



SPRING 2019

ROOF 'N' ROOTS

The Newsletter of the Methodist Ministers' Housing Society

MANNIE CRIED FREEDOM

REVD DR EMMANUEL JACOB KNEW THE PAIN OF LIVING UNDER APARTHEID. NOW HE AND WIFE LYNN EXPERIENCE THE PEACE OF MAKING THEIR HOME WITH US...

Emmanuel Jacob was just 12 when he saw the rallying call on a bridge over the Umhlatuzana River in Clairwood, Durban. 'Free Mandela,' the graffiti said.

Apartheid scarred his student years. 'We were told we were second class citizens,' said Mannie.

'It started me thinking about something I had never given thought to before,' said Mannie, now 68.

Mannie became involved in student protests alongside the likes of 'black consciousness' leader Steve Biko. 'We felt we were not being given the freedoms – let alone privileges – that white students had,' Mannie recalled. For his part in organising a student strike, he was expelled from university in 1972 and spent two nights in prison.

Mannie grew up in an Asian community in South Africa under apartheid. His was a happy childhood, playing barefoot in a close-knit neighbourhood.

He asked an uncle about the Mandela slogan. 'Don't talk about it,' he was told, 'don't mention it to anyone'. Mannie realises now his uncle was protecting him.

Although he'd studied science, Mannie turned to theology in 1978. He attended the Federal Theological Seminary for the black community, where he met librarian Lynn, and then Rhodes University, Grahamstown. 'She comes from a white South African background,' said Mannie, 'and to work in a township is very brave.'

Mannie was quick to learn. He noticed how race groups lived in separate communities.

There were queues for different race groups at the post office and library, and they had to use separate public amenities. Brought up in a Methodist family, Mannie wondered, 'How could people be treated in this way, in a country that claimed to be Christian?'

He was expelled from university in 1972 and spent two nights in prison



Photo: Clive Price

AFRICAN UNION: Mannie and Lynn Jacob defied apartheid for love

Growing up, Lynn was aware things were not as they should be. 'In terms of apartheid being a whole system of laws, I don't think I was aware of that at all,' she said. 'I was very sheltered from it.'

'We didn't have television in the country until 1975 and that makes an incredible difference to how much people know. It was seeing pictures of young children in Soweto that spoke so loudly to me.'

Lynn, now 66, added, 'That's when I started to find out what was going on. I decided I didn't want to be a part of a system that divided people'.



IT'S A MOVING STORY

Methodist Ministers' Housing Society has moved. For the first time we now occupy our own office space at **109 Baker Street, London W1U 6RP.**

'It's good that we're near Methodist Church House,' said our CEO Mairi Johnstone, 'as that will make it easy for us to keep in close contact with those members of the Methodist Church family who are based there.'

'Everyone in MCH will need to move out in due course when the plans for the building are finalised and actioned.'

We made our home at MCH for 18 years, and before that we were based at Methodist Central Hall. Please note that our new general number is **020 3848 6020**. Our email and web addresses remain the same – admin@mmhs.org.uk and <https://mmhs.org.uk>.

HOLD THE FRONT PAGE!

With this edition of **Roof 'n' Roots** are updated inserts for your **Tenants' Handbook**. Please use these to replace the existing front page, contacts page and pages 4.7-4.8 and 4.15-4.16 in your handbook.

MANNIE CRIED FREEDOM

There is a unique love story. Interracial marriages were not recognised under apartheid law. They had to leave South Africa to enjoy a legal wedding ceremony.

They moved to England where they married in 1981. Mannie was ordained the following year. They went on to work in Zimbabwe seven years later – where they heard of Mandela's release.

The couple returned to South Africa. That phase of their life had its own drama and intrigue, as their homeland was in turmoil again. They returned to the UK in 1994, and in 2012 moved to Sri Lanka, where Lynn worked as a librarian again and Mannie served as a lecturer.

Finally, Mannie and Lynn now enjoy peace at their MMHS property in south-west England, where they moved in 2015. On the edge of a country estate, the house is where they also entertain their two children and two grandchildren.

'Even though we don't own the house, it feels like ours,' said Mannie. 'It is the family home.'

Lynn has adorned their home with ethnic furnishings. Mannie has revisited his science days by building a telescope out of ventilation pipe strapped together with embroidery rings. The couple have created a tiered garden.

