

Ploughshare April/May 1993 (Scanned version from the original)

From the Rector

Our new Church Centre, at St. John's, has been in use for four months or so. I, for one, am really appreciating it. It is so flexible, warm, well equipped and appropriate - whatever we seem to use it for.

I'm thinking of three things in particular. We had a Marriage Preparation course, with fourteen couples, there recently, and

The intimacy of the Ken Waddington Lounge helped to produce a lovely, informal atmosphere. Early in March, the amazing World Mission weekend, Bread with Nowt taken out, was based in the centre - fast-moving, wide ranging, multi-media, with varied activities and good food. It was great to be there. For me, the most outstanding occasion so far was the Ash Wednesday evening Communion Service when our Lent course, Praying the Psalms, was launched. There must have been 120 or so present and it was possible to be both corporate (in the round) and in small groups without needing to move. A moving and memorable experience.

Our horizons are being broadened and we have many new possibilities ahead of us. We waited a long time for the Centre -but, thank God, it was worth the wait.

Christopher Frith

ps. There are many opportunities to enter into the very heart of the Christian story at this time of year. From Palm Sunday (complete with donkeys at each of the three churches), through Holy Week (with services each evening), to the glorious celebrations of Easter: please be part of it.

CF

Bread with Nowt Taken Out

"What a great weekend" "Interesting and challenging" "Stimulating sessions on Saturday" "Food for thought and excellent food to eat - what a variety of dishes at the International Buffet!" "I'm glad I don't live in such poor conditions". "Joshua Murie from the Sudan made the news more real being an actual refugee". "Watching Mandy Lines sterilising vegetables in her kitchen gave me a clearer picture of what life is like for them in Paraguay".

Just a few comments from people who came to 'Bread with Nowt Taken Out' - the weekend of 6/7 March 1994 which focused on mission - our call as Christians to care and provide for people in need and to share the good news of Jesus with them.

'Keliopa's Shoes' was a story about people like us but in Sudan who had refugees crowd into their village - what was their response to this need? Joshua Murie, an engineering student in Sheffield, shared his family story - his father tortured before he died in 1989 in Sudan, his brother in Juba in Sudan with no news since December 1991, one sister in N. Kenya and his other sister with his mother in N. Uganda - all in refugee camps.

Videos from Tear Fund, Church Army and Scripture Union showed different areas of need and ways of seeing Jesus. Chris Rankin from SAMS shared his experience of mission at Expo '92 in Spain, while the Lines Link Up video gave up-to-date news of our link missionaries in Paraguay. Bill Andrews from the Bible Society visited on Sunday and brought slides from the Philippines which showed both the poverty and the eagerness of people to read the Bible.

The worship included songs and words from the worldwide church, to remind us that as Christians we are members of one body of different races all called to share in mission - reaching out with God's love to those around us in Chesterfield, Britain and to the ends of the world.

Sheila Pite.

Letter to the Editor

I must confess to being somewhat provoked by the comment on preaching quoted by Christopher in his letter to your last issue, (February/March 1993). It reflects very poorly on those of us who sit in the pews.

The inference seems to be that we sit inert as fledglings in a nest with our mouths wide open waiting for some acceptable morsel to be dropped in. Or, to change the metaphor, that sermons must take the form of pre-packed meals which require no more from us than to be warmed with a few moments of our attention.

Now some of us are fledglings in the faith and we do have difficulties in grasping all that we hear at one go. Nevertheless, it is both unfair and untrue to speak as if the onus rests entirely with the preacher. We ourselves have a great deal of responsibility for getting something out of sermons. The Bible says some very pertinent things to me on this subject.

