

Ploughshare August/September 1997

(scanned version from the original)

From the Rector

My predecessor, the **Revd. Vyvyan Watts-Jones**, died on 1st June. Many, many people in our parish give thanks to God for him and send their love to his wife Gill and their family. An appreciation of Vyv appears later in this edition of Ploughshare.

I have been reflecting on what a good person he was to follow. St. Thomas' obviously turned a big corner in his time. Not only did the church grow numerically, but many members grew individually in spiritual awareness and willingness to serve. With encouragement from Vyv. and Gill, they discovered that they could do things they would never have dreamt of attempting. In addition, a lovely corporate feel to the Church developed, with a mixture of such varied people with a wide array of contributions.

I much regret that we haven't managed to carry through the re-ordering of St. Thomas', a project, dear to Vyv.'s heart, in his lifetime. However, when it is eventually done, we can be reminded of him again and thank God for such a remarkable personality.

It is holiday time and I hope you are able to get away. Our world is ridiculously frantic and we need regular breaks, just to recharge our batteries.

God intends our lives to have rhythm. There should be plenty of work (paid or unpaid) and regular play as well. Without recreation and rest, we become frazzled, bored, exhausted, or all three. "*On the seventh day, God rested from all his work*", we read right at the beginning of the Bible. He was setting a pattern for everyone to follow.

So, whether at home or away, enjoy a really good break.

Christopher Frith

Rev. Vivian Watts-Jones 7th July, 1922-1st June, 1997

I first met Vyv when he was in the final year of his ministry at St. Thomas'. There will, therefore be many here who knew this part of his life much better than I and will have so many reasons to remember him with affection and gratitude.

For example, several people have told me that he "brought a breath of life to the Church", that he encouraged lay participation, and that he instituted 'special' services like Healing, Youth, Memorial, and Mothering Sunday. He started a number of pastoral support and prayer groups. After much research, he introduced the Australian Hymn Book we still use. He was, as one lady told me, "keen on outreach", particularly to the young. He left a lively and viable church, a foundation on which Christopher has been able to build.

Denys and I have been close friends of Gill and Vyv for the last thirteen years -the years of his retirement, and it is of those years I would like to write.

Perhaps retirement is the wrong word for Vyv. He worked tirelessly during this time for 'Cruse' being President of the Chesterfield Branch for some time. He wrote many articles, he attended a wide variety of courses. He wrote and preached many sermons. He was always available to help anyone in distress. He had a passionate sense of fairness and justice, and campaigned vigorously for individuals and institutions he felt had been treated unfairly.

Vyv was a witty and extremely well informed conversationalist. Like many such, however, he had little 'small talk' and some may have thought him rather distant. Nothing could be further from the truth. He was a warm, generous and friendly man who listened when you talked to him and then gave a considered answer.

But music was Vyv's great and abiding joy. Almost to the very end he (sometimes with great difficulty) attended concerts of every kind. One of my last memories of him was when we took him in his wheelchair to the City Hall in Sheffield to hear the Halle Orchestra. Towards the end of his life, he found he could no longer physically play his piano and this distressed him.

Retirement did not give him good health. He suffered many afflictions (some grievous). He was in and out of hospital many times. He was often in great pain and discomfort, but he never let this prevent him leading a very full life filled with friends who enjoyed being with him. In this he had one priceless advantage, the deep love and constant support of Gill. Gill has many gifts denied to most of us. Her warmth, her amazing energy, and her single minded devotion enabled Vyv to enjoy a fruitful and very meaningful retirement.

Despite the years of pain, Vyv was granted a wondrous boon at the very last. He died reconciled, peacefully, without pain, and with his family present.

Joyce Crowther

The Celtic Experience

Over the weekend of 30 /31 May, we went on a journey to All Saints Church, Wingerworth in search of the Celtic Experience. This was led by Rev'd John Bell of the Iona Community.

What was the Celtic experience? Singing the faith; examining Celtic spirituality; prayer in the Celtic tradition; the Word in Worship and Bringing the Bible to Life.

The Celt, we were told, had a strong sense of community, not just for the people with whom he lived and worked every day but also reflected in a deep rooted spirituality. People were close to each other but even closer within the distinctive spiritual community.

The Friday evening began with "A Big Sing" with around 200 or so people. John Bell, in his relaxed and inimitable style, told the gathering that singing the faith was important. He encouraged everyone to join in and he had a message for all of us who had been told by others that they could not sing - "this was only a rumour". He led the gathering in song and within a few minutes everyone was singing in tune and in four part harmony. John Bell took the part as precentor and there was no other accompaniment. Short breaks and talking with our neighbours were part of the programme thus a sense of community was embraced. All of us left Wingerworth on the Friday night encouraged, wanting more, and full of praise for the Lord and all that He has done for us.

