

From the Rector

It has been no ordinary experience to be Rector for exactly 17 years. St Thomas' is a remarkable church, characterised by bewildering variety and versatility, outstanding love and generosity, emerging signs of community outreach and, under girding it all, deep love for Jesus. For all this, I claim no credit at all, but I do appreciate it.

St Peter's is so much stronger and larger, both the people and the building than it was in 1985. If ever there was a church to describe as friendly, we need look no further. St John's, Walton, has grown out of all recognition and their becoming an independent parish two years ago was a major highlight. In our free paper "**Mustard Seed**" which readers will have seen, I mentioned some special memories and now I have thought of some more.

First comes the development of our daughter churches. Early in our time the PCC agreed that priority must be given to them. Two young families agreed to move from St Thomas', one to St John's, one to St Peter's and that really kick-started the process. I spent a large amount of my time there, especially at St John's. Perhaps, most significant of all, God gave us gifted clergy to take over leadership in both. St Thomas' itself was undoubtedly held back but, over all, it was worth it.

Secondly, there was a Natural Church Development Survey completed in 1998. This was a device designed to reveal the "quality characteristics" most needing attention and the two such were shown to be "empowering leadership" and "functional structures". Behind this jargon, we could see we had major needs and a process began which has led to the formation of our six Mission and Ministry Teams which encompass everything which we do. The leaders of each of them make up our Leadership Team, appointed by and accountable to the PCC. We are now structured much more clearly for growth and leadership is shared.

Thirdly, I think of the appointment of Neil Roper, as our first Youth and Children's Worker. When the challenge to pledge an extra £17,000 a year for at least three years was put to the Annual Church

Meeting in 2000, there was a fantastic, positive response. The challenge to "reclaim a generation" was starting to be grasped.

Fourthly, I thank God for surrounding me with such wide and extraordinary talent and loving commitment. It starts with my wife and family, and includes a wonderful succession of Curates, Office staff, Wardens, Treasurers, Estate managersand so I could go on.

Lastly, and most thrilling of all, I think of the unbelievable joy in witnessing many people come to faith in Jesus. In the end, that is what it's all about.

As I sign off, I want to say to everyone as I often do to God

- THANK YOU for all the encouragement my wife, my family and I have received over the years
- SORRY I've not been a better, more prayerful and godly Rector In many ways, I'd like to start all over again
- PLEASE make pleasing, serving and loving God your priority. Remember our 2002 motto: "Commit yourselves to the Lord and serve Him only " (1 Samuel 7: 3)

Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

Golden Jubilee Celebration - June 2002.

To quote the words of a song - "OH WHAT A BEAUTIFUL MORNING, OH WHAT A BEAUTIFUL DAY". Well at 7am it was just beautiful. I woke up, thinking how wrong weather forecasts could be! But, how wrong I was! At lunchtime, the anticipated rush of setting up was taken over by 6 people, standing, staring at the rain, biding time - not wanting to commit to an indoor decision too soon. Time went on, and even the Rector passing through couldn't offer any words of wisdom. Eventually of course it was necessary to begin, and inside was the only answer. The next dilemma was that passers by would mistakenly assume that we had cancelled the event. So, with much persuading, our 'hot food counter', along with its aroma, was put up at the front of church, along with a rather noisy 'we are here' type game!

Strangely enough, since we had resurrected the Summer Fete concept 3 years ago, we had always seen the importance of having a lot happening in the church building, so that people unfamiliar with our church, would feel welcome, at an informal occasion such as this. This year for some reason, we had decided to hold the whole event outside. Well - that was obviously the wrong thing to be doing! Other than the barbeque; Kevin's tin can alley, and Thomas the Tank Engine - the whole event was inside, and what a lovely atmosphere it created. Oh, I forgot the 3 'stocks' sessions. Naturally they were outside, and the rain did not affect play in any way! The barbecue area, covered by gazebos - and surrounded by more gazebos, led the way nicely into church. Our visitors seemed happy - they were entertained by the puppet show; they mingled amongst the games; and if they queued long enough they could have had their faces painted, hair braided or nails painted - all to 50's music in the bargain. For those who wanted a quieter place to sit and chat, the refreshment area was perfect.

A little over £260 was made, after expenses, most of which has been forwarded to the Chesterfield Soup Kitchen. The remainder was raised on the cake stall for one of our teenage group's holiday. (As is always the case, money raised is a bonus. The whole purpose of our events is to be more a part of our community.) So, there we were, celebrating the Golden Jubilee with friends and family, eating our hot roast cobs, enjoying a lovely cup of tea and having fun - with many thousands all over the country! Many thanks are extended to those people who helped in any way to make the afternoon a success, not least those people who turned out on such a miserable afternoon to support us.

