

Ploughshare April/May 1994 (Scanned version from the original)

From the Rector

It is good to welcome **Brian Porter** back. We, especially folk at St John's, have missed him. He has served at Holy Trinity for five months and his ministry there has undoubtedly been appreciated greatly. It is not easy suddenly to change direction and to be working with completely different people. We are so grateful to Brian that he has been willing to do this. He and Barbara now look forward to being able to get "stuck into" life at St John's again and they deserve our prayers and support.

On Saturday 14 May. **Sheila Pite and Judith Henderson** are to be ordained into the priesthood. After all the anguish and all the fuss, it will be a momentous occasion. We rejoice with Sheila and Judith and will welcome the (slightly) increased scope of their already wide-ranging ministries.

I often get cross that the Church of England has made a bad choice of words. For instance, it calls its buildings "churches". So, it is not surprising that folk think that the church is a building rather than people, the people of God. I can't for the life of me think why that happened!

In the same way we call our chosen leaders "priests" and I find this even more confusing. Priests belong to Old Testament times: they were responsible for sacrifices to atone for sins; they were intermediaries between people and God. When Jesus came, he fulfilled the role completely. He is the great High Priest and there is no longer a need for any other priest.

True, every Christian is described in the New Testament as a priest in the sense that we all represent God to the world around and represent the world (in prayer) before God. The word priest is not used of church leaders. The Greek word is usually translated "presbyter" or "elder" and I personally am much happier to use those words, when referring to Ministers of the Gospel who are responsible for God's Word and His Sacraments.

Anyway, I have been able to get that hobby-horse off my chest, so to speak! Much more important, it will be great to have the ministries of Sheila and Judith properly authenticated and recognised. As far as most church members are concerned, the main change is that they will be able to preside at the Eucharist. Within a month or two, that will probably seem very normal and we will forget all this time when they haven't been doing so.

I am to have a sabbatical for **three months**. About two years ago, the PCC encouraged me to do so and the Bishop has kindly granted it. The return of Brian and the ordination of Judith and Sheila are certainly timely!

I am due to start the break on April 12 and will return to my role as Rector on July 12. The aim is to be **thoroughly refreshed**. Clergy sabbaticals have three ingredients:

1. Retreat, for quiet meditation and prayer.
2. Study. I am hoping to immerse myself mainly in the Gospel of John, as well as doing some general reading.
3. Relaxation. Pam and I are starting with a holiday, to which we look forward greatly.

I plan then to work from 9am to 5pm, five days a week rather than the 8.30am to 10:30pm, six days a week which I am used to. I am encouraged to develop a new skill, not related to work, and I hope to do something vaguely artistic.

I guess that three months will seem very short, but I am really grateful to have this opportunity.

I have every confidence that our churches will continue to thrive. The staff all have clear responsibilities, Matters related to St Thomas' should be advised to Sheila, St John's to Brian, St Peter's to Judith. Sheila will be responsible for co-ordination, working closely with Philip and the Wardens. Julia, my secretary, will be dealing with my mail. All administrative matters should be directed to the office.

Before all this, we shall be celebrating Holy Week and Easter. Dwelling in the most important events in history can be truly life changing. I pray that it will be, for many of us.

Christopher Frith

Link Missionaries Andy and Mandy Lines

1994 is the year when Andrew and Mandy Lines will return to the U.K. on furlough, and even though it will be in November or December we are sure they are already looking forward to being with their families and renewing old friendships in their link churches.

The old saying goes "The last mile home is the longest," so let us at St. Thomas' uphold them in prayer and keep them in our thoughts. Over the next few months please continue the flow of letters.

As with all mission societies, finance is a major concern, and one simple way to swell SAMS' funds is by the collection of used postage stamps which we will be pleased to accept and forward to the Society.

Richard & Dorothy Banks

The Ordination of Women

The ordination of women began with a wartime emergency for pastoral needs. The Rev Li Tim Oi was priested in 1944 by Bishop R O Hall of Hong Kong in a small southern China city. That decision caused much controversy, and Li Tim Oi ceased to act as a priest.

The 1968 Lambeth Conference asked the member churches to study the question of the ordination of women to the priesthood and to report its findings to the Anglican Consultative Council. Very little had been received by way of response before the ACC, at its first meeting in 1971, resolved by 24 votes to 22 that if a bishop (acting with the approval of his Province) ordained a woman to the priesthood "his action will be acceptable to this Council: and that this Council will use its good offices to encourage all Provinces of the Anglican Communion to continue in communion with these dioceses". Thus in 1971 the first two legal ordinations were held in Hong Kong. What next followed were illegal ordinations, "the Philadelphia 11" in the USA in 1974, later regularised by the General Convention when the Province of the USA adopted the legislation to ordain women to all orders in 1976.