'It is very good to be free in your house, to do what you do, in a location that is ideal,' said Mannie. 'It's very well maintained by MMHS. We still look at each other and say, "Isn't this lovely!"'

COSMIC PREACHER: Mannie made a telescope from odds and ends



A MESSAGE FROM MAIRI



Mannie and Lynn's story on our front page demonstrates how to be 'light and salt' in very difficult circumstances.

Philip's reflection on the back page gives us a window into his life – his story. Having read up a little about Philip, I know that, through the medium of photography, he encourages us to look more intently and lovingly at God's creation and to open our eyes to God's presence in different places and people. That's a great challenge!

I am often amazed – and inspired – by the variety of ministries in which our ministers are involved! It reminds me that we have endless opportunities to advance the Kingdom of God in our world with its great need for peace, justice, love, truth, redemption – and so much more.

What's your story? Would you like to share it? I can tell you for sure that our Communications Manager, Clive, would love to hear from you.

Wishing you lots of Easter blessings,

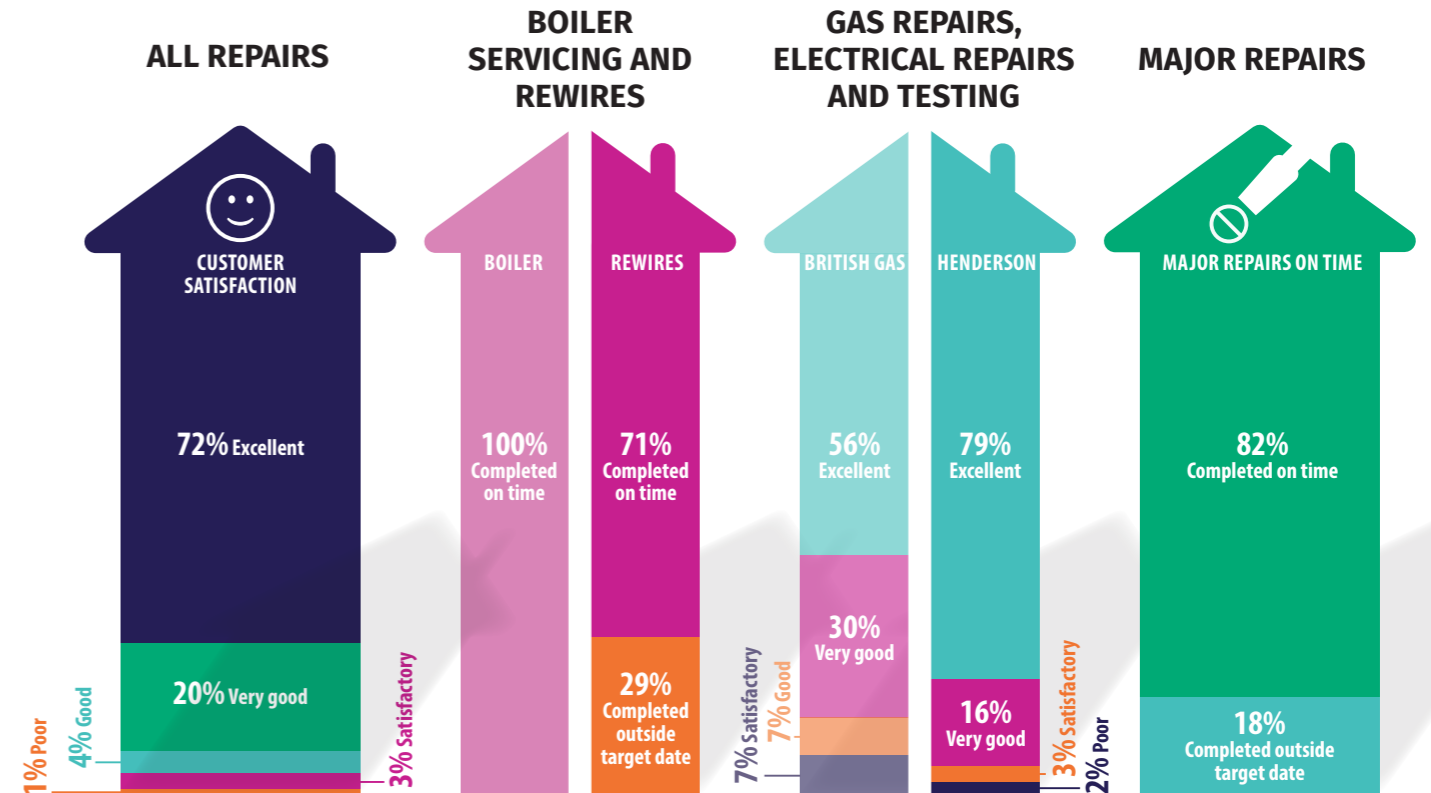
● Mairi Johnstone CEO

HOW WELL ARE WE DOING?

