanied them as part-time Equerry to the Duke, who was among those selected to play.

He married, in 1946, Jean Leslie, who survives him with their two sons and two daughters.

During the war Jean Leslie had served with MI5, and in 1943 her photograph was placed on the corpse of a man dumped in the sea near the Spanish coast. He was purportedly "Major Willie Martin", a Royal Marines officer whose briefcase contained bogus plans to mislead the Germans about the Allied landings in Sicily; and Jean Leslie was purportedly his girlfriend. The story was portrayed in the 1956 film *The Man who Never Was*.

THE Y's FAMILY NEWS AND VIEWS

John Newton writes.....from 12th September I will be travelling to South India to visit the YMCA work in Yellagiri where I worked as a volunteer in the 1960's.

Rupert George and myself are trying to plan a reunion of the Tirupattur Boys Division Hostel Old Boys for the latter part of July 2009.

From South India I fly to Colombo, where I shall be involved once again in the work of the Eastern Organisation for Democracy projects to help in building peaceful coexistence in the Central Camp/Ampara part of Sri Lanka. I do return with some reluctance because of the security and political situation there, but am still up for the challenge.

We are trying to get funds to further develop our work with farmers from the Muslim, Tamil and Sinhala Communities in the planting of fruit tree seedlings in uncultivated land and also to build a Nursery School for the children from all three communities.

Many of you will have heard of a USA YMCA quarterly magazine called 'Bridges.' If any Member would like to receive a regular copy of "Bridges" free of charge, please notify the Secretary, Reg Wake, Tel: 01372 275402 Email: regwake@aol.com who will arrange for you to be put on the circulation list.

Pray for the Christians in Orissa and the other Indian states where anti-Christian violence is continuing on an unprecedented scale.

Pray for those who are facing attempts to force them to convert to Hinduism, that the Lord Jesus will give them the strength to stand firm in their faith.

Pray that the Holy Spirit will be close to them, comfort and encourage them and give them peace.

From Bonnie Mairs – Chair of Secours Speciaux Committee – (New York City – USA)

I am writing to send special thanks to all retirees who have contributed to the Secours Speciaux fund this year and in years past. This year, your gifts have helped to provide assistance to one retiree in South America and another in India who faced medical emergencies. It also helped YMCA staff in Zimbabwe who had not been paid in 7 months because of the political crisis there. On their behalf, I say "Thank you."

Some readers may not know that the fund was started in the 1950s to assist YMCA staff in Eastern Europe who had lost their jobs because YMCAs were not allowed to exist under Communism. These former staff and their families faced tremendous hardship and the small gifts that were sent to them via quiet channels were much appreciated. Since then, the fund has expanded to serve worldwide. Of the 129 countries having active YMCAs, 80 do not have retirement schemes for staff. Unlike you and me, when they retire, the money stops.

The majority of recipients are in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Reg Wake is your representative on the committee. I appreciate his dedication and expertise. The committee meets by telephone conference call and reviews requests. It is a challenge to find a time that fits members in Switzerland, Germany, England, Kenya, Uruguay, the USA (New York City, Chicago and Honolulu) and India. I know they all join me in thanking you for your gift. We hope you will help tell Secours Speciaux story and contribute every year.

Donations please to our Treasurer. Cheques should be made payable to "Ys Retired A/C clearly earmarked on the reverse side "Secours Speciaux."

Treasurer's name and address is:-
Geoffrey Harris,
60, Homemanor House,
Cassio Rd, Watford, WD18 0QS

TEL: 01923 228138

Arthur Bennett (Ex Nottingham) listened intently to Martin Palmer's Sunday Worship from China and was moved by the content and intrigued that the music CD used was from Tian Yong Choir of Young Men's Christian Association



The chimes of a great Communist hymn ring out from a tall clock tower rising above the main shopping centre, Wanfujin, in the heart of Beijing. Welcome to modern China. I'm less than a mile from the Forbidden City, close by Tiananmen Square and in what is effectively the Regent Street of Beijing – surrounded by busy shoppers enjoying the delights of Western consumerism. Yet behind me is one building which stands in stark contrast - even though its origins are as Western as the clothes and goods in sale.

It's the Eastern Catholic Cathedral - a powerful reminder of other values than either Communism or Capitalism. The Eastern Cathedral is nearly 400 years old. It has been favoured by Emperors, shut by persecution, burnt down by revolutionaries, turned into a store during the Cultural Revolution but is now active again in the changing world that is China today.

