

Ploughshare August/September 1995

(Scanned version from the original)

From the Rector

Someone made a hurtful comment the other day. It probably wasn't meant to hurt, but I found myself feeling offended. Then I remembered an article I wrote for a church magazine back in 1975! I believe its contents are relevant to many of us and so I am recycling it 20 years on:

"Mrs So and So hasn't been in church lately, has she?"

"No. I hear she's all offended....."

Conversations like this can often be heard in churches. It's not surprising, for churches are made up of people, and people are always offending other people.

It's not surprising, but it is wrong. It's wrong to give offence unnecessarily (and I am aware how easily I do this.) It is just as wrong to take offence.

We are slow to realise this, but **it is thoroughly unchristian to be offended**, no matter what anybody says or does to us. In many cases Christian standards are completely opposite to the world's. For instance, Jesus tells us to love our enemies. Incredible - almost!

When I hear that I have offended someone at our church, I am obviously distressed, especially if I have been in the wrong. But I realise that it is inevitable. Think of all the people who took offence at our Lord. He told his followers to expect just the same thing. *"Woe to you,"* He said, *"When everyone thinks well of you"* and those words are so true. The one vital thing is to please Him, and nothing that anyone else says must distract us from this.

When I feel myself getting offended, I have to stop myself. A quick "radio" prayer is called for: **"Lord, help me resist this temptation."** I hope you will try it too.

Christopher Frith

A Day of Shalom and Prayer

A group of sixty people of all ages came from Skegby, Ashover, Matlock Bath, Mansfield, North Wingfield, Crich, Central Methodist and our own parish to St John's Church for this CPAS event. The feedback slips provided us with great encouragement and the following notes are, we hope, an indication of how special the day was in achieving a time of peace with God, and sharing with others.

MARGARET ABBOTT: The day was spent with many thought provoking and searching questions. I thoroughly enjoyed it, being both relaxing and meditative. I came home quite elated, as I had been able to concentrate on some serious praying time in a quiet relaxed atmosphere. The day just glided along with no hitches, everyone seemed so relaxed and free from troubles. The few days following seemed to be more stress free. The miming of the Lord's Prayer was particularly meaningful and gave me a somewhat different outlook. My highlight was the lighting of the candle and praying while focusing on this light.

RACHEL DUNKLEY: The day of Shalom at St John's was a day to be long remembered. The organizers, leaders, speakers, music makers, led us in a wonderful day of faith and fellowship. Many thanks to them all

JACKIE BEAN: This was an exceptionally fulfilling and rewarding time bringing the Christian faith into my day to day life. The evening was spent discussing the Day of Shalom with Phil, my husband, who says it has had a true effect on me. I felt at peace with myself and nearer to our Lord. Thank you to those who made the day possible.

Cricket, Lovely Cricket

Church Cricket March 1995

The Curate's team won by 4 wickets.

One of the highlights of summer in the parish of St Thomas' (for some at least) is the annual cricket match. An occasion when the Rector issues a challenge which no curate dare refuse. In fact it is murmured darkly in some quarters that every prospective assistant clergyperson (please note the inclusive terminology) is questioned closely about his or her affinity with cricket.

On July 6th, the teams gathered at Somersall Park on a glorious summer evening for the 1995 episode of the great challenge. The new curate Pete Wilkinson got off to a good start, winning the toss and asking the Rector's team to bat first. The tried and tested and highly valued dynamic duo of umpires, Jack Hemmings and Ian Wright took the field and battle was commenced.

It is the opinion of the writer, that unknown to most, the Rector had appointed one of his team to be 'secret weapon' for the evening. His duties included appearing unexpectedly all over the field making sudden dashes across the wicket and uttering from time to time loud and fearsome shouts. To confuse the opposition further, he was dressed as for a totally different sport, one usually undertaken in winter. He is known to most as Dave Fookes but will be referred to here as 'the Yellow Streak'.

James Stacey opened the innings for the Rector's team accompanied by the Yellow Streak, who obviously had instructions to disappear from sight as quickly as possible - he was out for a duck, second ball. Wily John Prentice, complete with straw hat, opened the bowling up the hill while Daniel Frith, in devastating form, took four wickets for only twelve runs.

Things were looking bleak for the Rector's team, when a familiar figure in a maroon floppy hat was seen at the wicket. Who could it be? Had the West Indies sent reinforcements? No! it was none other than the Rector himself, fresh from his pilgrimage to Lords, restoring some order to his side; bringing with him that sense of decision and order that epitomises the Church of England as he called for a quick single: Yes, Yes! No, No! Yes! NO! Eventually, in spite of some good bowling and excellent catching in the outfield, the Rector's team achieved the respectable score of 95 runs.