Saturday continued to explore the importance of community and spirituality to the Celt and this was related to modern day where some churches, clearly lacking a sense of community spirituality, were described as "acne churches".

This was a description of congregations of about fifty dotted around a church which accommodated up to five hundred people.

Prayer was important to the Celt and prayers tended to be very simple and related to every day life. The Celt would pray for a blessing on his doors and windows, his cattle and land whilst seeking God to bless the community as a whole. Again the distinctive Celtic spirituality and its relationship to prayer was stressed as was the importance of the community.

This was further illustrated with a practical description of preparation worship at the abbey in Iona. On Saturday evenings, people, most complete strangers, meet over a simple meal designed to foster friendship in order that they meet as one community for worship on the Sunday.

The Word in Worship was introduced by John Bell asking the community what type of books they were reading. These varied from text books to poetry, history and autobiography. The Books of the Bible include all types of writing and authors providing a rich variety for us to experience and enjoy both in a literary, but more significantly, in a spiritual dimension.

This led easily into Bringing the Bible to life which looked at a number of passages from the Bible and people were asked for views on how these should be read in Church. It is important when reading that people are familiar with the passage and its context. The use of a lectern can be a hindrance rather than a help. Be creative - not all of God's Word should be read in the same way. Where there is more than one part and location, e.g. the temptations of Jesus, try dramatic reading from different areas of the church. Where there are some unfamiliar names, have someone beside the reader explaining who the people are - the example given here was genealogy of Jesus from Matthew's Gospel.

John Bell was an excellent leader and gave great encouragement. The Rector and our friends in the congregation at All Saints welcomed us warmly and kept us supplied with teas and coffees. We thank them for their hospitality and welcome to their community.

A summary such as this cannot do justice to the event - The Celtic Experience as with Christian experience must be personal and participative.

Tom and Alison Donachie, Pam Brimelow, Doug Price, Ian and Eileen Gorden

How can I be sure of my faith? - an Alpha course question.

When I first became a Christian, I seemed to be very sure of my faith.

Although I have a deep love for my God, I find that living on my own can sometimes bring many heartaches and problems with only myself to sort them out. I cannot expect God to sort out everything in my life for me. I have to help myself but my faith in God is strong and, when I pray to God for his help, I am never refused. I know he is by my side and that helps me a lot.

The last three months have been very hard and distressing for me but my God has helped me through. I know that there is always light at the end of the tunnel. It boils down to the words of Jesus "*1 am the way, the truth and the life*". That, I hope will always be my journey to eternity with my God.

Jackie Walker

Wembley –With No Opposition

In the middle of what seemed like months of rain, twenty one of us set off on 28th June 1997 to join 50,000 other Christians at Wembley for '**The Champion of the World**', a praise, prayer and proclamation event.

It started on time at 4pm, with a reminder that, "We're not here to praise or honour the performing groups" ... and there was very little evidence to suggest that anyone had gone there to do anything but celebrate Jesus. It's also the reason for not including a list of them!

The power of prayer was obvious ...I've no doubt that everyone had prayed for the rain to stop ... and although 98% of the UK was still under deluge, Wembley stayed dry!!

So what did we all gain from it? ... I asked my fellow celebrants their views and one of the most interesting comments was, "We didn't know what we were going to!" For the benefit of those who might like to go next year -it was a six and a half hour version of a Spring Harvest Big Top celebration.

Other views/comments included:

"Brill!", "Excellent", "Electric, fantastic!", "A feast of worship", "Glad I was a part of it!", "People were **truly** free..., uninhibited!", "it was great to see children involved, doing their dance routines on the stage, and hearing what **they** pray for."

The three things which most people commented on were:

- ◆ The up-to-date style of worship ... the range of styles meant there was something for **everyone**
- ◆ The atmosphere ... there was a warm, safe feeling, with everyone at peace with each other and no worries about mugging, brawls, and pickpockets, despite the number of people and the venue.
- ◆ The freedom ... to stay in your seat or move around the stadium, go on the pitch, dance, wave your banner, **whatever you felt comfortable with!**

It was a very uplifting experience, and the age range was impressive ... babes in buggies to octogenarians, and the number of teenagers was particularly encouraging. Seeing them do the Conga around the pitch was wonderful ... what a way to celebrate knowing Jesus! In fact, the mood of the event makes me wonder whether Dr Harvey Cox of Harvard Divinity School was inspired by God when, talking about the earliest followers of Jesus, he said, "Their worship services were rather uproarious affairs ... *more like the victory celebrations of a football team*, than what we usually call worship today."

