

## **Ploughshare August/September 1998** (Scanned version from the original)

### **From the Rector**

Reflections on the Consistory Court decision.

I tend to say my glass is half empty when optimists would say theirs was half full! So, when I received the verdict after the Consistory Court, my immediate reaction was negative. We had lost; even worse, the Victorian Society had won!

The judge has ruled that we can do all we want to do in the nave of St. Thomas', making it thoroughly flexible. Chairs will replace pews. There will be a platform in front of the chancel step with a new communion table and preaching desk. However, the chancel may not be touched. When put this way, it is clear that we are permitted to do far more than we are forbidden to and lots of new opportunities beckon.

I still think what could have been a most impressive re-ordering has been spoilt. As Robin Dawson said during the hearing, it will be bit like having a museum at one end of the building and a living Church at the other. But, I guess that God thinks this is all we can cope with or afford or perhaps deserve.

We are still going to need many more funds to carry out the work, largely because the Garden of Remembrance - due, I trust, to be completed soon - has cost so much more than anticipated. We shall probably hold a Gift Day in the Autumn and hope to carry the work out in the Spring. The PCC have decided unanimously to proceed with what we are allowed to do.

My press statement, a week or so after hearing the verdict, was my attempt to be both positive and realistic. "We are delighted that at long last we are authorised to carry out much of the work that has been in the pipeline for over 15 years. It is very disappointing not to be able to include the chancel, though. Our architect's plans are being compromised, but we will make the most of what we are able to do. The Consistory Court was carried out fairly and with good humour and we have to accept the judge's ruling."

It's quite a challenge.

**Christopher Frith**

### **Soccer in Armenia**

Last month I was privileged to accompany coaches from Liverpool Football Club to Armenia and Nagorno Karabagh, representing the charity Operation Christmas Child. Following two successful projects to coach children in the past, OCC was back by popular demand! The children were victims of poverty, earthquake or war - very often all three.

My experience in Armenia was extremely rewarding and is probably the most satisfying thing I have ever done. There are so many facets of the expedition that I would like to share, but am not able to, due to space. I hope that the memories I share with you will give you a taste of the various emotions we all experienced.

The abiding memory from the whole week is the joy expressed on the faces of the children we met. They enjoyed everything we tried to do for them, and were overwhelmed by the fact that we cared enough to travel 2,500 miles to play football with them. The mothers (the war had claimed most fathers) could not stop thanking us for visiting them and for not forgetting their children.

The poverty that we witnessed was appalling and at times very upsetting. The Shahumian village was particularly disturbing to see. Here families live in large cylindrical water tanks converted into homes. Families of 6-8 people live in these cramped yet 'spotless' conditions. These refugees have lost everything, except their pride!

It was here that I picked up a little girl who could not see the entertainment at the front of the crowd. She held me so tight and kept looking at me. All her Grandmother could say was "No Papa, No Papa". It is still difficult, even now, to hold back the tears.

We visited the 'Lighthouse' refugee camp, set up by OCC's link charity - Christian Cultural Ministries International. The name 'Lighthouse' was given as a reminder of God's light shining in the darkness. Refugees from Nagorno Karabagh

live in squalid conditions; in tiny rooms - many without glass in the windows. Very few communal toilets served this enormous block of flats. Here I met a little girl and her mother. I gave the little girl a small cuddly toy, with which she was overjoyed. As I looked up, her mother was crying. I had not given the most expensive gift in the world; but I had given the most precious - love. This memory still, brings tears to my eyes.

The children here were so poor, they begged for anything we could give them. We emptied our bags of sweets, pens, whistles, and as we left we even took the shirts off our backs.

In the war zone of Nagorno Karabagh we stayed in a village called Shushi. Here, the Bishop, a charismatic leader, told us of the 'Miracle of Shushi'. At the height of the war he received a message that the Azerbaijan troops were on the outskirts of the village preparing to invade. Half an hour was all he needed to evacuate the women and children - but there was not half an hour, because the troops were so close. The Bishop prayed, and moments later, on what was a very clear and sunny day, a large cloud enveloped the village. It was not a rain cloud, or fog, just an answer to prayer, staying long enough for the women and children to leave.

Prayers were answered again as we drove through the 'town' of Agdam, which had been obliterated by war. The 'ghost town', having had every property burned to the ground, was finally littered with landmines. Only six weeks prior to our visit, two locals preparing for our project were killed, when they drove over one. It is here that we broke down, and were quickly and forcibly told not to wander away or pick anything metal up. Thankfully a Red Cross Land Rover came around the corner and was able to help us.