- 1) **I must genuinely wish to know the Christian faith better and its implications for my daily life.**
I cannot expect to receive what I do not **wish** to receive. It is all too easy to "construct" a gospel which I want to hear because it suits me and my way of thinking; but how far does it correspond to the faith that was once entrusted to the saints" that I **need** to hear (Jude verse 3)? Am I one of those people Jude goes on to talk about? *"godless men, who change the grace of our God into a licence for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Saviour and Lord"*? (Jude verse 4) What do I really want to hear from the pulpit? It seems to me that the first responsibility on our preachers will be at this point. **What** are they feeding us, not how long does the meal last.
- 2) **I must be thoroughly serious about trying to live my daily life 'as God wishes.** There is no 'take it or leave it' involved here. I am accountable to God both now and at that final day. Jesus really puts me on the line in Matthew 7 verse 21: *"Not everyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord' will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven"*. Interestingly enough, Paul starts and finishes his great doctrinal letter to the Roman Christians with this thought. In Chapter 1 verse 5 he speaks of calling people to "to be right. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled". I must bring this hunger to my listening.
- 3) **I must make sure that the 'soil' is prepared for the seed of preaching.** Since the preacher is helping me to hear God's word to me from the Bible, I need to have done some prayerful digging myself. Knowing something of the Bible ourselves, does make a world of difference to the effectiveness of a sermon, as I'm sure many people know. But if the preacher is expounding the unknown to the unknowing, then I'm likely to struggle, I fear. Jesus put it rather potently in Matthew 13 verse 12: "Whoever has will be given more, and he will have abundance; whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him".
- 4) **That I honour those whom God calls to minister the Word and Sacraments.**
Of course our clergy and readers have their limitations, as indeed do we - perhaps not least in my impatience, unforgivingness and pride toward them. I am very unlikely to learn much from them if I think myself so much wiser and more spiritual than they. I must believe that God has placed these people "over us in the Lord" (1 Thess. 5 verse 12), not because they are "wise" or "influential" but because they are "weak" and 'foolish", and for that reason are fit vessels to be filled and used by God (1 Cor. 1 verses 26-29).

Not all of every sermon is going to speak to me, but the amazing thing is how God blesses a ready listener. I readily admit from experience that if a sermon goes flat on me, it is far more likely to be my fault than the preacher's. Jesus was quite right *"He who has ears, let him hear"*. (Matthew 13 verse 43).

David Smith

What's in a Name?

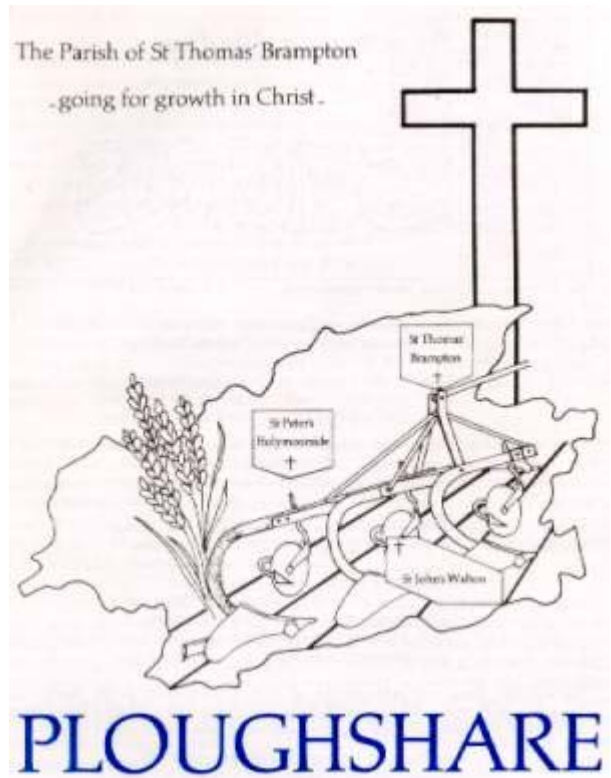
Comment on the new name 'Ploughshare' and front cover of the magazine

You know the feeling when you're choosing the name for a child, that feeling that you've got to get it right, that feeling that the name must be meaningful, representative; that feeling that the name you choose is going to be around for a long time. Well I got that feeling when we hit upon the name "**Ploughshare**" for the church magazine. Would others like it? Was it meaningful in the way we wanted it to be? Did it communicate?

I've lived with the name for four months now and the more I look at Karen's design, the more appropriate it seems to be.

Probably, the first image that you notice is the whole image of harvest which is suggested by the name and the picture: we are all 'wheat and tares together sown', and, according to the seeds of life that we sow, so shall we reap, eventually being harvested ourselves in to God's kingdom.

The parish boundary is a good idea, isn't it? Our parish is actually being ploughed through by the ploughshare of God. Did you know that St. Thomas' parish is really that big?



What about the counter pointing of the parish and all its complex internal institutions, set against the simplicity of the Cross. Life is so complex, difficult and involved, yet looking over all this is the simplicity of the Cross and everything related to it. Christ died to save us....not complicated is it? Awesome may be but not complicated. Remember, Jesus Christ risen from the dead.