The offering, taken for street children in the UK and Europe, raised an amazing £87,000 ... absolutely brilliant considering that the under 18's wouldn't have had much, if any, cash to spare!!

What happened at Wembley certainly reached others too ... the Wembley management said they'd "never seen anything like it!" ... and the stewards and security staff looked somewhat bored with the fact, there was nothing for them to 'deal with'.

One disappointing aspect of the day was that, given the capacity of the stadium, the attendance could have been higher. Maybe, as someone suggested, that was down to, "poor advertising ... something in the national press may have helped". Nevertheless, we all came away spiritually refreshed, rather than exhausted! ... and no doubt, many people were contemplating on Matthew 7:7 as they tried to find their coach in the dark!

Finally, if you would like a glimpse of the event, there is a 1 hour video available for loan. Please ask at the church office.

The other good news is that we don't have to wait for next year to celebrate Jesus in this way again ... the biggest **indoor Christian** event outside the US will be happening at Sheffield Arena on Saturday 25th October, 3pm – 10pm, watch out for information on the weekly church newsheet!!

New Readers

Our wonderful team of Readers, who help in leading worship and preaching, is increasing.

Bill Woodend has recently joined us from Nottinghamshire, having been a Licensed Reader for several years. Unfortunately, Bill and his wife Pauline have been unwell with a mystery virus for a long time, but, all being well, he is to be licensed in Derby Cathedral on 20th September 1997.

Bill Galloway has been accepted for training. His course is to start in September 1997 and, if things go well, he will be licensed two years later. Bill has been organising our recent Alpha courses and will be preaching from time to time.

We look forward to the contribution of both Bills to the worshipping life of our Churches

At the same time, we pray for the complete recovery of Keith Chappell who has been suffering a long period of illness and whose ministry as a Reader we have missed very much.

Face to Face with David Holmes

David Holmes has recently become Church Warden at St John's and also Headteacher of Horsley Primary School.

David, you're from Brampton originally, is that right?

Yes, along with generations of Holmes' before me. My mum was ill and already in hospital in Sheffield when I was born; it meant I was the first member of the family not to be born in Chesterfield.

What about your faith? Is it something you've always had or did it come later in life?

It seems to always have been there. I've had nothing spectacular happen, no sudden changes. As a child, I attended the Sunday School at Storrs Road Methodist Church. I was actually confirmed in my teens at the Parish Church, at the same time as my father.

How is it you came to be a member at St. John's?

When I returned to Chesterfield after University, I found it hard to find a church I could settle in. I drifted out of Church attendance for a while. Then Carol Woodward invited me to St. John's one Good Friday, immediately it felt right -there was a sense of belonging.

Why teaching?

Initially, I saw doing a PGCE as simply a way of passing a year after University -I wasn't convinced I wanted to be a teacher. But after the first teaching practice I knew it was what I wanted to do. I loved being with the children, and still do. It's so good being able to share enthusiasms, inspiring them into actions and interests. It's the 'relationship side' I enjoy the most.

How different is it being a headteacher?

You suddenly realise that there is no one else to pass things on to, as a Deputy, the Head was always there to go to - now I am the Head! But I do enjoy it, it's good to have the opportunity to lead the school forward in the things you believe in -to see your vision influence the school.

How does being a Christian influence what you do?

I aim to underpin the whole ethos of the school with Christian values. We are a C of E school and proud of our Christian ethos, we happily promote it through the school's life. I try too, to let those same values influence what I am and what I do.

We frequently hear a lot of negative comments both from teachers and about teachers. How do you respond to the present climate?

Teaching is still a good thing to do. There are a lot of very committed teachers who just get on with it and don't seek the media attention. There are also a lot of good children and young people too. There's much that is good teaching which should be acknowledged and built upon.

So what about being Churchwarden - how do you see that role?

Now that is a strange role! I'm still finding my way into it, but I think it's about supporting people -especially the Curate. On a Sunday, I aim to take on the practical side to leave Andy to his priority of being with people. I think also there's a role for listening, hearing and sharing. I prefer it if people 'share views' than complain. It's good to be used as a sounding board too but I don't go up ladders ...and that's another story...

Progress on St. Thomas' Memorial Garden

The Contractor has finished the first stage; the paths and wall on which memorial tablets will be fixed in future. When the soil has had a chance to dry out after the recent wet spell, he will prepare and sow the lawn. He is responsible for looking after the lawn until it is established and has had three cuts.