Every time we raise an order for repairs and maintenance, we send out a satisfaction questionnaire. These

graphics show the results of survey forms covering 1st September 2018 to 31st December 2018. Thank you

for submitting your views. Your cooperation is much appreciated. If it matters to you, it matters to us. ●



BLESSED BY A 'BEAUTIFUL' KITCHEN

High praise has come from one of our residents who's overjoyed with her recent kitchen refurbishment.

Margaret Parkes from the West Midlands told us she has been 'well and truly blessed' by everyone involved in the project.

'My grateful thanks for the hard work and attention given to my kitchen,' said Margaret. 'It's beautiful.'

She praised the contractors. 'They were very kind and thorough, and nothing was too much trouble,' she said.

Margaret didn't stop there. She also expressed gratitude for the cleaners. 'I couldn't have managed without them,' she admitted. 'They did a good job – and had to battle snow and ice to get here.'

When we refurbish kitchens in MMHS properties, we use units from Howdens, a major supplier of fitted kitchens. Howdens assure us that all their cabinets are made in the UK,

undergo rigorous testing, come from sustainable sourcing and boast a 25-year guarantee.

The work is carried out by contractors. And so far – as Margaret's story shows – our residents have been delighted with the results.

Based on the property survey we conducted in 2016, our Reactive Maintenance Manager Glenn Fry has been writing to many of you to see if you want your kitchen replaced.

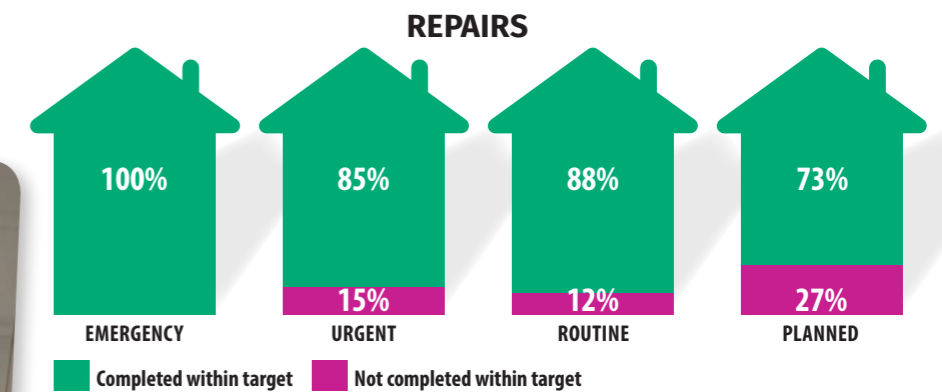
All those kitchens with less than a year's life left in them have been refitted. Those kitchens that have between two and five years left are the focus of this latest round of refurb.

'We work to a 20-year life cycle for our kitchens,' said Glenn. 'I've seen kitchens



DANCING QUEEN: Margaret said her new kitchen makes her want to dance!

left in other landlords' properties for 30 years! If you think your kitchen needs replacing and you haven't heard from us, please let us know. ●



GAME OF THRONES

A 100-year-old Berkshire home has undergone an 'astonishing transformation' to bring it into the 21st century.

The Society has been improving the two-bedroom semi-detached property over the years. And more recently, we've refurbished the bathroom and downstairs cloakroom.

Residents Revd Trevor Allen and wife Ann responded with overwhelmingly positive feedback about their new bathroom. 'This lovely old property now has a modern feel,' they said, 'and we're very grateful.'

Trevor said the original bathroom was 'a bedroom with a bath in it'. Facilities

were a basin, toilet and 'minimal splashbacks'.

We told the couple about our refurbishment programme. 'We were worried about disruption,' said Trevor. 'But we were surprised how non-disruptive it turned out to be.'

