



Well, it wasn't a pantomime horse or a bottle of ketchup running up Long Causeway and round Lark Hill on Sunday 25th March for Sport Aid but John Collier, Connie Williamson and Alex Presland who together ran (and walked a bit) for a mile after church. We stood on the steps to cheer them off to a good start and waited to welcome them back. On their return two young sporting heroes were presented with their gold medals (not the 22 caret stuff but 100% Cadbury's chocolate) and John got a certificate specially made by Carolyn. Altogether from our congregation they made £150. SO VERY WELL DONE CHAMPIONS [pictures above].

From the Kearsley Newsletter

Lifeline

Lifeline is published in the first week of the month by the General Conference of the New Church. Articles and notices should reach the editor by the end of the second week of the month prior to publication.

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new church

Lifeline



Report from the Philippines

(see page 10)

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Our mission is to express, share and experience with others in life an inclusive, non-judgmental vision of God's kingdom.

The Fire that Heals

The Jews had not one but three harvest festivals. Pentecost or Whitsun as it is sometimes called was the occasion for the second of these which was to mark the end of the grain harvest. It was also called the feast of weeks or the feast of first fruits, this is probably why the apostle Paul describes the effects of the wind and cloven tongues of fire on that pentecostal day as the 'first fruits' of the work of the Holy Spirit.

For these first Jewish Christians the feast of Pentecost coming 50 days (7 weeks) after the Passover was linked to fire at the giving of the 10 commandments at Mount Sinai 'seven weeks' after leaving Egypt. That liberation being remembered by the Passover Feast now forever linked in their minds with the story of Good Friday and Easter.

So considered spiritually, Pentecost relates to the law being written on the tablets of the heart, and the cloven tongues of fire that were seen to the baptism of fire which John the Baptist prophesied. It reminds us that our spiritual awakening is only beginning with Easter's realisation that the Lord is alive in our time, and His providence is at work in the circumstances of our lives.

The joyful news of Easter still left the disciples afraid and lacking the confidence that they needed to share the good news by which the church would grow. The Lord might be alive, but His life and their lives were still separate. In a similar

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It's not new. Swedenborg recounts meeting non-Christian spirits of good character who were disturbed by the mention of the name Christ, due to having met wicked Christians during their earthly lives [See *Heaven and Hell* 325 below]. He avoided the problem by talking to them instead of 'the Lord' - rather like the traditional Jewish custom of saying 'the Lord', rather than pronouncing the holy name of God, lest they might be in danger of profaning it.

However, that's not a solution in every situation, for many people have had bad experiences of lords. Indeed any name or title that we use could be spoiled for further use when people misuse it – as Mr Slater's parents had done with 'Jesus'. So many false and ugly ideas have been associated through time with every name and title of God, causing pain to honest and kindly individuals later!

Names well used are so useful and so appealing, reminding us in a moment of all the goodness we associate with them – in the case of 'Jesus' with all his wise words and beautiful actions. Those true and beautiful things are the true meaning of his name [See *True Christian Religion* 683] and we need to keep reminding ourselves of this, and making it clear to others whenever appropriate. Only in this way can the name of Jesus come to sound sweet for all ears.

Ian Johnson

A choir at a distance was heard one morning. From the choir's representations I was permitted to know that they were Chinese, for they exhibited a kind of woolly goat, then a cake of millet, and an ebony spoon, also the idea of a floating city. They desired to come nearer to me, and when they had joined me they said that they wished to be alone with me, that they might disclose their thoughts. But they were told that they were not alone, and that some were displeased at their wishing to be alone, although they were guests. When they perceived this displeasure they began to think whether they had transgressed against the neighbour, and whether they had claimed anything to themselves that belonged to others. All thought in the other life being communicated, I was permitted to perceive the agitation of their minds. It consisted of a recognition that possibly they had injured those who were displeased, of shame on that account, together with other worthy affections; and it was thus known that they were endowed with charity. Soon after, I spoke with them, and at last about the Lord. When I called Him "Christ" I perceived a certain repugnance in them; but the reason was disclosed, namely, that they had brought this from the world, from their having learned that Christians lived worse lives than they did, and without charity. But when I called Him simply "Lord" they were interiorly moved. Afterwards, they were taught by the angels that the Christian doctrine beyond every other in the world prescribes love and charity, but that there are few who live in accordance with it.