So as the sun was setting, the Curate's team began their reply. Disaster! The first four wickets fell for only 16 runs. The Yellow Streak took a good catch and triumphantly threw the ball far into the air uttering one of his famous roars. But cometh the hour, cometh the man (for the 1662 enthusiasts). Young Matthew Gratton strode to the wicket and took the innings in hand. In spite of many changes of bowler, many roars, dives and dashes by the Yellow

Streak, the Curate's team prevailed without the Captain having to bat.

Matthew and Ian Simmons put on 51 runs for the eighth wicket to win the match in the last over by four wickets. Matthew finished on 48 not out and was awarded the Charlie Brassington trophy as 'man of the match' by the adjudicator, Jack Hemmings. It had been a good evening of fun and fellowship for players and spectators alike. Long may the challenge continue!

Brampton Cricket Correspondent

Operation Christmas Child Conference

Having recently attended Operation Christmas Child's first weekend conference, I felt it appropriate to share some of the experience and information gained with those of you who have supported my work with OCC in the parish.

David Applin, a Church of England chaplain, and Britain's representative of the charity Samaritan's Purse; which OCC has now officially linked with. David, while still running a parish, will co-ordinate the activities of Samaritan's Purse in this country. The link means that the two charities will become more effective, reaching

more suffering children, in all parts of the world. For example, work will be increased in Rwanda, due to the link with this American charity.

Gary Cox of Eurovangelism spoke about the important work of his organisation. Much of their aid is taken out via Operation Christmas Child, and the two organisations work very closely together. He stressed how Eurovangelism train `native Christians to then go on and spread the gospel amongst their own people. This is seen to be more cost effective and successful than sending 'strangers' as missionaries, who need time to adjust to languages, cultures, climates and so on.

Rachel Cooke gave a wonderful account of her three years working with children suffering from Aids in Romania. When she first arrived, doctors and nurses would not even touch the babies -they didn't even remove dead babies from the cots.

Many may have seen Rachel on the Hearts of Gold programme that I have. Rachel desperately wants to see a home/hospice built for these children, so that they can experience the love of a family for a short period, in their short lives. Rachel feels that her prayers are being answered, because OCC are part way to fulfilling these dreams. The land has been acquired, and enough money donated already to pay for it. It was such an experience and a privilege to meet Rachel, who is so committed, and takes no credit whatsoever for what she does. When complimented on her dedication and work in Romania, Rachel will say: *'The glory is God's'*.

Dave Cooke, founder of Operation Christmas Child, and a committed Christian, like his sister, also gives God all the glory, and takes no credit for his hard work and dedication.

Liviu Balas spoke of his work and struggles in Romania. Liviu founded the Christian charity Ecco Homo, OCC's equivalent and partner charity in Romania. Before his official talk, we, Dave and myself, had been fortunate to meet Liviu informally, and it was such a humbling experience. The stories he told, trying to feed his family on half a loaf of dry bread a day, families sending children to school on alternate days, because they were sharing one pair of shoes; all left us feeling quite empty, and guilty at our own good fortune. We both felt very humble, but not helpless.

There are ways in which we can all help. They may seem quite small, but every little helps. It's like the ripple in the pond. You throw a stone in, and the ripples go on and on. Our little efforts spread much further than we know. OCC have set up a child sponsorship programme. £15 a month keeps one child with his/her family, rather than sending them to a state orphanage; which is often the case if the family is poor. So, like the ripple in the pond, you don't just pay £15 to feed the child. It helps feed the whole family, and more importantly, keeps the family together.

Sharon Baldam, one of Operation Christmas Child's volunteer workers in Wrexham spoke about the child sponsorship scheme which she helped set up and now co-ordinates. The scheme, as mentioned above was initially introduced to help the poor families that Liviu tries to support in Romania. However, children in Russia and Portugal now come under the scheme.

If anyone would like more information on this scheme, please ask me, or if anyone would like to help, but is not able to afford £15 a month, do still speak to me. If enough people are interested, perhaps we could sponsor a child as a group. 15 people each paying £1 minimum a month - the price of one lottery ticket - could have such a positive effect on a child's life. **This sponsorship programme is not a gamble** - if enough people can forfeit a lottery ticket, someone's life could be improved.