I've come inside the Cathedral, a beautiful welcome, cool space, to reflect on what is happening in China. Today, Communism is fading; an ideology which now seems outdated and troubled. And the Communist Party agrees. It recently launched a programme called Creating a Spiritual Culture of Harmony and has invited the faiths to help nurture a more caring, compassionate China. This recognises the resurgence of religion – Daoism and Buddhism as well as Islam. But it is Christianity which is the fastest growing religion in China today. It's popular because it is seen as modern, contemporary and to a certain degree – almost fashionable!

There are five official religions in China, the two major faiths of Daoism and Buddhism and then Islam, Christianity and Catholicism. Because in China, Protestant Christianity is seen as a different religion from Catholicism – mostly because the two traditions use different words to translate God – but also because they arrived at different times in China's history. In this report we will put the two together and refer to them as we normally would, as Christians.

The right to practice your faith is enshrined within China's Constitution, but long periods of persecution, especially during the Cultural Revolution of the 60s and 70s has left many believers cautious of overtly expressing their faith. Localised persecution still occurs particularly for churches which are not registered with the government. This means it is difficult to know exactly how many Christians there are in China, with estimates ranging from 40 – 80 million in a population of 1.3 billion.

The registering of churches sounds typically communist, but in fact, all religions have had to be registered in China since at least the time of the Tang dynasty, some 1500 years ago. At one level it shows that China has always recognised the power of faith to challenge and change political systems. In an officially atheist country where people have been taught that there is no divine purpose, the Christian vision of a living, compassionate Creator of All provides many with a profound sense of purpose, not just to their lives, but to the world around them. In common with Christians worldwide they find this wonderfully expressed in the opening of St John's Gospel, which speaks of how God reveals himself in Creation, in Word and ultimately in the Incarnation.

To understand the relationship between Christianity and China – and in particular what Christianity has contributed to Chinese culture, we need to travel back 1400 years to the first arrival of Christian priests, members of the great Church of the East, now known as the Assyrian Church.

Faith is a gift from God – but how does that gift come to us? For some it has to be preached – taken to places and people who do not know the Gospel – the Good News of God's love manifest in and through Christ.

For others, including many who come as Christians to China – Church of the East 1400 years ago or Jesuits 400 years ago, there is a different understanding.

This is that God is already here. He's been before us, to be encountered in the stranger, found unexpectedly. There is a real danger of making God too small. Of locking faith up in churches and of embalming Christ in dogma, language and ritual. But what if we took the risk that God is infinitely bigger than our understanding?

That Christ's love and compassion is at work in people, places and cultures where we least expect? For this, we need to see ourselves as pilgrims – willing to give up the comfort and certainty of the known, and set out on a journey of discovery and faith. Because if we listen and watch, we may find Christ is already there, waiting for us to hear his voice.

This is one of the things we can learn from China. An insight shared by its ancient faiths of Buddhism and Daoism. That it's through silence, through listening, not preaching or proclaiming, through looking with eyes of faith that we can be taken deeper into our own encounter with God.

China shows all the signs of success, but does it actually know where it's going? Does it have a real sense of destination? And that's very much how the Communist Party of China feels at the moment. It is very worried. It brought in the 1970s the single child policy and this has led to single children, the focus of family attention, they're known in China as little emperors and empresses, because they behave as though the whole world belongs to them.

Add to that consumerism and you've got the most selfish generation in China's history, which is why the Communist Party has asked the religions to join it in this quest for a spiritual culture of harmony. Young Christians have probably been attracted to Christianity because it's modern, but also because it does answer a sort of existentialist angst: who am I and what am I here for?

Christianity offers many in China a feeling that they are part of something bigger, that they can contribute to that, that they can be generous in a way that, sadly, contemporary China is not.

The days when any one religion expects to rule China are long gone. A century of revolutions has meant persecution for all faiths. In fact, a sort of solidarity has arisen amongst the faiths as a result.

From these experiences has come a real acceptance of pluralism – a sense that while each faith will be faithful to its distinctive witness, none will dominate and all will contribute to the greater sense of wellbeing for the nation and the world.

Christians in China are used to being a minority – they always have been. Christ's own vision of his people as the salt and light of the world, is that they will make a difference no matter how small or insignificant their actual numbers are.