From Heaven and Hell 325

Throughout his long years of involvement with the Kearsley New Church Eric knew and worked with many ministers. He had a great respect for the ministry and looked to offer whatever help and support he could. At times when a minister or lay preacher was not available he would step into the role of worship leader himself, although he normally preferred to be a member of the congregation. A succession of ministers were able to find in Eric a hard worker, a wise counsellor and a loyal friend. His encouragement and strong faith were at times of enormous help to the young and inexperienced minister. Whenever problems arose he saw them as challenges to be met and solved rather than insurmountable obstacles. Ministers and laity alike are now deeply grateful for all that Eric taught them of loyalty, commitment, friendship and service. His deep trust in divine providence remains an inspiration.

His was a life well lived. He brought something of heaven's warmth and light into countless other lives. He leaves behind him an enormous legacy, both in the work that he accomplished and in the faith and charity that he nurtured in other people. Above all else Eric's life pointed to the Lord and it is a lesson which those who knew him will never forget.

Rev Robert Gill

Mr Slater and Jesus

Mr Slater had been attending worship for a few months. He was a quiet courteous gentleman, widowed and retired, who lived a few minutes' walk from our church, and was slightly known to some members, but had revealed little about himself – until after service that particular Sunday. I forget what our theme had been, but the hymns included,

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds in a believer's ear.

'You know,' he confided to me, 'the name Jesus isn't sweet to me,' and I remember his pained expression as he went on, 'All through my childhood my parents warned me that, if I was naughty in any way, Jesus would be angry with me. So I got to be really frightened of him, and I've never lost that feeling.'

Just imagine how you would feel in Mr Slater's position. Could you bear to attend Christian worship? How else might you find spiritual ideas and fellowship? I assured him that I understood, and suggested how he might escape his ingrained feeling, but his attendance grew less frequent and soon ceased. I very much doubt that he was unique, and the plight of such people presents us with a problem.

way, a friend may be with me, but he/she is still separate from me. My friend may be happy and confident, but I can still feel sad and afraid. There is a world of difference between the Lord being **with** us and the Lord being **within** us. Jesus had spoken to them of His joy remaining in them that their joy might be complete (John15:11). Swedenborg calls this being conjoined to the Lord, our life being linked with His, for He does not expect us to do it all on our own.

The Israelites left Egypt to find God in the cloud and fire of Mount Sinai, but when they left there, **God went with them**. He was dwelling at the centre of their community between the cherubim on the top of the ark that carried the 10 commandments. The heart-warming soul-stirring fire of Pentecost is representing our awakening to the indwelling spiritual presence of the Lord with us in our thoughts and feelings. The Easter resurrection speaks to us of the Lord's resurrection and of the life after life that He promised His disciples. The Pentecost wind and fire speaks to us of Life within life in this world, of the Lord's spiritual presence within thought and feeling – 'travelling' with us on our life journey today.

That the risen Lord can be speaking to us from within our thoughts and inspiring us from within our feelings is truly a heaven-sent fire to warm and energise our hearts. The Lord came into the lives of the first disciples when they followed him from the Galilee lakeside but it was at Pentecost that His healing and courage came into their souls.

Please notice it was not that the disciples were never to feel confused, unconfident or afraid, ever again. Nor that they were never sad or downcast. The account of their lives in the book of Acts and in the Epistles shows how challenging their lives were in all sorts of ways. It is rather that from then on they did not feel the aloneness of those first weeks after Easter, of working in isolation depending solely on their own strength or personal abilities. As Paul was to say "*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*". He found the Lord's strength made perfect in his weakness and so can we.

To recognise that the Lord is alive today is but one important step on a journey of life and faith that is only just begun at the empty tomb. It is a journey of discovery and trust that calls us to face our doubts and fears by finding a strength not our own that comes from the Lord by His indwelling Spirit.