These and other experiences have given my faith renewed vigour. It has also been reinforced by the children of Armenia, who, wherever we went, entertained us by singing praises to God and thanking him for everything they had. I felt humbled that having so little compared to us, they never stopped thanking God.

The week consisted of a very intensive coaching schedule, aiming to see as many children as possible. The stress on coaching skills was not as important as that of having fun. These children have lost their childhood as well as everything else. Through the expressions on their little faces this visit obviously meant as much to these children as the shoebox gifts they receive from us.

So poor and neglected by the world are these people, that in Nagorno Karabagh every child (60,000 approx.) receives a ticket, which in turn is exchanged for a shoebox gift. No one is left out. (Incidentally this only happens after they have all heard the story of the first Christmas).

Through giving a little of my time, and sharing some skills and experiences, I have learnt the most valuable lesson of my life. These young innocent victims, who have already experienced far worse disasters than most of us in this country, taught me to thank God for everything, and to put my faith and trust in Him - no matter what!

Please pray for:

- ◆ All children growing up in war torn areas.
- ◆ The non-Christian coaches who were so genuinely concerned for the people of Armenia. Hopefully through this project they will find a place for God in their lives.
- ◆ The continued opportunities Samaritan's Purse/Operation Christmas Child will have to share God's love.

Thank you to everyone who supported this and other projects.

**David Simmonds**

## **Quest Club**

Each week at Quest Club, the children are encouraged to read the Bible, using Scripture Union's children's notes. Recently they were asked to write a poem to express how Peter might have felt after denying Jesus.

### **Peter's Denial**

There was a man with the name of Peter. He followed Jesus Christ, who was a great teacher. Jesus was on trial, one fatal day, Peter denied him, Judas gave him away. Peter did this three times, as Jesus said he would, Peter was ashamed for he said he understood. Jesus unfairly lost the trial that day, He went up on the cross and God took him away.

**By Joy Lennon (aged 10 years)**

**Peter's Confession**

What have I done?  
I've betrayed God's Son  
By saying I didn't know him  
Was a great sin.  
I pray you will forgive  
So I could live  
Without being guilty.  
As you hung is so much pain  
I only hoped you could remain,  
But I know you are dying for us  
To release us of our sins  
But what did I do  
But say I didn't know you.  
I was wrong.

**By Laura Martin (aged 10 years)**

## **Operation Christmas Child '98**

Many of you are familiar with the Samaritan's Purse annual shoebox appeal - and we thank everyone who has helped us make this such a success in Chesterfield over the years. Our target for '98 is 40,000 shoeboxes, an increase of 10,000 on '97! Preparations are already well advanced - although secure, local, permanent storage is a problem. If anyone can help with this, we would love to hear from you! We also require a warehouse in which to house and process the shoeboxes, from mid-October until mid-December. It needs to be secure, dry (and preferably not too cold!), about 60,000 sq.m. and have access/parking for cars and lorries. Again offers or suggestions are welcomed.

Lots of our volunteers are already collecting small fillers for us: cuddlies; things to write, draw and colour on, in and with; small, good quality toys; and toiletries. Such items are always useful, joyfully received by us and ultimately by the needy child who opens the box.

Hats, scarves, mittens and gloves are also extremely useful. Many people were touched by Carol's story of Levi, an 11 year old street child in Cluj, Romania. He asked her if she had a hat to give him and was overjoyed to receive a shoebox containing a Newcastle United hat, scarf and gloves! Some dedicated ladies have been knitting since January perhaps this is a way you could help too? We can supply wool and patterns if that helps you, or maybe you have wool you could donate? There are small items that can be made from scraps of material, and we have a nursery of dolls who need someone kind to dress them! Please contact us if you want further information, or just to let us know you're helping - we would be much encouraged!

The campaign proper will be launched in September. Nia, a popular gospel singer, is doing a "tour" to get the appeal off to a great start. She will be in our area on September 15th, and the day will end with an evening presentation at St. John's Church Centre. Please mark the date in your diaries now - she's far too good to miss - and watch out for further details.

Above all, please pray for the work of Samaritan's Purse, not just at Christmas, but all year round. The charity helps many thousands of people in need all over the world, in practical and spiritual ways. At present they are involved in emergency relief in the Sudan and Kosova as well as all their other projects.

Never forget, by helping Samaritan's Purse you really can make a difference and the gift of a simple shoebox can change the world for a child.

