

Ploughshare April/May 2001
(Scanned version of selected articles from the original)

From The Rector

A special loved one has died. The family are gathered in the sitting room with cups of tea, reminiscing. Occasionally there is laughter, occasionally there are tears and sometimes both come at once. And there am I, amazingly privileged, sharing in something of the experience, seeking in some way to "share the love of Jesus" who Himself understands and shares all the emotions.

We need to plan the funeral. When the person who has died was part of one of our Churches, that is a particular joy. Three St Thomas' members have died in recent weeks and one particular approach has been common to each family. They have asked for a short, private ceremony at the graveside or the crematorium where they can say their unhurried farewells. Then we have gone to St Thomas' for a service of Thanksgiving, to which many have come.

The services for Jill Robinson and Horace Totterdell were both amazing, true celebrations both of their lives and of God's promise of eternal life for all who trust the Lord Jesus. As I write, something very similar is planned for Wilf Bates.

The advantage of this approach - which certainly wouldn't suit every family is the opportunity for grief to be privately expressed by those who were closest, and the greater feeling of thanksgiving and celebration to follow in the company of any who wish to come. The disadvantage may, however, be the absence of a coffin at the Thanksgiving Service as friends and acquaintances seek to come to terms with what has happened.

The wonderful fact is that Jesus has overcome death. Good Friday and Easter Day together have completely transformed death. As the Apostle Paul wrote, Jesus Christ "has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel". That is why a funeral service can become a celebration.

Christopher Frith

This is my Story

Claire Redhead describes how her relationship with God has been developing in the face of much testing.

I started attending St Thomas' in 1986 after I had been to a family service. I had been brought up with a Congregational background and had lapsed in my teens. I decided to attend church because, although I was happily married to Charlie and had two little girls Kay and Mary, and life was going well, I had begun to question life, and how one day I would die, or someone close to me. If that was the case, then what was this all about? Having felt welcome at St Thomas' and speaking to other members of the congregation I soon realised that all these questions could be answered if I got to know God and talked to other people who knew Him. I joined the confirmation group and soon my Christian life became an important part of my life.

Sadly, in November 1991, tragedy did strike us. Charlie (39) was killed in an accident at his work. We were all devastated and it was a dreadful time in our lives. In the days afterwards my faith was my lifeline and I turned to God to uphold us. With two daughters 11 and 13 to comfort I was glad I could feel strong, helped of course by God and wonderful friends. However, grief throws so many emotions at us and my faith was really tested. Logic and faith went out of the window. After feeling grateful to have a strong faith to turn to I began to feel angry and let down, not just for myself but for Charlie who had missed so much of his life and seeing his daughters grow up, and

for the girls to be left without their Dad. What good had it done us? Of course being a Christian doesn't make us immune to death, but I can say that 10 years later!

For a long time I turned away from God, and St Thomas'. I felt my faith had gone for good, and tried to get on with my life. However, there were some blessings in the form of two more daughters, Chloe and Amy. Through this time I would be thanking God for each new gift and yet declaring I didn't really have much time for God. I seemed to want it both ways. I became very aware that no matter how hard I tried to get away, God was going to hold on tight. He had started something He was going to finish!

I began to pray with more feeling, to listen and to stop feeling so angry. I was soon feeling a need to rebuild my faith, but it wasn't enough on my own as I missed my church life and the friends I had at St Thomas'. I also wanted to bring my younger daughters along so they could learn about Jesus and get to know other Christians. Chloe is a regular attender at 6.30pm, and is enjoying it very much.

I have such reassurance that, since being tested by such a sad event, God will never leave me or give up on me throughout my life, and even though in the future I will be faced with testing times, God will be there. That feels very good. The words of Psalm 121, were and are a comfort to me, and sum up how I feel.

PSALM 121

I raise my eyes toward the hills. Whence shall my help come?
My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.
He will not allow your foot to slip; your Keeper will never slumber nor sleep.
Behold, the Keeper of Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.
The Lord is your Keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand.
The sun shall not smite you by day, nor the moon by night.
The Lord will keep you from all harm; He will preserve your soul.
The Lord will shield your going out and your coming in from now on for evermore.

Claire Redhead

What is Prayer?

Prayer is to be absorbed in God whom we love and who loves us. God's motive in making us was love. His greatest longing is that we should get to know him, come to love him, enjoy his company and know what he has planned for our lives. And when we talk to God and listen to Him, head to head, heart to heart, when we are with Him in life, this is prayer.

All of us at some time in our lives have prayed. We usually pray in times of need or crisis, perhaps as the plane takes off, or going into an exam, or as we go for that operation, prayer is never far from our lips even if we don't quite know what to say -like the two men who found themselves in a field being chased by a bull. As they were running for the fence it soon became evident that they were not going to make it so one man shouted to the other "we've had it! Nothing can save us - say a prayer. Quick!!"
The other shouted back "I don't know what to say, I don't have a prayer for this occasion" "Never mind. The bull is catching up with us. Any prayer will do."
"Okay then, erfor what we are about to receive, may the Lord make us truly thankful"

Most of the time, most of us don't live in crisis and so don't pray at all.