Rev Clifford Curry



A History of the Swedenborg Society - A Review

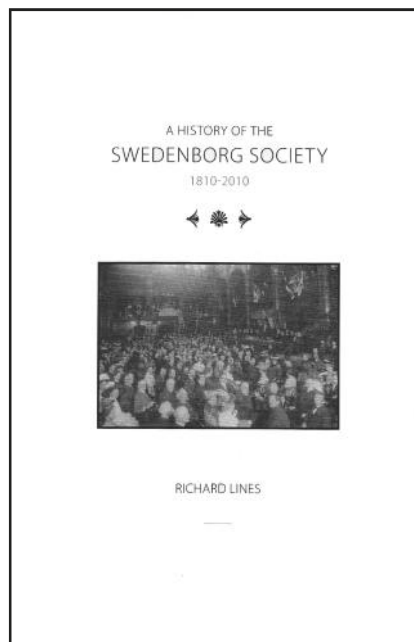
In February 2010 the Swedenborg Society celebrated the 200th anniversary of its foundation and the event to mark this was reported in the April 2010 issue of Lifeline. Other events during the year also publicised the continuing work of the Society. But for various reasons one event linked with the bicentenary got delayed till the start of 2012 – this was the publication of *A History of the Swedenborg Society 1810-2010* by the current Secretary, Richard Lines.

In the introduction Richard writes:

What follows is the story of the men and women who founded the Swedenborg Society two hundred years ago and of those who have sustained it over the years. My original intention had been to update the admirably concise and succinct history of the Society written by its then Secretary, Dr Freda Griffith, for the Society's 150th Anniversary in 1960. But when I gave the matter further thought, I came to the conclusion that it would be of interest, both to members of the Society and to other readers, to have a more detailed account, particularly of the first century of the Society's history when there was often a close engagement with the wider cultural, political and religious life of the nation. But the twentieth century could not be neglected, and so the book grew.

Indeed the book did grow and as published runs to 162 pages of actual history, 43 pages of very comprehensive endnotes, 7 pages of lists of officers of the society and finally a 15 page index. These additional 65 pages at the end of the book make it an excellent source for anyone doing research into people connected with the Swedenborg Society.

History by its very nature runs to a linear timeline and most history books tend to follow a straightforward time sequence in recounting things of the past. *A History of the Swedenborg Society* is no exception to this general rule and leads us through the 200 year period of its study mostly decade by decade, century by century although from time to time Richard takes a wider view of history. The



keep his local church moving forward. His record in this regard is quite outstanding, for during Eric's active years the Kearsley Society raised money to build a succession of three new halls, a new manse, and a new church! Much of this money was raised by the provision of catering in the church hall for public and private functions. Week after week, year after year, Eric and his faithful band of helpers catered for groups of a hundred and more raising vast sums of money in the process. It was hard work and demanded real commitment from all involved. Throughout these years Eric's deep faith and boundless energy were key ingredients in this remarkable achievement.



The Kearsley Church

As already mentioned Eric loved children and children loved him in return. He firmly believed that even a small thing such as teaching a child the Lord's Prayer was the sowing of an invaluable seed that would bring forth a good harvest in later life. Eric took on the regular commitment of both teacher and superintendent in the Kearsley Sunday School; these were roles that he loved and which he discharged with diligence for many decades. It was a very rare thing indeed for him ever to be missing on a Sunday. In addition to this work with children he also worked as a youth leader in the Kearsley church. During the 1960's he gathered together the "In Group", a band of young people with a growing interest in the New Church. Many from this group went on to become committed church members and workers in later years.

Astonishingly Eric had the energy and enthusiasm to work with older people too. He organised countless social activities for church members and local residents, he gave a lot of support to the small and elderly congregation of Heywood New Church, and he even organised a luncheon club and a number of seaside holidays for some of these older folk. In this work he was able to bring laughter and friendship into lives that might otherwise have been sad and lonely.

Following his retirement as a signwriter, Eric was able to attend the Annual Meeting of Conference and became a regular there over a period of about fifteen years. After some years, in 2000, he was appointed as an old style trustee of Conference (now known as honorary life members) and he continued to attend the Annual Meeting until 2006, after which increasing age and frailty prevented him from doing so.

Eric Yates passed into the spiritual world, on the 16th March 2012, at the age of eighty-three. With his transition the earthly church has lost one of its most loyal and hard-working sons. Eric was a quintessential New Churchman, ever faithful to his Lord, devoted to his church, and busy in the service of others. His firm trust in divine providence, coupled with his positive approach to life, was an inspiration to many and down through the years Eric touched countless lives with hope, friendship and laughter.

Eric was born and lived his entire life in Kearsley, on the south side of Bolton. He and his brother Alan were twins, and they completed a large family of eight children. The family had strong links with the New Church in Kearsley and from an early age the two spheres of family and church were central to Eric's life. Although he was a lifelong bachelor he was very much a family man having almost daily contact with his siblings and organising many a family celebration. In his youth he was strongly influenced by the ministry of the Rev Alan Grange, who served the Kearsley church during the war years. A later minister at Kearsley, the Rev Arthur Hall, also played a significant role in encouraging and strengthening Eric's faith.