**Stephen and Carol Woodward**

## **News of one of our EFAC Bursars Edison Muhindo Kalengyo**

**Edison Muhindo Kalengyo** has just returned to a major responsibility at the new Uganda Christian University, Mukono.

He wrote as follows to Dr Christina Baxter, Principal of St. John's College, Nottingham, two months after his return to Uganda:

"Early in the New Year, we moved over 400 miles from Kasese to Bishop Tucker College; since then I have had one month of teaching and continued learning. It is exciting and enjoyable relating to the students. I am constantly aware that St. John's College Studylink EFAC spent a lot of resources (for which I am grateful) preparing me for this particular ministry, and I am so happy to be continued prayerful support.

The Province of the Church of Uganda has started a Christian University at the College Campus. It opened this academic year with three departments. The former Theological College is now the Department of Divinity and Theology (with 127 men and :women training for the ministry). In addition to my teaching responsibility, I have been appointed as Head of this Department (a task that I find too heavy! I can now understand the situation that people like Moses, Joshua and Jeremiah found themselves in when they were asked to lead God's people, and I will value special prayers for this). When His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury visits Uganda in May, he will inaugurate the University on 8th May 1998.

Needless to say that I miss the Christian fellowship at St. John's College: the Chapel worship, interactions with staff and students, Corridor life not to mention the spontaneous (always inharmonious!) joyful noise three of us used to stage outside and in the Corridors! Members demonstrated great patience. But all that added to our life together. Special thanks to my M. Phil. Supervisor Dr Stephen H. Travis. My success was largely due to his commitment and patience in guiding me through my work, and many will bear witness that he is both a teacher and Pastor who serves with great humility.

Share our love and greetings with everyone. My wife and I pray for you."

The following churches were among those who made this possible by providing both financial support and hospitality for Edison:

The South Croxton Group, Leics. St. Peter's, Shipley, St. Thomas, Brampton, Chesterfield.

## **Hope for Eastern Europe August 1998 Mission**

As we approach our August Mission and look back on our work over the past four years - there is a lot to be thankful to God for. It is truly amazing to experience God's direction and blessings as His plans and purposes are fulfilled through his people.

We have had many trials and challenges - but JESUS is always there as we put our faith and trust in him. I personally have had to turn and seek His help in many situations and He has never failed me - He is a faithful God!

Our team this summer is to include four Christians from Holy Trinity Church, Matlock. Derek and Liz - a husband and wife team have volunteered to drive out with my husband Les on Friday 14th August. Two teenage boys Adam and James are flying out with Matthew and myself to Bucharest on Monday August 17th. We will all link up on Tuesday 18th August.

Emmanuel Mission have once again kindly offered us hospitality and we look forward to seeing first-hand the progress on the New Outreach/ Feeding Centre for the underprivileged and the homeless. Our prayers are with them at this time as they seek to put love into action. We are once more transporting large windows to help the building programme.

The team and our lorry will then travel on to Constanta with the bulk of our supplies - these will be assisting Pastor Dimitrio's Church in the village of Basarabi. This is a very poor community. We last supported this church four years ago and have had very close links with them each time we have visited Constanta. We are also supporting the Hangan family who are missionaries working in remote villages in the same area. Their oldest son Tony is a doctor in the Paediatric Department of the Constanta General Hospital which we are planning to support in October, along with Dr Nicolie's Orthopaedic Hospital.

A 38 tonne vehicle is hopefully being made available to help us transport our medical equipment and supplies in October. We will be linking up with possibly two other teams who are planning to take aid out to Romania at that time. Our journey will then take us to the Baptist Church in Tulcea where we will be linking up with Adrian, a missionary. We have been praying to see how we can help support his missionary work. His church has recently received help to establish a new church in a very poor village - we truly feel led to help them in November on our next mission, as they have not yet received any of our supplies to support their work.

'Gift of Love' parcels will be delivered next to the leper community in Tichilesti along with other much needed supplies to help the new lady doctor and the forty residents. We look forward to meeting our dear friends once again - there is always a warm welcome.

Please can I ask you in Jesus' name to support our work for Eastern Europe in prayer.

We are planning to support a Romanian young lady called Dina this summer - she is Pastor Dimitrio's daughter. She will be travelling back to England with us. She feels called to be a missionary in India and her father has approached us for help.

We also need practical help - urgent provisions - dried food, toiletries -good quality shoes - baby food and supplies - small useful household supplies - educational supplies for children.

Financial help is always needed especially for 'the family shelter home' for the street children - 50p a brick! If you would like to help build this home, we would love to hear from you.

May God bless you all.

**Les and Pamela Gratton**