Some reflection for us on Matthew's Gospel from Fr Thomas – a teacher of philosophy in one of the seminaries in China.

In the last 20 years, indigenous Chinese Christianity has been growing at a rate unparalleled in history. We can say that Christianity is booming in China now. I want to thank God for the openings and the positive developments. In Matthew's Gospel we hear Jesus say we should be 'the salt of the earth and the light of the world'.

But how can we make people's lives meaningful and how can we help people get out from the darkness? How to strengthen our faith? How to improve the quality of our religious life in this fast changing society, in which the social moral are declining? How to build and alter in our hearts, not just the churches.

So now evangelisation to the non believers and re-evangelisation to the believers is the most important work for us to do. What we have done has been accepted by the Government and by society. Gradually the Government also gives permission to the Church to do some social works – such as look after the orphans, the homeless, leprosy, kindergarten, the AIDS, mentally disabled children etc.,.

Communities tend to become more lively with catechumen classes, bible groups and well run liturgical celebrations. Christians are eager to know their historical roots.

They want to understand their faith better and learn more about the Church. We should have more contacts with other traditions, to talk about God, mission, morality, ethics and how we can get involved in the concerns of social problems.

In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus talks of how we should be the salt of the earth and light of the world. We don't want the whole world to be salt or on fire. Christians should be like salt in a meal, bring the best out of all the ingredients, or like a light, lighting the way for others to walk. We Christians are not numerous, but our influence should be great.

In any society, Chinese or British, many are trapped in materialism, in greater selfishness. They are often feeling lost, confused and unfulfilled. We should offer to them the promise of being more fully human, more compassionate, and if we can show this in our lives, we can help create a better society wherever we are.

How do we keep our saltiness – our ability to be the light? The very last words of the Gospel remind us to praise our Father in heaven. We should not let outside presence distract us from our personal relationship with God. It is this relationship which enables us to be God's instrument. The prayer of St Theresa asks us to be the eyes through which Christ's compassion looks out on the world; our hands through which Christ blesses everyone now. We need to be the channel for God's love to be shown to His creation.

In times of trouble, Chinese Christians have found strength through prayer. The prayers of the evangelical pastor, Watchman Nee, who suffered persecution in the 50s and 60s, inspired many to hold their faith.

Through prayer they have sustained themselves knowing that this links them to the Body of Christ here on earth.

I'm lighting a candle, as I always do, when visiting the oldest cathedral in China, the Southern Cathedral of Beijing, founded by Jesuits in 1601. I first visited China in the early 70s when the Cultural Revolution was in its final stages. All religious practice was banned – churches and temples seized or destroyed.

I was told faith is dead. Over the 30 plus years I've known China, faith has arisen again, faithful people of all religions had never ceased to believe. Today, faith is alive and well in China.

Of these faithful, some are Christians, but the majority are Buddhist or Daoist. Is this a problem for Christians? Not if we believe in the psalmist that the Glory of God fills the whole world - or as an ancient stone manuscript outside this cathedral, written by one of the Emperors puts it – everything comes from God.

And so may the living God from whom everything flows, surprise you along your journey, the Holy Spirit speak to you through strangers and may you find the face of Christ in those around you.

David - I attach a photo of Rev Bob and Shirley Senior at their 40th Wedding Anniversary lunch. I know they are known to many Y's Retired.



THE Y's FAMILY NEWS AND VIEWS

If anyone thought the life of Ys retired Newsletter had come to an end and that there was no further mileage in Y's Retired - they were sadly wrong. After the first email production in September, the editor has been inundated with emails from members expressing delight in its continuation.

Neil Sjoberg writes from Sweden at the beginning of Sept 2008 - I didn't realise you (the Ed) write from Marazion. For the last 40 years **Gaye** and I and members of our family have been going to Melangoose cottage for our holidays. Two minutes up the road.

The new mag looks great I am printing it off so I can read it in Sweden. **Gaye** and I are 60 years married this year and are celebrating by visiting my Grandad's home, Ystad near Malmo for the first time.

We were due to go to **John and Margery Naylor's** wedding / retirement/birthday in Scotland but **Gaye** ricked her back three days before. We couldn't drive all that way when she couldn't even sit. We will have to visit **John** another time. See you sometime, Thanks for the N/letter - **Neil Sjoberg** - YMCA career covered Kenya, Fairthorne Manor, Gaza, Romford, Youth at work.