Jane Simmonds

Procession of Witness

The annual Procession of Witness (Whit Walk) had a regal flavour this year as it coincided with the Jubilee celebration. The procession, once limited to the chapels, was opened up a few years ago to all the churches in Chesterfield as an opportunity for witness from the whole church movement.

Christian Education who organise the event themed the Procession "Kings and Queens of the Bible" and St Thomas's was given the subject of "The Wisdom of Solomon" portrayed by the story of the two women and the wise ruling of Solomon in deciding the fate of the child. (Kings 3: 16-28).

Costumes were a last minute problem but Chris Commons kindly volunteered her skills in making both the costumes and the backdrop on the lorry. Chris Rawson provided the lorry, which was driven by Maurice, through his Wheels for Work company.

An extra bonus this year was the provision of a trailer for the children to ride in, by Paul and Jenny Smedley.

Procession day started in hectic style at 7-30 a.m. with the preparation of the float and the children's trailer. The last piece of bunting was fixed as the trailer moved away to start the procession at 9.05 on Chatsworth Rd, joining the other churches and chapels from Brampton.

Our tableau of course was completed by our four biblical characters David Hardy as Solomon, David Sanderson as King's official in charge of air conditioning, (peacocks feathers courtesy of Les Grafton) Gaynor Roberts and Margy Foster as the women.

A short service was held at the Town Hall with the other 28 churches from all over the Chesterfield area. The full procession with some marching bands then set off around the town interspersed with the floats and the walkers from each church. (The largest procession of witness in the country).

At a procession of witness there is great opportunity to evangelise to the watching crowds. Issues of the 'Good News' were handed out along with balloons and pens for the children. Well done everyone, see you next year with a few new faces who want to show the Christian message in the town and have a good time.

Bryn Garland

Graham Brown: Finance and Fabric Mission & Ministry Team Leader....So Soon

Baptised and Confirmed in 2000, Team Leader in 2002. It would be fair to assume I was a little surprised even to be asked.

Yet strangely not very.

As my faith has grown my desire to serve the Lord has grown immeasurably. I have, to some extent, 'sampled' how I might do this. My stints on PCC and as Deputy Warden have led me to appreciate the tremendous contributions that so many make, which I feel we often fail to fully appreciate (although I'm sure God does). Yet throughout this time I have been struck with the nagging thought that, try as I might, these roles were not quite 'me' and that there must be a more appropriate way for me to serve.

Nevertheless I was far from certain that the Finance and Fabric Ministry Team Leader role, or for that matter any M&M role was right either. In praying about this I asked God to show me clearly what he would have me do, and in the way I was invited to put myself forward, I believe he did.

So here I am. Full of a mixture of emotions ranging from feelings of being spiritually young and inexperienced to those of a sense of privilege: to be called to a role to which I believe I am well suited and can contribute. And from those bordering on trepidation for the additional workload and responsibility, to delight at the opportunity to stretch myself spiritually and grow closer to God.

How do I see my role? One of supporting a very able team, which in turn functions to support all of the mission and ministry across the church. The key challenge? Undoubtedly, progressing the development of our development project. That's not to

undervalue the core roles within the team, but to recognise the need for us to grow our youth and children's work and reach out to our parish community to *Share the Love of Jesus*.

Evangelical Alliance - A movement for change

Most Christians have mixed feelings about change. When it takes place in the hearts of sinners, we rejoice. But when change occurs in the wider contexts of society and culture, we tend to strike a different, more defensive note: "Change and decay in all around I see; O Thou who changest not, abide with me!" However, cultural change can be an opportunity as well as a threat.

Like most institutions, the Christian Church is pressured by the surrounding culture. Public perception in Britain is of a Church which has lost ground and remained wedded to irrelevancies. But it's not all bad news. The church may have lost influence, but Christians still have sound reasons for hope. And if growth is happening anywhere, it is happening within evangelical churches, whose public profile has risen as a result.

From its inception in 1846, the Evangelical Alliance sought to influence society and culture. Today, in the 21st century, the EA is uniquely placed to represent the widest cross section of evangelical Christians in the UK. EA seeks to make its voice to Church and society louder still by:

- making sure church leaders and public figures understand the beliefs, values and vision of evangelicals.
- building on the Alliance's growing profile to achieve greater influence and impact for biblical perspectives.
- using its skills and experience in representing evangelical perspectives to parliament.
- speaking out on biblical values. Biblical scholarship will continue to underpin the EA's work, through the work of the think-tank and the Policy Commission.
- being a provocative and prophetic voice to the Church, to help to shape it, under God's direction, into a movement for change.