It is estimated that over 1,400 women serve as priests in the Anglican Communion. Of these over 1,000 are in the Episcopal Church of the United States of America (ECUSA). Apart from Canada (158), New Zealand (120) and Uganda (36), no other Anglican Church had more than 10 women priests in September 1992.

The Anglican Communion, as of December 1992, has one diocesan bishop, in New Zealand, an English woman, Penelope Jamieson, and two suffragan bishops in the USA: Barbara Harris, who was the first woman to be consecrated a bishop in the Communion, and Jane Dixon, who was consecrated suffragan bishop of Washington DC in November 1992. Now also, Victoria Matthews was elected suffragan bishop of Toronto, Canada in January 1994.

In the Church of England these are significant dates:

1975 Motion that "there are no fundamental objections to the ordination of women to the priesthood" carried. Motion to remove "legal and other barriers" lost in General Synod.

1987 First women deacons ordained in Holy Orders

November 1992 Final approval in General Synod to the ordination of women in the priesthood. This legislation was then passed by Parliament and returned to General Synod for a final agreement in **February 1993**

Judith and Sheila our Curates write:

We want to invite all members of the parish to share in the celebration tea at St John's Church Centre, Walton, following our Ordination Service to the priesthood. This is on Saturday, 14th May and will be from 5pm 8pm. The service is in Tideswell Parish Church at 2.30 and we are sorry that we cannot invite you all to be there but you can watch the FA Cup Final instead! We are inviting members of our families and friends from our previous parishes and elsewhere, so we hope that you will join us all and make the tea a very special celebration.

On Sunday 15th May, we have each invited a friend to preach at the Communion Service, when we will preside for the first time. Revd David Gregg, former Principal of Romsey House Bible College, Cambridge and now Vicar near Aylesbury, will be at St Peter's and Revd Mike Butterworth from Oak Hill College, North London, will be at St Thomas'.

We are looking forward to continuing our ministry with you all and ask that you will pray for us and for all the many other women who in these months from March to July are being ordained as priests.

Judith Henderson and Sheila Pite

What Does It Mean?

Kath Steer continues her series investigating what lies behind well-known Bible concepts

The Eye of a Needle

**"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."
Mark 10:25**

Samuel Schorr, a Christian Jew of the last century explains:

"Cities are pierced with several two-leaved gates of iron which are always closed from sunset to sunrise. For convenience a smaller door is fixed into the larger one - this is called the 'Needle's Eye'. It is used mainly for officials to pass through during that time. But, what of the camel?"

Samuel Schorr as a boy witnessed this scene when a schoolboy. "It was Friday, and being the Moslem's Sunday, all gates were closed at noon to allow soldiers to march to the Mosque for prayer." The author attended school inside the city.

On one occasion when returning home for a meal he reached the city gate too late, which then meant an amusing hour among the crowd of Arabs gathered there. Suddenly an officer knocked at the Needle's Eye, and after much questioning was allowed to enter the city. But - before the door could be closed, a 'fella' suddenly began to push his camel through the Needle's Eye. The camel, having its head, long neck, and front legs in, just refused to go any further. Enjoying the fun, several men began to force the camel by pushing and beating, to the sound of much groaning on the part of the camel. Amid cheers and laughter, the crowd won!

The camel was carrying no burden!

It was obvious to those who listened to Jesus (but not to us) that all burdens must be removed from the camel before attempting to push it through the Needle's Eye.

However, the point which Jesus sought to point out to His followers was not that a rich man cannot enter the kingdom of God, but that anyone who trusts in riches for entry will find it to be an impossibility. Thinking on this we remember David's words, "If riches increase, set not your heart upon them" (Psalm 62:10)

Nevertheless, lest we should imagine 'riches' as being the only thing which would burden and block entry through "The Straight Gate", we hasten to add that anything which becomes an obsession so that we live for that alone, can become a burden which will block entry.

We therefore consider the words of Jesus spoken at a later time "Lay up treasure in Heaven" Matthew 6:20&21 and 19:21 and "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Matthew 6:33.

Hope for Romania Appeal

My heart overflows with grateful thanks for the wonderful response that we received for our Bosnia/Romania appeal. Our Lord has really blessed this work. Twelve churches from the Chesterfield area responded to this appeal and twelve supermarkets willingly provided collection points where donations of food, medical supplies and toiletries could be left. The appeal was a huge success and a tremendous blessing, especially for the food.

A large consignment went to Bosnia via 'Organisation Christmas Child', (Wrexham, North Wales) organised by Julie Jordan-Brown and Jane Simmonds, and the remainder adequately met the needs of the Romanian trip in November. Six vehicles - three from the Hope Valley and three from Ashbourne, led by David Fox and John Stanton made the journey. My husband Les volunteered as a co-driver for this journey. Over £3,000 was eventually raised for the specialised medical and fuel costs - a real blessing.