After completing his education Eric was apprenticed as a signwriter and eventually he was able to set up his own one-man business in this trade. He spent the rest of his working life as a signwriter, serving transport companies, shops, offices, churches and many other customers. For some years he employed an assistant, Barrie, as well as various apprentices. Through his signwriting business he gained many personal contacts and was able to serve lots of other businesses and individuals in the Bolton area.

However, Eric's service to the community went much further than his daily employment. During the late 1960's and early 1970's he served as a Liberal councillor on Kearsley Urban District Council, and although he stepped down from the Council after a few years he continued to support and raise funds for the Liberal party for many years afterwards. Through his political work he became a governor of Birtenshaw Hall Special School in Bolton and after a few years was appointed chairman of governors there. He supported this school over many years in every way that he could, including much fund-raising activity. Fund-raising and work with children and young people were to be threads that ran right through Eric's life.

In the 1950's he was appointed treasurer of the Kearsley church at a young age and held the office for about 30 years. For him the job entailed much more than bookkeeping and he put a huge amount of time and energy into raising funds to

main source used for the detail of the book has been the Annual Reports and books, journals and correspondence of those connected with the Society.

Richard writes in a clear and engaging style that quickly draws the reader in to the mass of facts and details that he carefully presents and comments upon. Here are four extracts by way of example:

This very first meeting was fruitful and effective and one must assume that a large amount of preparatory work had already been done. No less than thirty 'General Laws of the Society' were promulgated and a Committee of twelve gentlemen was elected by ballot.

The Annual Report of 1827 mentions a bequest from Mrs Deborah Holder of 'all the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg in the original Latin, both Theological and Philosophical' which were in the possession of her late husband Stephen Holder. These works, together with others purchased from Hodson the printer, formed the nucleus of the Society's Library which may be said to have begun then.

After Clissold's retirement the chair was taken in turn by a number of different distinguished members of the Society who included the Revd William Bruce, Dr John Stocker, the Revd Dr R L Tafel (the nephew of Dr J F I Tafel), the Revd Dr Jonathan Bayley, his son John Clowes Bayley and Major, later Colonel, Samuel Bevington. In 1882-3 the Chairman was Dr Garth Wilkinson, having reappeared on the list of subscribers in 1878. In 1894 Edward Bayley, the second son of Jonathan Bayley and at that time Member of Parliament for North Camberwell sitting in the Liberal interest,' was in the chair at the Annual General Meeting.

This chapter takes us from the retirement of Freda Griffith in 1973 to the end of the century. It is an era in the Society's history remarkable for achievements in translation. The new English translation by the Revd John Elliott of the twelve volumes of *Arcana Caelestia* was published between 1983 and 1999. Apart from George Harrison's translation published 1857-60 (mentioned in Chapter 5), this was the first independent English translation of this immense work since that done by John Clowes at the end of the eighteenth century. John Chadwick assembled and edited his great *A Lexicon to the Latin Text of the Theological Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772)* which he circulated in eight sections issued between 1975 and 1990. It contained over thirteen thousand entries and was followed by a supplement (published in 1990) with over six hundred additions and changes. John Chadwick also translated *The True Christian Religion* (which was published to coincide with the celebration of the 300th Anniversary of Swedenborg's birth in 1988), *Conjugial Love* and several other works.

But if you were to think, from these extracts, that *A History ...* is only filled with facts and figures about the people and work of the Society you would be mistaken. Richard also reflects repeatedly on the historical context in which the Swedenborg Society operated in the past and continues to operate today - the Napoleonic Wars, the long reign of Queen Victoria, the Two World Wars and even the Beatles!

A History of the Swedenborg Society 1810-2010 has not been published by the Swedenborg Society but privately by South Vale Press. However it is publicised on the Swedenborg Society web site at £19.95 plus £2.75 postage. It can also be purchased via Amazon.



Richard Lines

Richard Lines is to be congratulated on producing an excellent account of the work of the Swedenborg Society over the past 200 years and of all those people who have laboured so diligently to maintain and develop the translating, printing and publishing of the theological writings of Emanuel Swedenborg.

If you haven't yet read it, buy one or borrow one as soon as possible – you will not be disappointed.