But prayer is not just a set of words, a formula, a method - it's a way of life, it's a way of living which means living in a relationship with God. And like any relationship in order for it to grow it needs time, attention and commitment. It means listening to each other, as well as talking, it really is about spending time with each other. And God loves that He loves spending time with us, He loves talking with us and listening to us because He loves us.

It sounds so easy doesn't it and yet so many of us can find times of prayer difficult. It's at those times that the Holy Spirit is there to help us to pray, to inspire us and even prays for us when we just are not able to do so ourselves. Prayer is about living a life which enables us to come to the Father, through the Son by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Let us spend time with God; make prayer a priority because it means making God a priority. He longs for His relationship with us to deepen. He longs for us to get to know Him better and to receive all that He has for our lives and to fulfil all that we are meant to be in Him and do for Him. Prayer is essential in life because it is life itself, living a life in relationship with God.

Petra Owen

Horace Totterdale

After many years of heart trouble, Horace Totterdell died in January [2001]. Here are extracts from tributes by two of our Readers.

Horace and Joyce were always seen together at St Thomas' gatherings (except World Mission Committee and Men's Breakfast!) She was his beloved wife and constant companion. When they came to us seven years ago, most of Horace's service in Christ was completed. I treasure personal impressions of his last few years: love for his Lord, practical love, honest and straight speaking, cheerfulness, courage, commitment, fine craftsmanship, involvement in the Chesterfield Tsumeb Association (Horace loved Africa). He was a great reader and writer to the end, a much-loved husband and father, grandfather and friend.

I thank my God for every memory of him.

Ray Hearn

My friendship with Horace sprang from our membership of St Thomas' World Mission Committee. He encouraged us to consider carefully our policies, seeking to benefit from the accumulated knowledge and experience of those who had gone before. He once said something like this to me: that all the great Missionary Leaders to whom he had looked up in his earlier years had gone off and died. Now the work was left to us inadequate sinners to carry it on. In fact, the World Mission Committee and other did benefit greatly from his own knowledge and experience. Horace had been General Secretary of the Africa Evangelical Fellowship for many years and he knew the importance of teamwork. He was a great believer in the biblical idea that the "sending" church should maintain its links with and its prayerful support for mission workers who have been sent out from its midst.

John Goodacre

Chesterfield (Derbyshire) is twinned with Tsumeb (Namibia)

The "twinning" was established in 1993 by the Chesterfield Borough Council and the Tsumeb Municipality. Namibia is in South West Africa and has borders with South Africa, Botswana and Angola.

Churches Together in Chesterfield supports an Old Age Home in Tsumeb, which is managed by the Tsumeb Churches. From Chesterfield £8 a month supports one resident. St Thomas' has sent £200 a year for the last three years. At present there are 15 - 20 residents in the home. While most elderly people in Namibia live with relatives, the home provides for those who have nowhere else to go.

St Thomas', Brampton, is linked with the evangelical Lutheran Church in the Nomtsoub Township of Tsumeb. The pastor is the Rev. Jesaja Nashongo, who began his ministry at the church in 1999. The Church address is - PO Box 518, Tsumeb, Namibia. Mr Eino Hauuanga, an elder of the church, is one of the senior staff of the town local government; he has visited Chesterfield.

Helena Mazuva, also a member of the Church, is a Tsumeb Youth Worker, who visited Chesterfield in October 2000. Earlier in the year Helena won the title of Namibia's "Miss Millennium". She is the Administration Secretary of the Tsumeb Community Skills Development Centre, where unemployed young people learn crafts and other skills to enable them to provide for themselves and their families. Helena is also involved with the children and young people at the church. St Thomas' young people could write to Helena at PO Box 969, Tsumeb, Namibia.

In 1998' the Tsubeb Copper Mine and Smelter, the town's main employer, was closed due to financial failure. This resulted in unemployment and a great reduction in the income of the Municipality. Many have moved to their ancestral homes or to places of potential employment. There is a possibility that the smelter will be operational again, but the facilities need considerable repair and only a few of the workers would be employed.

PRAYER FOR TSUMEB

- Pray for Jesaja, the new minister, that he may know how to care for the church members and faithfully teach the Word of God.
- • Namibia has high unemployment; pray that the Municipality and the Churches will work together to develop new industries. Tsumeb is the gateway to the famous Etosha Game Park, 30 miles to the West. Tourism is therefore open to expansion in the town. Pray that the Smelter will be a viable project.
- The Evangelical Church in Nomtsoub has a good number of children and young people. Confirmation is a step on their spiritual journey, but some stop attending soon after they have been confirmed. Pray that a programme for older teenagers will strengthen their faith in the Lord.
- Pray for Helena Mazuva and others involved in the Skills Development Centre, and that young people will find work as a result of the training.
- Pray for the Committee of the Tsumeb Churches that manages the Old Age Home, and for the matrons who give daily care to the residents. Pray for the completion of the building work that will enable more residents to be accommodated.

Pray that more organisations and individuals in Chesterfield will take a practical interest in Tsumeb, a town that needs friendship and support.

John Goodacre