There was hardly any of the usual dust and dirt that householders usually face. 'It was very tidy and under control,' Trevor said of the work. 'The contractor cleaned up and took rubbish away.'

The fitter – also named Trevor – deserves 'the highest possible praise' for coping with 'the eccentricities of this old building,' said our resident. ●



Photo: Neil Grabowsky/Montclair Film (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/montclairfilmfest/4454439690>)

JEFF DANIELS – a spirituality that sprung from Methodism

METHODISM IN OUR MADNESS

ARTS AND CULTURE BY CLIVE PRICE

Actor Jeff Daniels has won popular following and critical acclaim with a variety of film and TV roles – from a hilarious oddball in hit comedy *Dumb And Dumber* to a counter-terrorism expert in the recent miniseries *The Looming Tower*. He was brought up a Methodist.

Son of a timber yard owner from Michigan, USA, Jeff's church roots are revealed on the web services *Wikipedia* and *Preview Online*. 'I was raised a Methodist,' said 64-year-old Jeff, around the time of his 2005 family film *Because Of Winn-Dixie*.

'I haven't gone to church in 30 years,' he admitted. But I consider myself very spiritual.' Jeff plays the part of a preacher in the movie, which is about a mischievous dog who befriends a lonely young girl in a new town and helps her make new friends.

After playing that preacher role, in 2009's romantic comedy *The Answer Man*, he portrayed a bestselling New Age author who wrote about his relationship with God. Adored as a self-help guru, Jeff's character realised, despite his writings, he didn't have any answers after all.

In 'real life', Jeff and wife Kathleen were college sweethearts. She is Catholic and sings at mass every Christmas Eve. 'I always go in there and see her, watch her sing...And you can never find a seat,' he told *Preview Online*.

'I kind of live with some kind of spirituality every day,' Jeff explained, '...I'm real happy with where I am.' ●

HOME TRUTHS

REFLECTION BY REVD DR PHILIP RICHTER

Photos have a unique ability to freeze time. Once the shutter button is pressed, that moment is preserved for posterity, if you choose to keep the image. Oliver Wendell Holmes called photography 'the mirror with a memory'. Back in the day, we recorded the past in diaries and autobiographies, now it's more likely to be images in your photos or social media account.

Photos can trigger our memories, like certain smells or tastes. Recently, I've been sorting through boxes of old photos and slides, passed down from my late parents. It's a bewildering task, as I don't recognise everyone in the photos and few are captioned. Which to keep and which to discard?

Photos can trigger our memories, like certain smells or tastes

One image that stopped me in my tracks was a small monochrome photo of our front room, empty of people, evidently taken in my early childhood. It immediately unlocked many happy memories of that room, that for nearly 60 years had lain forgotten. Another arresting image was a colour slide of people chatting outside the Methodist church we attended in West London, taken after a morning service in probably the mid-60s. It was fascinating to be reminded of these people, to notice our ethnic diversity and the fact that almost all the women wore hats to church!

Discovering those two photos, it struck me that perhaps we don't take enough photos of ordinary everyday scenes, items and activities. We often restrict our photography to commemorating family occasions or documenting our holidays. If you have a smartphone you always have a camera with you, so why not take more photos of how things are in 2019? Such images could be invaluable to historians in the future and could awaken memories for those who by then will have become the older generation.

It struck me, too, that we owe it to children and grandchildren to caption



Revd Dr Philip Richter is a Supernumerary Minister and author of *Spirituality In Photography* (Darton Longman & Todd, 2017)

our photos, by writing on the back or tagging them if they're digital. Otherwise, how will they know why and when we took the image and who features in the picture? Incidentally, there's something potentially very evocative about writing on a photo. It lends your voice to the photo and links the photo intimately to you – to your unique handwriting.

Photography can be a great way of maintaining your wellbeing

Naturally, it's worth regularly printing some of your photos, individually or as a photobook, otherwise your memories are too reliant on digital media, which can fail or become obsolescent.

Photography can be a great way of maintaining your wellbeing, at any age. It can get you out of the house and boost your creativity, independence and mobility. Photographers sometimes talk about their camera 'taking them for a walk'. It's a good excuse to get out and about and you don't have to go far. Start in your own back garden. Now spring is emerging, there will be a variety of colours and shapes for the camera. You might also join a local photography group, to gain inspiration, learn some extra skills, meet new friends - and have some memorable experiences! ●

