

December 1994

Free throughout the Parish

Mustard Seed

St. Thomas' Church Brampton, St. Peter's Holymoorside, St. John's Walton
- going for growth in Christ -

Compassion Fatigue?

It's bewildering! So many worthy causes cry out for our support.

Desperate refugees ... innocent people caught up in the seemingly insoluble Bosnia situation ... victims of civil war and anarchy in Somalia and Liberia ...

Increasing poverty in Britain ... abused children ... teenage runaways on the streets of our cities. Hundreds - literally - of tragic situations cry out for our compassion and vie for our support.

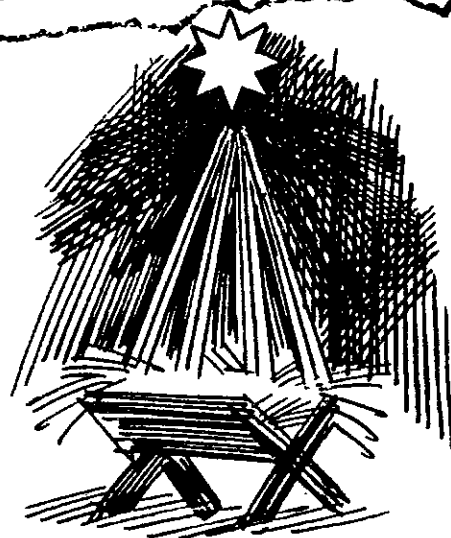
Television heightens our awareness of it all. Occasionally we are moved to action. Children in Need provokes a huge response. Slowly but surely however, we can become immune to it all. It's on too large a scale. One tragedy follows another.

The National Lottery gives the impression of helping. A number of charities certainly benefit. But the effect on many ordinary citizens is to give false comfort: buy a lottery ticket and you are doing your bit for charity - a nice, easy, enjoyable way to relieve the world's problems. Ignore the fact that over three times as much goes to charity if you give it directly.

Christmas, thankfully, does arouse compassion. So it should! It is the supreme celebration of compassion. God is showing the world that He still cares. He doesn't suffer compassion fatigue. His involvement in this world, its suffering and poverty, homelessness and victimisation, is there for all to see in the Christmas story.

Being aware of compassion on this scale gives renewed hope and inspiration. The best way through compassion fatigue is to take Christmas seriously. Stop ... look ... listen. "To us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders," as the prophet Isaiah declared.

BETHLEHEM One star accommodation. Self catering only. Animals welcome. Cot provided.



TOUCHSTONE
Community
Enterprise.

Details of the special Christmas project:
see inside

*Make room for God
this Christmas.*

Pause for thought

What might your most vivid memory of 1994 be? The opening of the Channel Tunnel or the Normandy landings remembered? Perhaps, two handshakes....

The first that of Nelson Mandela and President De Clerk. Joy and hope, fear and uncertainty all in one fleeting moment. But too far from Brampton? Not so far - it was good to see their released cricketers and athletes in action this summer. It affects us all somehow.

The second that of Gerry Adams and Albert Reynolds as presidents of two opposed entities: an inconceivable act of reconciliation only a year ago but now arguably a point of balance in Northern Ireland. So far from Brampton? The shoppers of Warrington will testify about that from their devastating experience.

The situation in Northern Ireland leads to the question Jesus was asked: "Who is my neighbour?" Jesus replied with the story of the Good Samaritan. Remember? The man about his lawful business, ... wrong place, wrong time, ... violently attacked and left for dead, ... the Priest and the Levite unable to help (bound by their tradition and intolerance), passing by on the other side of the road, ... rescued by ...? Ah, yes! A traveller.

I find this story too near to Northern Ireland for comfort: a land with an occupying army (Romans in the time of Christ), the religious leaders divided, opposed and in dispute over interpretation. But who is the traveller to the rescue? Could it be Jesus Christ?

In the parable the traveller cared for the dying man and revived him, taking him to someone who would look after him. He paid in advance. Jesus did that for us too, by dying on the cross to pay for our sins and to bring us back to God. Unless we turn to God and accept Jesus as Lord we can never be truly reconciled to one another. So too in Northern Ireland. Nothing will heal unless there is full trust and forgiveness.

Who is my neighbour? The parable continued: the traveller promised to return and deal with anything outstanding, cost or reward. So did Jesus. What will we say to him then?

Compassion in our Community

Touchstone Community Enterprise is taking off. It is a local initiative, started last year by people concerned about unemployment and its devastating impact on the health and welfare of many.