An update was also given .on the Chernobyl children, and the refurbishment. of the hospital, which has since been carried out. Many volunteers visited these children for the first time, and have returned with very mixed emotions. Children are still being born with very severe deformities - *9 years after the disaster!*

Our country still spends .12 million simply monitoring the effects of that disaster on farmland in England and Wales. Over 500 farms are still affected). Yet very few organisations help these suffering children. This year for the first time, OCC made contact with a church approx. 15 minutes away from the hospital. In just two days, the benefits of this contact could be seen. Staff at the hospital (who are not Christians), trusted OCC when they brought church members to the hospital. Although they lived so close, these local people were not aware of the hospital housing these innocent victims.

The 'simple' morning service was a wonderful spiritual and uplifting experience. The prayers and worship were from the hearts of people who all have a common aim. - that. of helping innocent children all over the world, and spreading God's love in so doing. The words of the song *'All over the world, the spirit is moving'* come to me so many times when I think of the, weekend.

Being a Christian organisation, Operation Christmas Child spread the love of God in all their work. They strongly believe that there should not be any conflict between evangelism and social concern. In many organisations the two are divided, but surely one should go hand in hand with the other.

David Applin mentioned a statement made by Sturgeon many years ago. Please forgive me if I mis-quote it by accident, but he said something like:- *"If you want to show a poor man the gospel, wrap it up in a sandwich"*. These words said so much to me when I heard them for the first time that weekend. How can you preach the gospel, without showing compassion and concern for your fellowman's problems and practical needs? Unfortunately, the weekend came to an end all too quickly for everyone present. It had been a wonderful opportunity for reps. like myself to come together, learn more about OCC and the people behind the scenes, so to speak, but above all it gave an opportunity to share our common concern.

Dave and myself certainly came home wanting to help OCC more, and knowing that every little contribution was both appreciated and put to good use.

Shoe Appeal

As many of you are aware, Operation Christmas Child have started a shoe appeal. At Christmas we want your shoeboxes, now we want your shoes! Footwear of any size, description, and in any condition are needed for the charity. An articulated lorry full of old/new shoes is worth £6,000 to OCC. This money would go a long way towards funding the numerous projects that Operation Christmas Child are currently involved with.

Jane Simmonds

Christian Fiction Summer Reading

Where Does The Sea Go?

by Jan Godfrey, £2.99 (paperback) (A Tamarind Book, published in association with SU Publishing)

Billy Bear has gone to the seaside for the day with his family. Later, he is surprised to see that the sea is "running away". "Where does the sea go?" he asks his Mum, Dad and sister but they are too busy playing in the sea. Grandma has fallen asleep and even though a passing crab tell him it's "low tide" he still can't get a satisfactory answer to his question! Finally, as his family all sit down together to eat their picnic, Grandma tells him about how God made the sea, explains about high and low tide, and more besides. A delightful book for 3/6 year olds and one to pack alongside the bucket and spade!! (One of a series of four Billy Bear books.)

After The Fire

by John Lockley £0.99 (paperback) (Published by Nelson Word)

Due to mankind's carelessness (as usual) and a mouse, a deadly epidemic wipes out the majority of the human race. A group of stunned survivors gather in a small English market town. They struggle to build a society better than the one that had collapsed around them, with the inevitable problems and differences that such a diverse group of people bring. I couldn't put this book down once I'd started it, very gripping reading! I hope there will be a sequel soon!

Telling the Sea

by Pauline Fisk.

Telling the sea is a very good book about a girl named Nona who tells her feelings, secrets and happenings to the sea. Nona has many adventures by the sea including nearly drowning in its depths. It is quite sad but has a very nice ending. I enjoyed it a lot and I think other people will too.

All read by Catherine Leteve (aged 9 years)

Link Mission Partners, Andy and Mandy Lines

Everyone is waiting with interest for the news from Wimbledon - no not the Tennis Championships but the birth of Baby Lines. Watch this space!

Our latest news is that the family are happy and healthy and Andrew's course is going extremely well. They are enjoying a spell of stability whilst waiting for the birth, but 31 August, the date for their return to Paraguay will be upon them all too soon. Our prayers will be much appreciated at this exciting time.

Richard and Dorothy Banks.

Hope for Eastern Europe

Thanks be to God for his strength and for your support, prayers and donations in money or supplies for our existing work.

As you are probably aware through our previous article, God laid it on our hearts to support and help financially a very poor Romanian family to rebuild their house which had been destroyed in a flood three years ago. Thank you for all your donations. The first floor of the house is now completed at a cost of £2000. Please can you continue to help them, so that they do not have to spend another winter in such poor conditions - 20 C on the Russian border. We are planning shortly to register as a charity.