Alan Misson

To the extent that you detest evil, goodness enters you from heaven.
To the extent that you detest promiscuity, what is chaste enters;
to the extent that you detest frauds and unlawful gains, sincerity and justice enter;
to the extent that you detest hatred and revenge, loving kindness enters;
to the extent that you detest lies and blasphemies, truth enters;
and to the extent that you detest arrogance, humility before God and love of your neighbour as yourself enter.

To shun evil is to do what is good.

Apocalypse Explained 803

Now we are able to turn our attention to the proposed School building itself. On Friday afternoon the builder called to discuss plans he had had prepared. The building will, at least initially, be single storey consisting of 2 classrooms, an office, toilets, outside covered walk way, etc. And, separately, in the yard, a covered parents waiting area and kitchen. As at this stage we believe it wise to keep the School Kindy and pre-Prep, (for which, by the way, it is currently registered) but the two classrooms will enable us to double the number of children we take, to around 100.

Now to the fund raising! The builder has given us a firm price, which he will hold to for 2012 and 2013, of the equivalent of \$50,000. The first \$5,000 of this amount has already been received.

Warm and sincere thanks for your interest, encouragement and support.

Rev Ian Arnold
27th March 2012

Editor's Note:

The pictures on page 1 of this issue are *The Ministers in church on Sunday, 25th, with their Ordination Certificates* and *Children lining up for the procession at the start of the Graduation ceremony, March 23rd*.

Coming soon ...

In the April issue a statement by the Committee of Ministers included these words:

It is intended in the near future to share something of this discussion through Lifeline, offering something of the spectrum of Ministerial thought and opinions, to encourage some open and honest discussion within our Church and at the forthcoming annual meeting of the Conference.

It is hoped that this further communication from the Ministry on the subject of second ordinations and the impact of human sexuality on church ceremonies will be published in the June issue of Lifeline. However if the timescale involved proves too short it will definitely be published in the July issue giving readers time to consider and discuss the matters involved before Conference.

Editor

Report from the Philippines

Dear friends,

With Margaret's encouragement I was able to visit the Philippines again this month, March 18th through to the 25th, the visit timed to coincide with our little Charity Day School's end of School year Graduation Service and Ceremony last Friday, the 23rd. Trevor Moffat and I were able to synchronise our travel arrangements, arriving and departing, though by different airlines, at near exactly the same times.

The Graduation was as well organized and as delightful as ever. We have such excellent teaching staff (of 3) led by Veron Cayabyab, and the children as beautiful in their innocence as ever.

In addition to the Graduation we held excellent meetings with the Ministers, Rev Merlita Rogers, with her husband Franklin, arriving the day after us; and during the Service in the headquarters Church on Sunday, 25th, each was presented, albeit belatedly, with their formal Ordination Certificate. We were delighted, by the way, that members of the Pampanga Society and from the Group in Manila were able to join us in Church for this Service.

The visit, too, provided the opportunity to finalise the legal transfer of the Church property, in Bataan, to the Philippines New Jerusalem Church, the documents requiring Franklin Rogers's signature as well as Rev Merlita's.

Importantly, we were able to progress developments with regard to the proposed new School building. In recent months Rev Septhan Baltazar has overseen the clearing of the site purchased some two years ago. As well, the level of the site has been raised, maybe as much as 18 inches to 2 feet. And the perimeter wall has been repaired and rebuilt. Just a fortnight ago, Rev Baltazar awarded the contract for iron "grill panels" to be placed between the pillars of this surrounding wall, and for new gates to be installed. Donations from Australia have largely covered this preparatory work.



The Letter

What follows is a very different article for Lifeline. It is not an article on a text or subject from the Word or the Writings nor is it a report of a church related activity or a notice of some future event. Rather it is something about life from a very personal and private perspective which I think brings to mind Swedenborg's statement in Arcana Coelestia 8478:4 *It should be recognised that Divine providence is overall, that is, it is present within the smallest details of all, and that people in the stream of providence are being carried along constantly towards happier things, whatever appearance the means may present.* **Editor**

Grandpa

[Grandpa, the nom-de-plume, protects some persons' natural sensitivities]

My wife and I await the letter every six months. It's sometimes a bit late, but no matter. Then the postman knocks and we sign for the slim package. The first came in January 2010. It contained a typed single page of A4. More recently the letter has run to two pages.

There are mysteries about the letter. We simply don't know the name of the writer, nor the writer's address; though the final line reads, "Bye for now, Iris."