Sharing these aims for church and society, St Thomas' church has recently joined the EA.

John Goodacre

Introducing St Thomas' Development Project

Following from the vision statement "Share the love of Jesus" the St Thomas' Development Project aims to adapt our current buildings to provide a Parish Centre for the worship of God and the service of the community of Brampton. We seek to:

- glorify God in our worship and all other activities which take place within the Church building
- provide a functional, flexible and fitting building within which people of all ages and backgrounds can "do business with God"
- ensure the centre is used by church groups and groups from the community.

With the full agreement of the PCC, we have appointed an architect to work with us in planning the project. He is David Werrell and as it happens he is also working with St John's, Walton on their plans to connect the Church with the church centre, - one of those lovely coincidences that happens when you pray!

Why do we need this?

There are three main reasons which are now driving the project which are to improve:

- **accessibility for all** - (a requirement now under the Disability Discrimination Act) - the current premises fall short in particular for people with disabilities

- **accommodation for children** and youth activities to allow for growth and expansion of areas of work with these groups to include suitable space for activities e.g. games, drama etc and adequate and sufficient storage space for their needs
- **upgrading the kitchen facilities** to meet requirements for the production and serving of hot and cold food.

Each of these reasons will help us to reach out into our community by enabling the community to come in! We are therefore looking for a building design which

- a) meets our legal and social responsibilities for people with disabilities;
- b) provides flexible space for multiple uses at any one time and
- c) adequate and sufficient storage for the different activities and groups both now and in the future.

When will this happen?

We know that some of you have been waiting a long time for this project to take shape -17 years in some cases! Well, we still have a long way to go, but we believe that God's timing is perfect and that NOW is the time to go forward with this project. The target is to dedicate and open the new building in autumn 2003 - an ambitious timescale but we believe it is achievable.

Your role in the project

More than anything, please PRAY for the project, that we may have faith, courage and generosity in abounding measures!

From Alison Hawksley

(Letter via Yvetta Jacques) Arequipa, June 2002

Dear All at St Thomas',

I do hope that you are all well. I am sending you all my love and greetings from Peru. I am also sending you a packet of bracelets which the children at the children's home have made.

I had a wonderful response to my plea for embroidery threads and the children are delighted with the lovely colours. They are still very enthusiastic and enjoy making up new designs with different combinations of colours. Unfortunately I am bringing home only 8-10 bracelets a week and so in 2-3 months I have enough to send each of my link churches 10 bracelets each (there are 9 churches). I guess production is a bit slow but the children do so enjoy making them and they are kept happy and busy for a few hours a week which I think is the most important thing. I have recently been leaving extra thread with a volunteer who works in the home so that the children

can make bracelets during the week which seems to be working quite well. Anyway, I hope you like the bracelets. Perhaps if people are interested

they could make a donation to the home and then take a bracelet home?

Money could be sent to my mum who will pass it on to the children's' home either through the diocese or via me.

Please lift the children of the home up to God in prayer. They are having a rough time at the moment, they are all having to have psychological and

medical tests which are not very nice.

I do hope that you are all well. With much love as always Yours in Him

Alison. (Hawksley)

Prayer Changes Things - by Eileen Balch

I would like, if I may, to share a poem that I have valued for many years. It was written by Irina Ratushinskaya - a leading Russian poet, who in 1983 was sentenced to 12 years in a strict regime prison camp. Her only crime to write 'anti-Soviet' poetry.

Believe me, it was often thus,
In solitary cells on winter nights,
A sudden sense of joy and warmth
And a resounding note of love
And then, unsleeping, I would know
A huddle by an icy wall
Someone is thinking of me now
Petitioning the Lord for me.
My dear ones, thank you all
Who did not falter, who believed in us
In the most fearful prison hour
We probably would not have passed
Through everything - from start to end
Our heads held high, unbowed,
Without your valiant hearts
To light our path.

I have a vivid recollection of reading this poem in the late eighties at a Women's World Day of Prayer Service, when the worship was constructed by women from the Eastern Bloc. That occasion stayed in my memory as a very powerful time. In the intervening years, Irina's release from prison, where she was kept in degrading conditions, was effected by a Christian group from the West. Also, in what seemed like an amazingly short time, the Berlin wall came down, Communism crumbled and the political scene changed dramatically.