If you look closely at the plough, you will find that the tractor, the source of power has been replaced by the Cross and meets it at the link, the steering mechanism where St. Thomas' is outlined. The coulter is the blade that cuts the furrow preparing new ground (St. John's), and the share, which does the heavy work of lifting the turf is, appropriately, St. Peter's! How appropriate that three strong churches should be represented by the three important parts of the most important farming implement in preparation and harvest of a crop.

Note to the overall design, the combination of the man-made item, the ploughshare, and the earth produced item, the corn; both God-given to supply our needs.

A name really is so important, it should always represent that thing to which it is applied. I think "Ploughshare" is most appropriate for what we are trying to do with our magazine-to break new ground, sow new seeds and harvest new crops. It is a trademark, a symbol and like ICTHUS, it conveys an important message.

Keith Morgan.

The Missile that became a Church

The Baptists in Kobryn desperately needed construction materials to build a church. So late last year the former Soviet Republic of Byelorussia granted them permission to demolish a nearby Soviet Army barrack and missile silo. The salvaged bricks, cement blocks and structural steel could be used in construction of the congregation's first permanent building since it was formed in 1925.

That's when the story took a strange twist. While breaking down the site, volunteer church construction workers discovered an empty World War II artillery shell sealed within a brick wall. Rolled up inside the shell was a 42 year old letter, written in Russian.

"These bricks came from Polish Orthodox and Russian Orthodox churches," the letter explained. "If the missile complex is ever torn down, we ask that the bricks be used to build churches." It was signed by several construction workers, apparently Christians.

The churches had been destroyed on the orders of Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin after he seized nearly 200 miles of Poland during World War II.

Today, once again, the scarcity of materials has caused people to look for existing buildings that can be pulled apart. Now, however, it is the Christians who are taking bricks from the fallen dictatorship.

Polish Canadian missionary, George Bajenski, who returned to North America with the story said, *"It's beating swords into ploughshares, except in this case, the ploughshare was first beaten into a sword, then back to a ploughshare."*

"...and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Isaiah 2:4

Little Fishes

This is a group aimed at Mums with young children, from new born babies up to school age. We meet once a month, normally on the third Wednesday. Meetings are from 2.pm until 3pm in the St. Johns Church Centre lounge.

Each month our theme is based around a well known story from the Bible, with games, singings colouring and other activities. We finish with tea, coffee, orange and a chat.

Our team consists of Brian and Barbara Porter, Sheila Turner, Julia Potter and Sue Oliver. We welcome people of all denominations, including those who are not regular churchgoers. Why not give us a try, and bring a friend.

Sue Oliver*

The Apostles –Who Were They?

Jesus chose twelve men to be his closest friends and companions? What were they like, and what happened to them after the Resurrection?

Thomas

His name occurs in all the lists of The Twelve, (Mt. 10:3; Mk. 3:18; Lk. 6:15; Acts 1:13), being linked with Matthew in the Mt. 10:3, and with Philip in Acts 1:13.

'Thomas' is Aramaic, meaning 'twin', and was not a name. John uses the Greek version, 'Didymus' (Jn. 11:16; 20:24; 21:2). We do not know whose twin he was. Syriac Christians appear to have known him as Judas Thomas (ie. Judas the twin), so perhaps he was called 'The Twin' to distinguish him from Judas Iscariot?

It is only in John's Gospel that we find any personal references to Thomas. When Jesus decided to run the risk of returning to Judea, and face possible death, Thomas' comment, *"Let us also go, that we may die with him"*. (Jn. 11:16), reveals a pessimistic, but realistic, outlook and intense loyalty and bravery.

When Jesus assumed the disciples knew the way to the Father, Thomas is humble enough to openly confess his ignorance of Jesus' meaning (Jn. 14:5).

The chief incident for which he has been remembered, and for which he has been called '**Doubting Thomas**', is his disbelief in the Resurrection. He missed the appearance of Jesus to the other apostles (Jn. 20:24) and said, *"Unless I*

see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put m hand into his side, I will not believe it." (Jn. 20:25. A week later Jesus appeared to the eleven apostles and Save Thomas the evidence he had asked for. Thomas' response, *"My Lord and my God"* (Jn. 20:26-28) marks the climax of the fourth Gospel.

Thomas was one of the seven apostles who met Jesus on the seashore after the Resurrection (Jn. 21:2).

It has been said that Thomas is portrayed as a deeply devoted, but somewhat dull disciple whose lack of understanding provided Jesus with opportunities for further explanation; but when he understood he responded with tremendous loyalty.

