

Ploughshare August/September2001
(Scanned version of selected articles from the original)

From The Rector –Christopher Frith

I am convinced that Churches are meant to grow, numerically and in various other ways. This is one of my passionate concerns for St Thomas' and St Peter's - and it is why I get agitated at those times when we seem to be standing still or even contracting.

How do Churches grow? It's a science, which has occupied many worthy people and spawned much literature. I recently came across "TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR CHURCH GROWTH", produced by Joel Edwards, Director General of the Evangelical Alliance, and they contain a lot of good sense.

1. Don't just have a welcome mat: Be welcoming
2. Get the building to say "Hello"
3. Worship like you really mean it
4. Make everybody feel important
5. Make the kids happy and they bring their parent along
6. Act generally as though you expect "outsiders" to come in
7. Preach about things people talk about
8. Take the Bible more seriously than you take yourself
9. Talk about God as though He's turned up
10. Make Jesus a mid-week Man

My question to readers of PLOUGHSHARE is this: how are we getting on at St Thomas' and St Peter's with these commandments? Please let me know. I have a hunch that the answers will be significant.

Christopher Frith

Sarah Frith writes

One of the best things about being a student is four whole months with absolutely nothing degree-like to do. This summer I am going to spend half of this time (13th July - 11th Sep) working in Cape Town, South Africa, with the Southampton based charity Hope Now.

For the first couple of weeks I will be staying at Pollsmoor Prison, working in the Juvenile section, alongside Jenny and Jonathan Clayton who multitask as ministers, teachers, counsellors and social workers to the prisoners. Then I will be shadowing a social worker, helping children and teenagers of the township of Langa.

Finally, I will be helping to organise a Sports Week, for the township (potentially my most challenging task, not being blessed with sporting prowess...), and I may also be doing some work with street kids.

Please pray:

- that God will really use us to make a difference in people's lives
- that I will learn more about Him
- for safety, both in travel, and while working in an area where white people are vulnerable.

Report from Belgrade

As some of you may know, Dan Frith and I were in Belgrade, Yugoslavia earlier this summer (June 17-28) where we spent almost two weeks working with students and with EUS, the Christian student movement there.

We were able to go because I am very good friends with the full-time staff worker of EUS. We were able to stay with him in his apt and worked closely with him for the duration of our stay.

From the first day, we spent time talking with individual students, seeking to encourage them as much as possible. I preached in the main student meeting on the Monday and Dan led worship. Throughout the next days I preached a few more times and we both shared with people some of our own experiences of Walking with God and how we are able, to live out our faith positively at university. We sang some songs and Dan led the worship in about six different church meetings, which was much appreciated.

Both Dan and I were really aware that God had been using us while we were in Belgrade, and at the same time we were both really encouraged ourselves. We were both really conscious of people praying for us too, so if you were, then thanks!! The guys in Belgrade asked us to come back and maybe take a small team next year, so please keep praying for us that God would guide us in the planning of this. Please also keep praying for Yugoslavia, for the Christians there that they would be free to witness in public and not just be classed as a sect, and also for the nation itself as it seeks to move forward after the horrors of the recent past.

Andy Goodacre

HOPE FOR EASTERN EUROPE UPDATE 2001

As I reflect back over the last six years, these life-changing journeys to Romania have certainly been challenging, rewarding and faith-building for me personally and for our team.

This mission work into Eastern Europe has touched countless lives here too, and helped us together to reach out and help others in many different circumstances. As God continues to bless and extend our missionary work in Romania, he has led our team to respond to his suffering people in Armenia with essential food and medical supplies. Two consignments have now reached their destination. Ivan Pembakian, director of Armenian Ministries in Holbeach, Lincolnshire wishes to extend a very big thank you to everyone for their very generous gifts.

The highlight of our May Mission this year was purchasing a property in Basarabi, Constanta. This will be used as a safehaven to help people through times of crisis. This Christian base will be registered with the Church under Hope for Life Trust It is a true blessing in this very poor region.

During our time in Basarabi we were taken to visit some extremely poor families in Nazarcea and Ciocarlea de Jos; many under threat of homelessness due to circumstances beyond their control. It seemed an almost impossible task as we listened and tried to assess their desperate situations - but there is always hope with God.

We also had an invitation to visit a Kindergarten in urgent need of educational supplies, and a very beautiful mountain retreat in Hunadoara being renovated to accommodate deprived children in need of a holiday.

We have continued to faithfully support the leper community and the prison ministries with bible gifts and financial help.

Please can you continue to support us prayerfully as we venture into new pastures while still supporting those God has entrusted us with.

May God bless you all

Pamela Gratten

HOLYMOORSIDE ECUMENICAL BIBLE STUDY GROUP

I really cannot remember when our particular Bible Study Group began. It must be at least 10 years ago, or even more. It began as a group of people who attended a Lent Course and enjoyed it so much that we agreed to keep meeting, as a house group, on a regular basis.

I think there were about six of us at first, but over the years our number has grown to almost twenty. Of course, this means it is no longer practical to meet in each other's houses and so we gather together in the Teaching Room at St Peter's on alternate Wednesday evenings at 7.30pm. We have three planning meetings each year. One after Christmas, one after Easter and one in September, when everyone is asked to come along and discuss the material for study in the coming weeks. We also make a point of visiting Willersley Castle, the Christian Guild Holiday Home and Conference Centre at Cromford, twice a year - once for the Mid-Summer dinner and once for our Christmas dinner.

Subjects have varied enormously over the years. A deeper study of the Gospels has been of great value to us. The Acts of the Apostles was a most enjoyable and rewarding study. A special study of the Angels of the Bible" was something quite different, and we have even completed a study of the Book of Revelation, sometimes covering three chapters in one evening!

Several of our members have been to the Holy Land and when we come across a reference to a place we have visited it is absolutely wonderful to be able to cast our minds back to the time when we were there. When we tried to recreate the feeding of the five thousand during Lent last year, we even played a tape of the sound of the water flowing down the mountainside by the Sea of Galilee, and when the Mount of Olives is mentioned, there is no knowing what someone will pull out of their pockets.

We have been successful because the Holy Spirit has been at work within our group, bringing in people from the United Reformed Church, The Methodists, The Church of England, Christian Scientists, The Salvation Army, The Roman Catholic Church and the Quakers.

Does this not just go to show that if we had had the privilege of sitting on the grass by the Sea of Galilee and listened to Jesus preaching his Sermon on the Mount, that we would have all become his followers without any knowledge of the way in which his church would be divided into so called different denominations?

Peter Grayson Secretary of St Peter's.