Our new title will be '**HOPE FOR LIFE**'; Romania being one of our projects under this title. All the glory to you Lord!

Planning for a New Mercy Trip

Following the success of our last. years trip we are planning to return this year in August 1995 for two weeks. The aims of the next trip are to:-

- A) Visit again the Leper Community at Tichelesti to offer them an individual food parcel plus Christian literature.
- B) Visit the hospital in Constanta with children HIV/AIDS and leave with the doctor medicine, baby milk etc .
- C) Visit the Orthopaedic hospital outside of Constanta. This hospital is in great need of everything - they are quite desperate because of lack of funds but the positive fact is that there is a Christian doctor in charge.
- D) Visit the local Christian churches and offer support to poor families.

Prayer Diary

Please could you pray for:

- ◆ The lepers and staff in the community.
- ◆ Medical supplies and equipment.
- ◆ All the necessary documentation for the journey plus traveling.
- ◆ That God will bless our work and meet our every need according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.
- ◆ That our team will work together in God's love and be led by the Holy Spirit.
- ◆ Our team for the August trip: Les, Pamela and Matthew Gratton, Ian Charlesworth, Carleton Badger, John Deville and Kevin Jones

Pamela Gratton

Comings and Goings

Welcome to Peter and Julia Wilkinson

After just a fortnight in the Parish in July, they will be starting properly on September 1st. Peter's main responsibilities will be to oversee the children's and youth work and the 909 congregation. Julia will continue to work part-time with Christians in Sport.

Brian and Barbara Porter

Are moving to Amsterdam. Brian has been appointed Assistant Chaplain of Christ Church, Amsterdam with Heiloo, to start in the middle of September. After lengthy convalescence, following a successful operation. Brian is making excellent progress and should resume work in August.

Sheila and Don Stevenson

Following their wedding on 22 July, will be in the parish on Sundays on 13th and 20th August. Then they will living in Bedford. If you can't get used to her new surname Sheila won't mind; she is rather attached to the name Pite!

There will be a farewell to Brian and Barbara, and Sheila and Don on Sunday 20 August, during and after the 6.30pm Service.

Jonty Frith

Has returned from almost a year in Uganda. He will be starting his ministry training at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, in October. He is due to preach at the Youth Service on 3rd September and after the service will talk and show photos about life in Uganda.

Chesterfield and Tsumeb

An Unusual Link - Two towns with a similar background - mining, but very different in most other respects.

Both with the same official language - English; but for very few in Tsumeb is their home language English; the majority, Black Africans, speak their tribal language, and the small white population mostly speak German or Afrikaans.

'TSUMEB' No, it is not printed backwards! But it looks hard to say. Try it. First ignore the 'T', and then just put a touch of 'Y' in the front. 't-soo-meb'. That's good.

Where is Tsumeb? It is an important town in Namibia, which is on the south-west coast of Africa, bordered by South Africa, the Atlantic, Angola and Botswana. After a war of liberation against South Africa, Namibia gained its independence in 1990.

The Link was made between Chesterfield and Tsumeb by the two town Councils and signed at the 'Winding Wheel' in September 1994 by the mayors of Chesterfield and Tsumeb. The purpose - mutual friendship and help, sharing information and experience.

The 'Chesterfield - Tsumeb Association' is established to express in practical ways the purpose of our Borough Council in twinning, and to make these activities known. St Thomas' is a group member of the association.

Our Link can be made with one or more of the churches of Tsumeb. In due time we shall make contact by letter, sending photos and audio tapes, making 'pen-pals', and sharing matters for praise and prayer.

Problems may arise, such as language, and the poverty of many of the Tsumeb people. The town's one big mine recently closed, although the smelter is still operating. Many people previously employed by the mine are now unemployed. The mine not only provided work, but also such things as water and electricity. Now the people in the townships have to pay for these services.

Namibia is mainly desert, with the Kalahari to the East and the Namib along the coast. Its wealth consists of its people, minerals including diamonds, cattle, fish and its natural beauty. The Etosha National Park, very close to Tsumeb, is a tourist attraction, with many African animals and superb scenery.

The total population of the country is 1.5 million, divided into eight African ethnic groups, and under 100,000 whites. The population of Tsumeb is 25,000.

Churches Tsumeb has churches of the denominations represented here, with the addition of Lutheran Churches, begun by German and Finnish missionaries when, before 1914, Namibia was a German colony.

Now begin to pray that we shall know how to make the link and with which of the churches in Tsumeb.