Reverend Graham Clarke (Regional Secretary for the South) writes 'Newsletter safely arrived. An excellent production as always from the Smith's. We are just gearing up for the Church's 40th Anniversary and what looks like being a busy autumn.

Ron Boyles writes from British Columbia- Thank you so much for including me in your mail out, both formats were received in good form . I was interested to read the various items and particularly to read of **Reg Wakes** recognition of dedicated service by the award of the Order of the Red Triangle, also news of the African Y's - I have now subscribed to their new newsletter.

It is over 40 years since I left the "Y" but my time as a member and as staff has been a most significant part of my life and for which, I am most grateful. I started as a callow youth at 17- 18 and joined the Nottingham YMCA which had a great Gym - General Sec was **Jim Edgar** - Youth Secretaries were **Frank Buck** and **Ted Parsons**, later **Henry Lightbrown**. Then **Ray Collins** came as General Secretary. While

working there I led the extension YMCA in the city east end in Sneinton.

I went full time with the YMCA opening a new centre in Egremont, Cumberland. **Jack Francis** later **Frank Baker** were the Regional Secretaries.

Went for training to Durham -- **Raymond Hall** was the Tutor. Took over Penrith YMCA. My colleagues in the North West were **Bill?** in Carlisle, **Norman Gabbat** in Windermere, ...? **Stuart** in Barrow, **Derek Webb** in Appleby and **Reg Wake** at the National Camp at Lakeside.

Then off to Africa--Kitwe--Copper Belt YMCA development.--**Edgar Carter** was the Federal Secretary in Salisbury.

Returned to U.K. Resigned the YMCA and became a Probation Officer in the Midlands and North West. Left to take up post as Probation Officer in the fledgling Probation Service in British Columbia--later became the Provincial Co-ordinator for the Community Probation Service and later -Ministry Attorney General, Police Services, Director Police Programs.

1988--Retired from Provincial Government Service-- to date various community volunteer projects--Golf--Water Colour and Acrylic paintings etc. Primary activity is helping raise an active 8 year old great-grandson who lives with me and my daughter in Oak Bay, Victoria. British Columbia.

Thank you again. Ron Boyle (no Ron - thank you Ed)

Lovely letter from **Peter Parfitt** - David, just a short note to say how pleased I was to receive our September newsletter and to thank you for relieving **Reg** of all the work involved. It was pleasing that he and **Geoffrey** had been honoured by the YMCA for all their devoted work. I was in that "Cinderella" Department, Community Services for 23 years eventually made redundant at 61 years of age (no fault of the YM or me!!) I managed to get another job in Rotherhithe for my last 4 years, having lost my wife at the same time as my

redundancy. Fortunately I was given the opportunity to move here (Morden College) in 1991 where, several ex YMCA staff had spent some of their retirement.

I am in pretty good health nearing my 86 birthday, still go to school two days a week to listen to children read, having completed 20 years at the same church school. Recently I had a small problem with skin cancer benign tremors do not improve, cataract operation - a great success. Best wishes to you as our Editor and to **Jim Lamb** as our President.

Peter Brookes writes - I was very pleased to received the Y's Retired missive, you have done a great job with your first issue... That sounds as though you have just given birth. I think **Jim Lamb** is a very sound man to have as President, I have known him it seems forever, but is actually from 1962 when we were both on the staff at Sheffield. I'm equally sure that you will do a good job with the newsletter you obviously have plenty of IT skill. We should all take to heart Jim's plea for contributions, and I will do my best to let you know of happenings in this area. The trouble is that once you are retired you very quickly drop out of the loop. Keep smiling, and remember to stand back to the really quick bowlers (this is a reference to PB bowling out the Editor at an AOS cricket match. Clearly it was a 'No Ball' but fellow student of PB, **Paul Harper** was refereeing. Need I say more!!

Paul Harper writes:

There I was watching the cricket at the County Ground Taunton early September, when I was approached by a member of the committee, asking me to accompany him to the Committee Balcony to meet a V.I.P. Intrigued I agreed, and ascended the stairs passing the framed photos of past and present players into the Executive Committee Room. There I was introduced to the Chair of the Bath & North-East Somerset Council, none other than Councillor **David Bellotti, MA FRSA MID**. We had an enjoyable discussion about the match in progress but more about YMCA experiences. David sends warm greetings to all who knew him during his time with the YMCA.