Each year, the churches in St Thomas' parish feature a particular project over Christmas. They invite people to give generously, as a way of expressing gratitude for all they are enjoying. Usually it is concerned with poverty, famine and homelessness in the developing world.

This year, they are focusing on Touchstone, being concerned to confront unemployment and its effects locally.

Touchstone wishes to set up a support and opportunities centre in suitable premises. This will be its base, to be readily accessible to unemployed people for:

- practical and emotional support,
- advice and counselling;
- vocational development opportunities;
- stimulation and creation of new business ideas.

Touchstone want to create jobs by stimulating, supporting and running non-profit and community businesses.

The opportunities are enormous. Finance is a major need. A grant of £15,000 was received from the Bishop of Derby's Urban Fund and £6,800 has been raised from donations and special events. However, it is estimated that £100,000 per year will be needed for the Centre. Immediately, a sum of £5,000 is needed, with a further target of £20,000 in all to come from local fund raising.

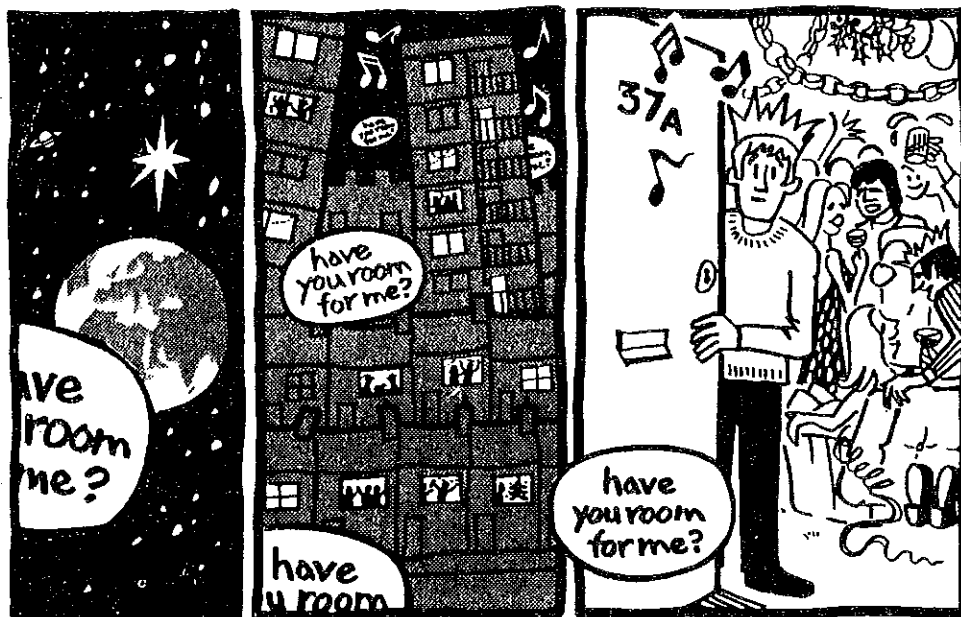
INVITATION TO SUPPORT

Touchstone invites local people to contribute to this local project. Gifts can be made in two ways:

- at all Christmas services at St Thomas', St John's and St Peter's churches, there will be special collections for Touchstone
- money, in an envelope clearly marked, can be delivered to St Thomas' church office at any time.

Cheques should be payable to St Thomas' Mission account, with "Touchstone" written on the back.

Touchstone is an expression of compassion in our community.



asks Jesus

It all began with a baby

Christmas. A time for giving, for receiving presents, for carols by candlelight - and as every child will tell you, a time for saying thank-you, perhaps with just a little prompt ...

Yet with all those exciting new toys and games to try out, writing thank-you letters to grans and grandads, aunts and uncles can take up a fair bit of valuable playing time.

For Steve and Hazel Hudson, however, gratitude will be at the heart of celebrating Christmas. Gratitude for their marriage, for two delightful daughters Sophie and Emily, for their home. And above all, for the birth of the baby Jesus they now worship as Saviour.

"A lot of people just go to church at happy or sad times, for weddings or funerals. But they don't go just to say thank-you to God, for all the good things in life," said Hazel.

Before they started going to St John's Church at Walton, Christmas for Hazel and Steve was much the same as it is for many others - the mad rush buying presents, the madder rush to have turkey and trimmings all arriving at the table for just the right time.

"We might go to midnight mass or a carol service, but it was just another of the things you did at Christmas time. You would come away and it hadn't really meant anything to you," Hazel recalled.

"We might go to midnight mass or a carol service ... it hadn't really meant anything ..."