Horace Totterdell

"We're Following Jesus"

"Where is Chesterfield?" I remember writing these words from Plymouth as we introduced ourselves to the parish in the Autumn of 1989. Now almost six years later, the question we have had to ask is "Heiloo Where is Heiloo?"

Many of you will know by now that we are to move to the Netherlands shortly where I am to be a Chaplain to the English speaking people in Amsterdam and North Holland, an area 25 miles north of the city which includes the towns of Heiloo and Alkmaar. We expect to be living in Alkmaar.

The initial invitation to join the Chaplaincy came as long ago as January but had to be placed on 'hold' due to the surgery that I suddenly and unexpectedly required. We are grateful to the Chaplaincy Councils in the Netherlands for being prepared to wait for me to get fit again. We shall be working under the aegis of the Intercontinental Church Society. Intercon, as it is known, has had a ministry among English speaking people abroad since 1823 and it will be a privilege to be part of this ongoing evangelical ministry.

Our feelings as we prepare to leave St Thomas' are inevitably mixed. We arrived in the parish from Plymouth where I had been a non-stipendiary minister for ten years, a role which had run parallel to being a director of our family building business. We came to Chesterfield very conscious of God's Calling. Now as we look back over the five and a half years we feel confirmed in that calling, even though in many ways God's plans for us proved to be quite different from our expectations!

We have learned much; enjoyed real warmth of fellowship in many areas of the life of the parish not least within the Staff Team, where life with Christopher and Pam has always been refreshing and fulfilling and sometimes hilarious. Leaving a place such as St Thomas' where above all else the name of Jesus Christ is exalted and where we have been privileged to make many friendships brings a sense of real sadness.

We believe, however, that God has placed before us a new opportunity to serve, to which we have to respond. So off we go, thanking God for each one of you, for your support and encouragement of our ministries and asking Him to bring rich blessings upon all you seek to do in His Name.

Brian and Barbara Porter

Liberal, Marvellous Cakes

Thus with commendable brevity did Christopher describe the Study Group in his report to the Annual General Meeting this year. This enigmatic description is accurate as far as it goes, but in case anyone is intrigued may I elaborate a little.

The Group has been meeting monthly for just over ten years now. Members are given a sheet of questions in advance and are asked to come prepared to discuss them. The questions are on theological, doctrinal or ethical issues current at the time.

The group is not primarily a teaching group, its function is much more exploratory. We try to create an atmosphere of complete openness in which people are free to say whatever they sincerely think. The liberal character of the group lies in the fact that we have no 'party line' - the questions are usually 'open ended' and are designed to provoke discussion rather than to elicit particular answers. Christianity is understood in different ways by different people and we feel it is important that there should be a forum where these differing insights can be explored in friendship and without correction. Too often discussions on religious matters turn out to be simply statements of entrenched positions with each party trying to convince the other that his version of the truth is superior.

We all know only too well the "I am right and you are wrong" type of discussion. We try to escape this. Of course, we sometimes fail. and we hardly ever reach agreed conclusions. Perhaps this is because, in the nature of the questions, no definitive answer is usually possible. But we have found over the years that our friendship and understanding of each other has grown mightily. We may in the end be no wiser - but we are much better informed and perhaps a bit more tolerant!

The "marvellous cakes" to which Christopher referred are a tribute to Joyce who as well as being a founder member of the group has made cakes to be eaten at the end of each meeting. The discussion may at times fail to reach the heights, but the food is consistently good!

Denys Crowther

Your Legacy will help

WHAT IS A LEGACY? A legacy to the church is a means of leaving to it a proportion of your assets after you have died.

WHY SHOULD I LEAVE LEGACIES TO THE CHURCH?

It is our privilege, as the church family, to provide for continuing Christian work for future generations. Legacies to some parts of the church -parish, diocese, voluntary or missionary society - are acts of thanksgiving to God, and witness to family and friends. Christians are able to prepare positively for death. This should extend to material things.

HOW DO I MAKE OR AMEND MY WILL? You can add a short codicil to your existing will, for a charitable legacy. If you have no will, it is better to make one with the help of a solicitor. Go ready prepared with a list of things you own, and names of organisations or individuals to whom you wish to leave legacies.

WHO SHOULD I LEAVE A LEGACY TO? Your parish church will find an unconditional legacy very useful, or you may wish to leave it for a specific purpose. You could also contribute to the cathedral or diocese, or nationally to the Central Church Fund, Pensions Board or missionaries societies.

This information comes from the Christian Stewardship Committee of the Central Board of Finance of the Church of England.

More information is available from Phil Johnson.