His subsequent history is uncertain. A fourth century historian, Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea, states that Thomas worked as an evangelist in Parthia. Later traditions say that he went to India and founded seven churches at Malabat.

Thomas is recognised as the founder of the Syriac Malabar Christian Church. He is said to have been killed by a spear in Madras, India, and his body buried at Mylapore.

Judas, Son of James

This Judas is called Thaddaeus in the first two Gospels (Mt . 10:3; Mk. 3:18) and Judas son of James in the other two lists of apostles (Lk. 6:16; Acts 1:13). Thaddaeus means 'one who praises', or 'Man of heart', and was probably an endearment. The only mention of Judas, apart from the lists of apostles, was when he asked Jesus a question as he was teaching them about the coming Holy Spirit On. 14:22).

Fourth century tradition tells us that Judas had a successful evangelistic ministry in Mesopotamia and Turkey, before being killed with arrows at Ararat.

Keith Chappell.

Jeremiah 2:13

"My people have committed two sins:
They have forsaken me,
the spring of living water,
and have dug their own cisterns,
broken cisterns that cannot hold water"

In order to dig our own messy man-made wells, our Lord says we must first forsake Him, "the spring of living water".

Many of us believe that we are searching thirstily for God, rather than forsaking Him. So unrecognisable are the wells we dig that we appear to dig them with our hands tied behind our backs, the wells miraculously appearing before us with no visible means of effort behind their appearance. Such wells take the unlikely guise of: Christian service, self-sacrifice and even holiness, all of which show forth our own reflection and gape breathtakingly before us, smiling, "Drink of me and all will be well with you - you can't possibly do any more to please Him?"

The first problem is that the work and virtues of Christ are so utterly beautiful that we may drink greedily from them and forget from whose source they originally gushed.

The second problem is that Jesus does not scream or shout to claim our wilful attention; when he calls "Come unto me", it is with the "still small voice of the Shepherd"- and we must recognise the Shepherd to hear it. This is why we are called to be disciples once regenerated; if we know our Master as Job did, then the saccharin sweetness of works and virtues or the bitter gall of affliction cannot possibly dull the tastebuds against the refreshing taste of the "spring of living water".

Is your road at present a dust-worn desert track, where you are parched for the "spring of living water"? Do your good works emit the stale smell of your own endeavours or the fresh fragrance of Christ?

Listen for the tender murmur of your Saviour and turn towards Him - therein lies the well of salvation, and in it God provides the life which gushes abundant and whose aroma is forever unailing.

S. Lowrie.

Use Your Purchasing Power to maintain fair trade with the Third World

Christian Aid is working for better conditions in the Third World through their "Trade For Change" campaign.

How would you feel if you were working just as hard today as ten years ago but earning a third less? That's exactly what has happened to the poorest communities and countries of the Third World.

For many people in developing nations it does not matter how hard they work, they just keep getting poorer - thanks to international terms of trade.

So why are they so badly affected by the international trading system - and why are the prices they are paid for their goods and labour so low?

Let us consider one instance: In Uganda, one of the world's poorest countries, coffee bushes lie neglected. The reason being that in 1989 international coffee prices plummeted, falling by a third in just one week. For Uganda, the price slump was a catastrophe - coffee provided 97 percent of its foreign exchange earnings. For the country's many small-scale coffee farmers it was a disaster - it was not even worthwhile harvesting the crop on which their livelihoods depended.

How can I help? You might ask. In the U.K., a consortium of fair trade organisations Traidcraft, Equal Exchange, Oxfam Trading and Twin Trading have launched **Cafedirect**, a filter coffee which tastes good and benefits Third World producers. They are paid a premium of 50 percent above the world market price and the benefits go directly to the producers and their communities.

Cafedirect is available through the organisations listed above, through Christian Aid and some supermarkets. So next time you go shopping ask for Cafedirect.

Also in the future look out for other goods with the Fairtrade mark: This will be a guarantee that they have been traded fairly.

Oh! And look out for Christian Aid Week 10th - 15th May.

Bernard Blanksby

Link Missionaries –Andy and Mandy Lines

Anyone visiting St. John's Church Centre on 6th March for our Mission week-end would have had the opportunity to hear and see Andrew and Mandy on audio and visual tapes, and therefore realise how very much appreciated are our prayers and letters. They have now returned from holiday and have a very busy and worrying time ahead, Andrew beginning a new CALEB course and Alex beginning life at the "big" school so our continued prayers and support will be needed even more and we feel sure our churches will keep the link ever strong.

Richard and Dorothy Banks