To give it a suitable setting, the lawn will have a screen of shrubs behind it. The Contractor has to look after these and the hedges until they too are established and so planting of the shrubs and hedges will wait until the Autumn.

Also in the Autumn,, when approval has been obtained from the Diocese, the existing memorial stones will be moved to their new position in the area now laid out as loose gravel. This gravel will be used as a surround to the repositioned stones and a hedge will be planted to screen them.

When complete, it is intended that the garden will be a place for remembrance and contemplation. Please treat it with respect. The wall is not for sitting on and children should be discouraged from running around the paths.

Robin Dawson

Hope for Eastern Europe

Thanks to the prayers and support of so many wonderful, caring people, people, the medical supplies and equipment are finally on their way to the orthopaedic hospital in Constanta on the border of the Black Sea. Many pieces of urgently needed equipment which Dr. Nicolae had specifically hoped for including a reconditioned anesthetic unit and physiotherapy equipment were obtained.

Transportation of the heaviest equipment. was arranged with 'Link European' and our own 7.5 ton lorry took the more basic items. May they truly bless and encourage Dr. Nicolae, his staff and patients and give them positive hope in their desperate situation.

Our August 15th journey to transport bibles, and many basic supplies is our next mission. Food, toiletries, first-aid supplies are still urgently needed to help support the street children and very poor families.

Please can you help? -By purchasing an item next time you are shopping or fund raising to support the feeding centre. Your help and love make all the difference to a hungry child. Remember the words of our Lord Jesus *'It is more blessed to give than to receive'*.

Pamela Gratton

News from our Link Mission the Lines Family in Paraguay

The update from the Lines' received early in July was very informative. First of all, plans are already being made for their U.K. visit between December 1997 and February 1998 which we hope will include a few days in Chesterfield.

Their work at present includes greater involvement in the School (Collegio San Andres), which has grown tremendously this year. Andrew does much more **preaching, and his responsibilities** in the Special Episcopal Commission continues. It is possible that Andrew will be ordained deacon before the end of the year.

The general health of the family is good, although Mandy has recently had a bout of bronchitis, and Zoe is having treatment for a dental abscess. Alex is flourishing at his new school and although Lizzie is slow in talking, she communicates effectively, nevertheless.

Our prayer support continues to be much appreciated by them all.

Dorothy and Richard Banks

A Worm's Eye View

A teacher in San Francisco set her class the rather ambitious homework assignment: to write a paper to "explain God". This was the essay handed in by 8 year-old Danny Dutton:

One of God's main jobs is making people. God makes these to put in place of the ones that die, so there will be enough people to take care of things here on earth. God doesn't make grownups. Just babies. I think because they are smaller and easier to make. That way God doesn't have to take up valuable time teaching them to talk and walk. God can just leave that to their fathers and mothers.

I think it works out pretty good.

God's second most important job is listening to prayers. An awful lot of this goes on, as some people, like preachers and things, pray at other times besides bedtime. God doesn't have time to listen to the radio or TV on account of this. As God hears everything, not only prayers, there must be a terrible lot of noise going on in God's ears, unless he has thought of a way to turn it off.

God sees everything and hears everything and is everywhere. Which keeps God pretty busy. So you shouldn't go wasting God's time by going over your parents' heads and asking for something they said you couldn't have.

Jesus is God's Son. He used to do all the hard work like walking on water and doing miracles and trying to teach people about God who didn't want to learn. They finally tired of him preaching to them and they crucified him. But he was good and kind like God, and he told God that they didn't know what they were doing, and to forgive them and God said: "OK!"

His Dad (God) appreciated everything Jesus had done, all his hard work on earth, so God told him he didn't have to go out on the road any more. He could stay in Heaven. So he did.

And now he helps God out by listening to prayers and seeing which things are important for God to take care of and which ones he can take care of himself, without having to bother God with it. Like a secretary, only more important, of course.

You can pray anytime you want, and they are sure to hear you because they've got it worked out so one of them is on duty all the time.

You should always go to Sunday school because it makes God happy, and if there's anybody you want to make happy, it's God. Don't skip Sunday school to do something you think will be more fun, like going to the beach. This is wrong! And besides, the sun doesn't come out at the beach until noon, anyway.

Atheists are people who don't believe in God. I don't think there are any who come to our church. If you don't believe in God, besides being an atheist, you will be very lonely, because your parents can't go everywhere with you, like to camp, but God can.

It's good to know God's around when you're scared of the dark, or when you can't swim very good and you get thrown in real deep water by big kids.

But you shouldn't always think of what God can do for you. I figure God put me here and God can take me back anytime he pleases.

And that's why I believe in God.

(With acknowledgements to the *"New Christian Herald"*)