I confess, I cannot remember the year, but those images on television of the Wall being demolished remain. We know today, that many of those countries, especially Rumania, with whom St Thomas' has a close link, are struggling to restore a sense of normality, prosperity and hope in the lives of many damaged people. So it is good to remind ourselves -of the progress and change in a relatively short time. It is right too, to remember that prayer changes things, even in the most desperate of situations. Irina's words stand as testimony to that truth. She knew when people prayed it made a difference. God has arranged things so that our prayers bring His power and love into the world. What a privilege and responsibility is ours when we pray!

Open House Programme

We are planning to have a series of meetings based on a course devised by the Reverend Ray Simpson and the Norwich Diocesan Training Team, called "Spiritual renewal of a neighbourhood". This will help us to see the possible role of the new church development plan to serve our community. This series of meetings will begin on September 25th and take us up to Lent 2003. There will be plenty of scope for social meetings, and a new incentive to pray for World Mission. Invitations and work material will be ready at the beginning of September, and it is hoped that many will join the time of discussion and prayer in groups as we seek to renew our role as a church within the community.

Robin Balch, David Sanderson and Tim Wheeler

The Church Cricket Match

It was a glorious evening: some would say a foretaste of heaven. The sun shone way past 9p.m. There were two full teams of eager cricketers, and most wore whites. To cap it all, for only the second time in living memory, the Rector's team won!

The Choirmaster won the toss and invited the Rector's XI to bat. In their allotted 20 overs they scored 105 for 3 wickets. Jeff Mills played the outstanding innings, retiring for 29. Mark Torkington hit out stoutly at the end and the

Rector, forgetting his age and going for a short single, tore a hamstring and retired hurt.

Dave Simmonds took over leading the side with great aplomb and, to most people's surprise, the Choirmaster's XI were restricted to 79 for 8 wickets, when their time was up. Phil O'Donnell made 23, but his only support came from Geoff Beresforde (10). Matthew Gratton, Steve Broadbent and Jeff Mills each took two wickets. The Charlie Brassington Player of the Match award deservedly went to Jeff Mills, St Thomas' Welsh ambulance driver, and the Rector's XI won by 26 runs.

After the match the Choirmaster and the Rector were both to be heard ruminating about retirement and the Rector dropped his ancient cricket boots in the wheelie bin

People and Jesus Councillor Keith Morgan

In the hurly burly of school teaching, being a councillormy views as a Christian.

Being a Christian is a 24 hour a day commitmentmy other commitments fill most of that time but are complemented by my Christian belief. Both are roles which serve the community, both are roles which have their stressful moments but both, in the right climate, offer a high degree of satisfaction because they are service.

As a Christian I try to be generous, I try to listen, I try to forgive; I try to share my belief---to witness with those with whom I work, I try to be humble and I do pray. I have to say that on all of those attempts I probably fail ---- except the last. Saying a quiet prayer to God in an empty room, in my car, even in the Council Chamber is remarkably "undifficult" ----- I know there is no such word but somehow "undifficult" is not the same as "easy ". "Easy" implies that one leans on it as a solution to problems and it is not like that at all; " undifficult" means that I probably expect it to be hard before I start and it becomes remarkably clarifying, easing and settling. Prayer is what we make it, and I believe that it can work for us all if our faith is strong enough. Mine is often tested, but I know it is being tested and somehow it draws strength from the severity of the test. The more testing the situation, the greater the faith needs to be. More than once, after a testing time I remember and try to act on the words of advice from Eli to Samuel, when Samuel as a boy mistakenly thought that Eli was calling him. (The wiser man of course soon rumbled the situation!!!) "Speak, Lord for thy servant heareth ". And if we remember and acknowledge the presence of God, our problems often, not always, fall into perspective. We are all blessed, profoundly blessed.

We live in a secular world, full of materialism and losing contact with each other and our community. Individuals seek comfort in many forms; the worst possibly being drugs, the best is probably personal achievement and there are many others along that continuum. They all have in common a self direction which often excludes others. Service is forgotten---it is often seen as weakness. As a Christian, I believe that we cannot exclude others. Others are part of the complex world in which we live and they too, have their story. The ultimate in service, of course, is sacrifice and in this Jesus is supreme. Few humans can even walk in that shadow. But that does not mean that we don't understand what it is and therefore my humble service to children and the community is, I suppose, my way of giving back the generosity shown to me by God exemplified in a wonderful family, a fulfilled life, and a belief that it will not end with death.

Keith Morgan