



## editor's thoughts

### Set all free

25 March 2007 marks the bicentenary of the passing of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act (1807). This year we will be reminded that William Wilberforce – and other White Christian abolitionists – fought long and hard to end the transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans.

With this in mind, I would like to take this opportunity to coin two phrases: 'may the Wilberforce be with you' and 'wall-to-wall Wilberforce'. The former is best used as a Jedi-like felicitation to anyone with emancipatory aspirations. The latter may be used to describe the ubiquitous presence of the long-dead Member of Parliament for Hull in films, books and posters.

In her article, 'Black abolitionists and the end of the transatlantic slave trade', **Linda Ali** says: 'By all means, thank God for the work and witness of White abolitionists like William Wilberforce. But we should also give thanks for the work and witness of Black abolitionists like Mary Prince, Phyllis Wheatley, Ignatius Sancho and Olaudah Equiano.' She argues: 'The story of those who worked tirelessly to end slavery in the 19th century cannot be told without giving due prominence to Black abolitionists.'

Linda also points out that many White Christians – including clergy – were committed to maintaining the trade in enslaved Africans. In fact, most Christian denominations supported the slave trade.

She writes: 'Some, such as the Quakers and the Church of England, held slaves at some point during the 17th and 18th centuries... When slavery was finally abolished in 1833, the Bishop of Exeter received £12,700 in compensation for his 655 slaves.'

So, challenge number one: when we teach our students about the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade, we should be careful not to give the impression that Black people were hapless victims; resigned to their fate; set free by White people.

Challenge number two: we should be careful not to give our students the impression that all abolitionists were Christians, nor that all Christians were abolitionists.

Challenge number three: 200 years on from the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act (1807), what lessons can we draw from a period of history when Christians found themselves on opposing sides of the argument? Which issues divide present-day Christians... and, just as significantly, which side are we on? Are we on the side of righteousness, truth, compassion and justice... or are we (unwittingly) on the side of sin, self-deception, condemnation and oppression?

In the name of the One who sets all free.

### Have your say

Whether you want to write a letter or article in response to an item in this issue; express your views on a topical educational issue from a Christian perspective; share personal testimony about what God has done for you in an educational setting; review a book or film; share a lesson plan or classroom resource; write a poem; or submit a prayer request, please send your contribution to: **The Editor, ACT Now**, 94a London Road, St Albans, Herts, AL1 1NX.

#### Presentation

Individual prayer requests should be 20–40 words in length. Longer prayers, poems and film/resource reviews should be a maximum of 250 words in length. Emails to the editor should be 50–250 words in length; letters should be 250–800 words in length. All other items should be 500–1,500 words in length. Longer articles may be considered for publication in an abridged form.

All items should be submitted as a Microsoft Word document on a CD or as an email attachment. Naturally, items should have been carefully spell-checked by the author prior to submission. All items must carry the author's name and contact details. Articles and letters must also come with a

brief biographical note about the author (50 to 80 words in length) written in the third person. Photographs, illustrations and logos may be included where these are relevant (see below for technical specifications).

#### Photographs and illustrations

Photographs can be accepted in two formats: (i) analogue (ie 'Kodak' prints); and (ii) digital. Analogue photos should be sent as clearly labelled unmounted originals eg with a sticky label on the back (giving a photo caption/title and contact name). Digital photos should be sent as JPEGs unmodified from camera/scanner and at the highest resolution available (preferably 300ppi). As a rule the minimum file size is 800kb, however files 2,000kb or larger are preferred. Photos that do not meet these criteria cannot be accepted for publication.

Line drawings should be in black ink on white paper.

All other artwork should be provided as a plain original without lettering or numbering.

#### Administration

All items received will be acknowledged as long as they carry adequate contact details.

The editor's decision to publish or reject material is final. The editor reserves the right to edit or amend the content, grammar and style of all items.

Once accepted for publication, a prayer request, article, letter, etc becomes the copyright of the Association of Christian Teachers unless it is reprinted with the permission of another publication with prior copyright.

#### ACT Now deadlines

**Summer (May) 2007** All prayer requests (for the period 1 May to 30 September 2007), emails and letters to the editor, resource reviews, articles, etc should arrive at the ACT Office no later than **15 February 2007**.

**Autumn (September) 2007** All prayer requests (for the period 1 September 2007 to 31 January 2008), emails and letters to the editor, resource reviews, articles, etc should arrive at the ACT Office no later than **15 June 2007**.

**Spring (January) 2008** All prayer requests (for the period 1 January to 31 May 2008), emails and letters to the editor, resource reviews, articles, etc should arrive at the ACT Office no later than **15 October 2007**.