That has all changed now, thanks to the reality of Jesus, born in a stable, coming into their lives. And, perhaps fittingly, it was the birth of their first child, Sophie, almost four years ago, which set Steve and Hazel Hudson on their road to faith.

"We wanted her to be baptised," explained Hazel, "because it was the thing to do. All our friends were having

their babies Christened, usually at afternoon services just for family and friends and that was what we wanted.

"But when we spoke to Christopher Frith, the Rector at St Thomas", he said 'Come to our baptism preparation course and we will have a think about it'.



Sophie, Hazel, Steve & Emily Hudson

At first we weren't sure - he said the baptism would have to be during the morning service even when we told him we had people coming from as far away as London. But we decided to give it a go."

The Hudsons went to both St Thomas' and its sister church St John's before deciding on St John's with its smaller congregation and the ease with which they got to know people.

Hazel, who went to Sunday School in her home town of Staveley as a child and was confirmed when she was 12, was at least familiar with church, but for Steve, with no church background in his family, it was all very new.

"St John's was the type of church which made us want to carry on. I had been to the church where Hazel was brought up but just didn't feel part of it. Whereas St John's, it was easy to fit into, and the services were much more informal and we felt very welcome," he said.

Around this time Hazel spent a morning talking over coffee with another mum from church and the conversation was an

important milestone in her spiritual journey. "We had a wonderful time - she spoke about Jesus and what he meant to her and that night I told Steve it had been great. I could see she had something that I wanted to know more about - her faith was obviously very important to her."

The seeds of faith which had been planted when the Hudsons first asked about baptising Sophie really started to grow when they joined a Christian Basics group for people wanting to know more about following Jesus. Then Hazel, and a year later Steve, went into greater depth on the confirmation course.

Hazel readily accepted what she was learning but for Steve it wasn't as simple as that. With the analytical mind of a Chartered Accountant and a keen interest in science from his schooldays, many questions remained to be answered.

"It was as if so many things worked together to knock your faith. But there was something inside me saying 'I can't explain it all but I have a belief which is growing and that overrides the doubts'."

"I can't explain it all but I have a belief which is growing ..."

Steve feels there have been other changes, too. "Before coming to faith my lifestyle was very selfish, playing lots of sport. I can still find time for sport, but now I feel more committed to other people, and you feel so blessed by having children. We are constantly thanking God for them."

And it is a faith which is growing week by week as Steve and Hazel seek to follow Jesus. So when they go to church this Christmas they will be doubly grateful - for God's gift of His son who came into the world as a baby 2,000 years ago; and for Jesus stepping into their lives to bring new hope, meaning and direction.

Forthcoming attraction

*Three Men and
a Baby*
THE ORIGINAL



NEAR YOU THIS CHRISTMAS!

✂----- CUT HERE -----

Please complete this and return it to:
Philip Herrick, St Thomas' Church Office,
Chatsworth Road, S40 3AW.

I would like to receive information about:
(please tick)

- Christians for Life courses
- Free literature about the Christian Faith
- Children's and Youth Activities
- Parents and tots groups
- I would like a visitor from the Church.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

TEL _____

Enquiries

The administration of our churches is based in St Thomas' Church Office and general enquiries should be made there. It is staffed, Monday to Friday, from 9.00am until midday.
Office telephone: 558461

If you want to enquire about a wedding or baptism, or just have a word with one of the clergy, please come to the office on a Monday between 6.30pm and 7.15pm (through the door opposite Church View, not the tower end).

CHURCH STAFF

Rector	Christopher Frith	232717
Curates	Brian Porter	566346
	Sheila Pite	231089
NSM*	Judith Henderson	569106

(*Non-stipendiary minister)

Christmas Services

ST THOMAS' CHATSWORTH ROAD

Sunday, 18 December 1994

6.30pm, Carol Service (and mince pies)

Christmas Eve

6.00pm, Family Carol Service

11.15pm, Midnight Communion

Christmas Day

8.00am, Holy Communion

10.00am, Family Communion
(Children: bring a present)

ST JOHN'S WALTON

Sunday, 18 December 1994

6.00pm, Carol Service (and mince pies)

Christmas Eve

5.00pm, Family Carols at the Crib

11.15pm, Midnight Communion

Christmas Day

9.30am, Family Communion
(Children: bring a present)

ST PETER'S HOLYMOORSIDE

Sunday, 18 December 1994

6.00pm, Carol Service (and mince pies)

Christmas Eve

7.30pm, Carols around the tree
in the recreation field)

11.30pm, Midnight Communion

Christmas Day

9.30am, Family Communion
(Children: bring a present)