The whole journey was committed to God in prayer and, no matter what difficulty arose, whether it be mechanical failure or weather conditions, there was always help at hand. Our Lord met every need.

Through an appeal for a volunteer to move some hospital beds from Leicester up to Derbyshire, our Lord has linked us up with Rodica Bradbury, a Romanian-born pensioner aged 72, who urgently needs to get thirty eight tonnes of medical supplies, food and clothing over to the poor and sick people on the Russian border of Romania. There are thousands of cancer victims, lepers and gangrene sufferers who cannot afford medical treatment. **Imagine living a life of torture because you have no money!** Rodica has appealed to us for help as she has no money for fuel costs and no vehicle. All the money she receives in Leicester goes into a hospital fund. She has pledged to spend the rest of her life helping these forgotten victims and building a hospital.

Carleton Badger and myself are planning to make the journey with her to see what conditions are really like. We have launched an appeal here in Chesterfield to support the journey and help complete the hospital.

We urgently need committed link-workers who are willing to collect supplies and fund raise. If you are interested please contact me. We also welcome donations of money no matter how small. Please pray for these people and the work and see what our Lord has to say to you personally.

Remember the words of our Lord Jesus, "**it is more blessed to give than to receive**".

Thank you in the name of our Lord Jesus.

Pamela Gratton.

Book Review 'Going Home' (What to do when somebody dies)

by Michael Cole, Vicar of All Saints, Woodford Green Essex, Highland Books, Paperback £3.99

As we approach Easter and think about the death of Jesus, maybe this is a good time to think about our own mortality.

In our society, death is a taboo subject and is spoken of in whispers. In this very readable book, Going Home, Michael Cole says "A right attitude to death will bring a right attitude to life and a right attitude to ourselves will bring us a right attitude to God and to the Lord Jesus. When these things are true we can look upon death as "going home".

It is full of examples of personal experience and the experience of those he has come into contact with in his ministry. It is easy to read and full of helpful and practical advice. He looks at bereavement from an adult and a child's point of view, how we can be prepared for death, making of wills, saying 'goodbye'. He tries to give helpful, reassuring explanations to our questions and doubts and succeeds in giving encouragement and hope.

This book is written, not just for those who have faced bereavement but also for those who have a concern about the future, about heaven and eternity.

Michael Cole's prayer is that none of us are fearful of going home.'

Jackie Bradley

Was this the Winter of Discontent?

Not for Brian Porter nor Holy Trinity

On the last Sunday in September 1993 as I prepared to lead worship at Holy Trinity Church, I stood at the front of the church looking at a congregation, most of whom I had not met until that morning. I remember asking the question: 'Here I am newly arrived in your midst, what aspect of your life together is likely to encourage me most during the months ahead.' Their answer was clear: love, they all said, our love for one another through God's love for us.

So it proved in practice right from that first Sunday, I was welcomed warmly and very quickly drawn into the life of the parish: painting and decorating at the Church hall. (within a fortnightly, visiting and enjoying fellowship at the various housegroups which meet week by week around Chesterfield and in everything being encouraged more than being an encourager.

Perhaps the most memorable aspect of these months at Holy Trinity is the great enthusiasm of the people there for the Bible. God's Word is honoured; beautifully read in church; avidly followed during sermons; diligently searched in house groups and at prayer meetings and so obviously well known by so many. Out of this love of scripture flows a freedom in prayer.

As I have reflected on this, there does seem to be a dynamic of prayer that as we pray back the scriptures together, we find we are listening to God at the deepest level of our hearts and I have enjoyed the privilege of rediscovering the joy of being drawn deep into the presence of God simply by listening to others praying in this way.

Opportunities to share in a wide variety of informal activities during the Winter have been a delight. Monthly Wednesday Fellowship meetings (Prayer and Praise to us) at the Institute have been good times of learning together.

On another level, the parish production of the pantomime - Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (at least one was 6'-4") was brilliant and had the audience rolling in aisles, especially at the sight of the ladies of the parish (high kicking?) Chorus line! Everyone who took part was clear that the hard slog of preparation had drawn them closer together in a way that truly complemented the more spiritual activities in the life of the Church family.

These months have been something of an emotional roller coaster: being removed from St Thomas' and St John's, becoming deeply involved with and committed to a group of people who are holding on faithfully until a new leader appears, and now, again being removed as they continue to wait. There are so many unresolved aspects in this whole episode that it is not possible to say 'mission accomplished!

For me the next questions are how far have St Thomas' and St John's moved on in my absence and how long will it take to catch up?

