

The Chairman writes

Normally, my piece in the BRAVE Trust Newsletter is along the lines: *"Our work is very important. Our Schools Workers are doing great things, which we must continue. But we need more money. Please give us some"*. All of this remains absolutely true – see the box on page 3. But this time I want to air a few thoughts on the deeper purpose of our work.

There are three biblical passages which lie at the heart of the BRAVE Trust's mission. Two are from Mark's Gospel:

"Then they brought unto him little children that he should lay his hands upon them and pray. And the disciples rebuked those that brought them. But Jesus said, 'Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not.'" (Matt. 19 v14,)

"Jesus took a child and set him in the midst of them, and said unto them, "Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me". (Mark 9 v37)

But what is happening in today's world? In the UK, formal RE and informal Christian teaching are under pressure from an increasingly crowded curriculum, lack of commitment or even outright hostility. However, we tend to forget that in most parts of the world, Christianity is going through a golden age, a momentous expansion throughout Asia, Africa and South America, but not in Europe.

In 1900, over 55% of children attended Sunday school in the UK. The figure now is 4%. Only 3% of people in their twenties attend church regularly.

Paradoxically, while people don't seem to find spiritual fulfilment in formal Christian worship, interest in "New Age" cults is increasing. The saddest statistic is that 40% of our population has never had any meaningful relationship with Christianity.

The BRAVE Trust's challenge, however, is not simply to get young people into church. It is to help young people with their own spiritual needs and with their own discovery of Christ.

The Christian story has now been denied to successive generations. There seems to be a desire to remove Christianity from the public domain, yet to *tolerate* it merely as a private matter; another individual choice in a consumer society.

How can we possibly reverse these major cultural shifts? Should the Churches in England slowly pack their bags and confine themselves to the elegant management of decline, becoming an indulged commentator on social and environmental affairs? Surely not!

How can the BRAVE trust make a difference? As always by one step at a time. We remind ourselves of our purpose and renew our efforts in the journey we started five years ago. Above all we must face the future with prayer and confidence. As Jesus said to the disciples, *"The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore of the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest"*. (Matt. 9 v 36 – 38)

Money Matters

Although we have now secured our finances to the end of 2014, much of this is due to the award of new grants over a three-year period. Our aim is to be self-supporting through our own regular income. The BRAVE Trust is therefore particularly grateful to those congregations which have given financial support in 2011:

St. Lawrence, Ardeley, St. Mary, Ashwell, St. Mary, Aspenden, St. Mary Magdalene, Barkway, St. Mary, Brent Pelham, Christ Church, Buntingford, St. Peter, Buntingford, St. Nicholas, Great Horstead, St. Mary, Reed, St. John the Baptist, Royston, Royston Evangelical Church, Royston Trinity Life Church, All Saints, Sandon, St. Mary, Therfield, Therfield Chapel and Holy Trinity, Weston.

The BRAVE Trust would be most grateful if churches not listed here could consider joining our much-valued group of supportive congregations. We are also most grateful to those individuals who make donations, or give regular support. We need more people to join this blessed band!

Martha writes: The autumn term ended well before the Christmas Break, with assembly and teaching sessions booked right into the final week. The highlight for me was the final assembly at Greneway which I felt went particularly well and we were congratulated personally by the Head. It involved the children performing a drama of the Christmas story, and also giving out awards to the winners of the Christmas card project.

These first few weeks of the Spring Term have been about planning and preparation. Designing and printing new posters for all the schools advertising our groups along with 'mini flyers' to give to the children individually. Meetings are set for January with our contacts within all schools, where I will be setting assembly and teaching dates and also taking time to

discuss PSHE times. I'm also keen to see if there is a way to incorporate a R.E. day into the run up to the 2012 Olympics. The Bible Reading Foundation is offering workshops within schools entitled "Who



Symbolic depictions of John's and Luke's Gospels (below). Roysia Buds' pupils

comes first?" that explores sporting values and challenges

through the eyes of Christian faith and belief. Including workshops and assembly we are hoping the schools will be keen to use the material. Please hold this opportunity in your prayers that funding support will be found for the schools.

In our work with Greneway pupils we've become aware that there are opportunities in a variety of things the youngsters do with us to recognise achievement, by awarding a certificate. A certificate could be awarded at our discretion for a number of reasons and helps build confidence and esteem. I have designed and laminated a certificate of appreciation in recognition of valuable contributions to **U2** club dramatic productions.

In general I'm excited about this year and the challenges that it will bring and am trying this term to involve the children more directly with planning what we do and how we do it. The **Buds** at Roysia, for example, want quiz/story-teaching/crafts/role play as a regular part of



the session. I really want them to enjoy the learning experience and am reiterating that it is their club and therefore they can have a choice in the structure.

Margaret writes: It certainly was a busy but blessed time in the winter term and the opportunities to provide the real meaning of Christmas were many. We experienced the presence and power of God working in the activities, assemblies, sessions and lessons. Thank you for your prayer support. We really do feel that as we go into schools.

Please remember in your prayers the Greneway headmistress, Sue Kennedy and the changes of Head at this school (the school is moving to an Academy status). Sue has always backed us with our suggestions and ideas.

As we plan and talk with the children we are aware their hearts are being stirred by God. We want to praise God for the **Core** group for Meridian pupils that come to Greneway School after school on a Tuesday. This is a great time to talk with the students who come and it has been a support to them. We continue to pray and encourage them to follow the Lord. I hope to do an assessment with them so you can read their comments on the group.

Christingle lessons for Year 5 (40 students) was great fun in Roysia school. I used drama and visual images to portray the account of Jesus birth. There was an awesome moment in the second lesson when the students stood in a circle with their Christingle candles alight, listening carefully to a DVD song. Then we all sang 'Away in a Manger' and I asked the students to say what they had learnt about the coming of Jesus.

Edwinstree School **ASK** for years 5 & 6 is going very well. Last week I had 16 students finding out about the ways that God speaks to us. **ASK** for Years 7 & 8 has also started very well. We are encouraged by the response and the openness of discussions.

Supporting the BRAVE Trust's work

Legacy:

Could you leave a legacy for the BRAVE Trust in your will?

Please contact our Treasurer Mike Maze for further details.

Donations

Planned giving helps us know what money we have to spend in advance and so offers us the greatest benefit. However we are equally happy to receive a one-off payment.

How about organising a coffee morning or other local event in aid of the BRAVE Trust?

Online shopping:

If you shop online you can raise funds **without any additional cost to yourself**. If you or your family shop at Amazon, Marks and Spencer, John Lewis, Curry's, iTunes or countless other shops online we are missing out on extra cash for the BRAVE Trust.

Not sure how to set it up? Contact Simon (simonqrice@gmail.com), our webmaster, who will help you directly to set it up on your PC.

Corporate Charitable Giving:

Many corporate organisations will match a payment from its employees or donate to causes employees are involved.

Does your employer operate a scheme that could help the BRAVE Trust?

My Response

✂.....✂.....

*I would like to make a one-off donation of £.....

*I would like to make a regular monthly donation of £.....(*delete as appropriate)

I am a UK tax payer and all donations I make from this date until I notify you otherwise should be treated as Gift Aid donations

Signed.....Name.....

Dated:.....Address.....

Please send your donation to Mr. Mike Maze, BRAVE Trust Treasurer, 16, Shrubbery Grove, Royston, SG8 9LJ (Mikefmaze@aol.com)