Who is Iris? We used to see and talk to her, but no longer. Nor is she the letter's actual author, as Iris cannot read or write. Recently we've been told she *can* now talk and also answer the phone, though she has never spoken to us. No phone-call to us from her.

So who is Iris? Iris is our grand-daughter, just ten months old when we last saw her in 2009. Alas no more.

I'll explain. A family; man, wife and young daughter have provided a home for Iris. She has been adopted. That was agreed and arranged, undoubtedly after rigorous vetting and perhaps appearances before a judge at the Family Division of the High Court. And it's the adopters who write the letter; the fruit of the *Letterbox* arrangement: our sole means of contact with our grandchild.

Why adoption of Iris? The event was painful, though those letters we receive soften the regret. Brief details are as follows: our younger daughter and her husband were unable to look after their daughter Iris. Our daughter's all-too-frequent trips to A & E and hospital admissions made their continuing care for

Iris impossible. A long-term solution was considered, sought and eventually found. And we grandparents were simply too old to take on the task, neither would that have been fair on Iris.

Iris's natural mother, her husband and we grandparents were to see her intermittently for most of the first year of the little one's life. The immaculate care and healthy bloom, her calm, trusting gaze; these suggested how truly providential was the professionals' choice of the fostering lady, Justine. Enquiries, watching briefs on the babe and her natural parents continued. However finally the Social Services and the courts concluded that others, rather than the natural parents, should care for Iris. Adoption appeared to be the solution – in Iris's best interests.

Chance acquaintance by us with adopters and adopted has been surprisingly wide. We counted no less than seven cases, including those touched by a nephew and a cousin. So although a bitter pill to swallow, we had realised and accepted that adoption would likely be the best option for Iris. We continued to go to a centre to see and dandle Iris for two hours every few weeks during those first ten months of her life.

During enquiries about Iris's possible adoption, the professionals came to see us. The final visited by Social Services staff told of progress in the search to find for the babe a permanent home. News of meetings for Iris with a prospective adopting family, who already had their own nine-year-old daughter. That report included that the two youngsters had played, romped and otherwise showed a meeting of minds. *It sounded like love at first sight!*

Then in May 2009, when Iris was nearing her first birthday, came our final two hours with her at the usual neutral venue. We were granted permission to take photographs of our babe. We gave her a doll. Then, nevermore to cast our doleful eyes on her; or at least until 2026 perhaps, when Iris will be 18 years old.

And so to the letters. The Social Services Fostering and Adoption Team told us that the adopters had agreed *letterbox contact*, an exchange of letters every six-months or so.

What's in the letters, we now receive? Letter one: eight simple paragraphs. We read, "... I have settled in well, I am happy and so are they ... I can say about 20 words ... my favourite word is cuddle." Other news included Iris's food preferences: banana, yoghurts, porridge and 'on special occasions chocolate'. We're told of family visits to Devon, Gloucestershire and Suffolk. The letter mentions Iris's favourite television programme, *In the Night Garden*.

Letter number two is of eleven paragraphs. Sibling sister plays with Iris; with water, snow, sledge and dancing around. Family friends from Bristol visited and

were visited. Significantly the letter ends with "Bye bye Iris x".

Letter number three tells of a trip to Disneyland Paris, with larks and horse-play by the Disney characters and Lewis Carroll's creation – the Mad Hatter.

Letter four ran to two pages. TV preferences this time: *The Neverland Pirates* and *Doctor Who*. Its closing words were, "Bye for now Iris x x". More kisses: duly noted.

Our replies include details about our garden with its pond and goldfish. We report on other grandchildren's achievements and interests. I mentioned my favourite television programmes, *Mastermind* and *University Challenge*. Gran likes *Countryfile* and *Victorian Farm*.

Each letter and each reply are soothing salves. We know that Iris is receiving from others care, and also engendering much affection and devotion. Also our daughter has seen vastly improved health in these past three years. Providence appears to be peeking through the gloom and what could have been viewed as a bereavement; now evidences positive outcomes for Iris, her adopters and not least our daughter's health. Our relationship with her is also far better.

In five years time Iris will hopefully write her own letter. In ten years she will be a young woman. In fifteen years, at age 18, the file of her adoption will be opened for her to inspect. We pray now, and also hope she'll decide to re-acquaint herself with us, face to face.

In the meanwhile we must and shall be content with – the letter.



Galatians 5:22