Perhaps we all need to turn back to scripture for reassurance. In my farewell letter to Holy Trinity I quoted from Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians: *'the God who calls you is faithful and he will do it.'* (1 Thess.5 24)

Can I encourage you to continue to pray for our brothers and sisters at Holy Trinity as they hold onto this promise.

Brian Porter

Thank God for our Retired Clergy

Three delightful and willing clergy are spending their retirement locally. They and their wives are all valued members of our congregations and they help us out frequently by leading services. Without their assistance it would not have been possible for Brian Porter to be loaned to Holy Trinity to help out during their long vacancy.

Canon John Rollinson and his wife **Evelyn** have been with us since 1981. John was ordained in 1949 and has served parishes in the Diocese of Derby. He is a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists and his playing has delighted us on many occasions, even on the little organ at St John's! They have 2 sons, 3 daughters & 12 grandchildren and 1 great grandchild.

The Rev Geoffrey Wilbourne and his wife **Eileen** are also natives of Chesterfield. They joined us in 1992. Geoffrey was ordained in 1962, having previously served in the Church Army, and they have worked in different parishes in the York Diocese. Their son, David, is chaplain to the Archbishop of York.

The Rev Sam Cartwright and **Elsie** his wife have joined us recently from the Manchester Diocese. They used to be in the same Deanery as Christopher in the 1980s. Once a painter and decorator, Sam was a minister in the Free Church of England for 13 years before being ordained in the Church of England in 1972. Their son, Brian, lives in our parish, with his wife and family.

We are so grateful to have them all with us. A warning: as the wives all have names beginning with 'E', take care not to muddle them up and pair them with the wrong husbands!

Cold Comfort Farm? –Too Comfortable

"This is nice, isn't it?" I thought. I had been a worshipping member of St Thomas' Brampton for nearly two years and I was comfortable. Therein lay the problem. I was too comfortable. I realised that I was slowly settling into a tradition of church life many people far wiser than I had warned against. After analysis, the cure for the problem seemed so simple.

Try something new.

I needed a different experience to shake me from my cosy existence. After prayer, I decided that God had laid me aside in favour of more worthy causes. Then in true God style it came out of the blue.

"Piers, I wonder if you could help us?" Being me, (curious), I enquired how I could help.

It transpired that one of the Pathfinder leaders could not make it to a training weekend run by CPAS just down the road in Swanwick. Before I knew it, I was there and feeling slightly lost. There were so many people there. It was great to know that the vast majority, if not all, were Christians.

"Now then lad!" exclaimed a voice belonging to a character from Brookside. The voice was actually Les from Stockport whom I once met at a party. With the thought that I had at least one friend in the thousands(?) the world brightened up.

Then worship started. It was so refreshing to hear the band playing. I think that New Wine and others do an excellent job in the leading of our worship, but I am sure you will agree it is an experience to hear a new style of playing.

The weekend was split into two halves, one for CYFA leaders and one for Pathfinder leaders. Three main themes were presented for each. As I went as a Pathfinder leader I shall deal with these. There were Pathfinders in school, Pathfinders in Church and Pathfinders in society. These seminars were very thought provoking and made me examine my thoughts towards the younger end of the congregation.

I also attended two workshops, one of which was aptly entitled "Surviving as a leader in the first twelve months"!

In all the weekend was a very challenging time for me. I think that the Lord may be leading me towards youth leadership so I have enrolled as a member of the Pathfinders team and if all goes well, I hope to be a good leader and share my faith in a practical and interesting way.

The Pathfinder age group are halfway between children and adults, and therefore, require treating suitably. I have been told that they are probably the most challenging of groups to lead but , after all, I was seeking a challenge!

Put your faith in the Lord and see what he does with you!

Piers Oldham

Thieves in the Night (1 Thessalonians 5:1-11)

The 2nd coming and day of judgement are not an optional extra - they should affect our whole outlook, and how we live.

This was the theme and teaching of the Church Pastoral Aid Society training weekend for CYFA and Pathfinder leaders at Swanwick in February, attended by 4 youth group leaders from St Thomas'.

There were teaching sessions, seminars, workshops and times of worship, covering all sorts of issues to do with working with young people. It was good to meet with others, to encourage each other and to exchange ideas.

Out of the whole weekend, 3 particular ideas have stayed with me and inspired me:

- 1) That sometimes in the church we behave like members of a rather select yacht club, while we are called to man a life-boat station, going out to reach those who will die unless they hear about Jesus.
- 2) That Christ's essential message is relevant to all people in all cultures (including "youth culture!"),
- 3) That the well-being (spiritual and/or physical) of every member of the body of the church is the concern of every member. Caring for each other should mean getting involved and is a 2 way process.

These may seem disjointed ideas, but so much was covered at the weekend.

Perhaps individually we should ask ourselves how much we would be taken by surprise by the coming of the Day of the Lord.

Rosie Welch