

Ploughshare December 2001/January 2002 (Scanned version of the original)

From the Rector

St Thomas' is changing shape.

The building, of course, has been reordered, highly successfully. We hope, before too long, to continue this development, replacing the temporary tatty portacabins with a permanent structure.

But St Thomas' isn't the buildings; it's us. The year 2002 will see us restructured. In short, all that we do will be contained in six different teams –“Mission and Ministry Teams”. Each team will have a leader appointed by the PCC who will supervise and support all that goes on within it. These leaders, together with the Rector, will form our Leadership Team (Mission and Ministry Leadership Team to use the full title.) They are to be commissioned by the Archdeacon of Chesterfield on Sunday 20th January at 6.30pm.

I'm excited about all this. There should be many gains. For example...

- Everyone serving the Lord in St Thomas' will have a clearly appointed person to whom to relate and to be accountable.
- The PCC, which will be smaller, will not have to be concerned with so much detail but will be able to pray more and to be concerned .with vision 'and policy'.
- Leadership will be shared as the Bible implies it should be. Blockages caused by the Rector's inability to be everywhere at once should be removed.

It will take a year or so to get used to our new shape. We are praying for patience, a sense of humour and the advance of the Kingdom of God in West Chesterfield.

Christopher Frith

Harvest at St. Peter's

Although at the time of writing it's cold and raining buckets, autumn is a lovely time to celebrate God's rich harvest. Our churches are bedecked with beautiful colours of foliage, rosy red apples, baskets of fruit from children, hops from dad, conkers and even a 371b pumpkin metrication having not yet reached Holymoorside! At St. Peter's we are thrice blessed because not only do we join with the URC and Methodist churches in their celebrations, but each have a Harvest Supper as well.

However this is also a time when we can do something for those who do not enjoy a rich harvest. Our Harvest Supper in the Village Hall starts with a hearty meal, prepared by Betty Wright and her band of helpers. This is followed by the auction of produce for the Red Cross famine relief. Our auctioneer, Roy Thompson, is slightly eccentric - some would say very!

Let me illustrate. "What am I bid for these special cucumbers? 50p, is that all? Come on you can do better than that." Meanwhile the one in his hand mysteriously grows 2 inches , longer. "Lady at the back, can I say pound?" Another 2 inches! "I did say were special." By the time the cucumber has reached £1.50, it has grown a full six inches. Next, the exploding sweet corn: "You all know

what this is," says Roy, holding up a sweet corn, "well I bet you didn't know it would make instant popcorn." Bang! Party streamers fly in all directions.

Then we have the anonymous telephone bidder chasing a bottle of wine up to £12. There is also a mysterious tin of baked beans; purchased on the market for 7p, that has ended up being recycled at inflated prices at all three harvest suppers, with a sell by date of September 1998! of 'Golden Oldies' such as; Harvest Moon, Daisy Daisy and Now Is The Hour, all led by the St. Peter's Singers. The net result of all this fun and games is £260 raised for famine relief without the audience even noticing, and still two more harvest suppers to

The evening ends with more audience participation, singing a selection of 'Golden Oldies' such as harvest Moon, Daisy, Daisy and Now is the Hour all led by the St Peter's Singers. The net result was of all this fun and games is £260 raised for famine relief without the audience noticing, and still two more harvest suppers to go!

Adrian Marsden-Jones

Full time student work in Guildford – Andy Goodacre

Since graduating from university in June, I have been preparing for the next step in my life and hope to explain a bit more about that to you in the next few lines. As I write, I have already started my role as a full-time student worker supporting Christian students and Christian activities on the University of Surrey campus in Guildford. I have been heavily involved in running the CU and overseeing cell groups during my final year and feel God calling me to build on this full-time.

The two main parts of my work here are as follows.

We currently have ten cell groups running on campus. These are essentially small groups but with a particular emphasis on growth, both personal spiritual growth, but also numerical growth as people pray for, and reach out to, their non-Christian friends. While I was a student I was heavily involved both in leading cell groups, and then in co-ordinating cells and in training student cell group leaders. Cell groups are the foundation of Christian student activities on campuses throughout the UK, and we benefit particularly from the support and resources of an organisation called Fusion. (www.fusion.uk.com) Now that I am working on the campus full-time I have more time to devote both to supporting individual cell group leaders and to running regular training sessions for cell leaders, as part of a small cell oversight team.

The second key component of my work is supporting the student leaders of the Christian Union. The leadership team changes each year as students beginning their industrial year are replaced by enthusiastic first years. The CU has suffered from this lack of continuity in previous years, so we are keen to support the leaders and help them to build on what has gone before.

In addition to these two key areas, I also spend an increasing amount of time meeting individual students on a one to one basis to listen to and help them where appropriate, and to mentor and disciple them.

I also take part in many of the general Christian activities on campus including early morning prayer meetings, giving out free tea and coffee, speaking in meetings, as well as organising a new Saturday night worship event, which will take place in the main students union building.

I would really value your prayers and support during the next couple of years as I do this work. I really feel called by God to do it, but am so aware that I cannot do it without his help and strength.

Yours in him,
Andy Goodacre

The Incarnation The Word became flesh

Are you ready for Christmas? Have you posted your cards, bought the presents and decorated the tree? If you are like me, you are probably still rushing about doing Christmas shopping. But in all the preparations it is easy to lose sight of what we are really celebrating: the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, 2000 years ago. So let's take a few moments to consider the significance of this amazing event, so amazing, we even base our calendar around it.

A virgin birth

In the gospel of Luke, the angel Gabriel prophesies Jesus' birth to Mary, and it is here that we discover Jesus' conception will not be a natural human one:

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you."

Although Jesus, as Mary's son, would be a human being, he would also be truly divine, "the Son of God". His conception therefore would be sinless. Looking at John's gospel we get more clues about the divine nature of Jesus, or the `Word' as John refers to him:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. "

In other words, Jesus' existence had not begun with his human birth 2000 years ago. As the Word, he had existed *with* God from *before* the Creation, because he *was* God. Yet in revealing Jesus as God, there is no lessening of his humanity, as John declares:

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us."

The word *flesh* itself conveys the idea of Jesus being fully human, feeling pain, hunger and thirst, at risk of illness, disease and injury, just like all human beings. He was not pretending or appearing to be human, he really *was* human.

A humble God

These then are the facts of the incarnation that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus was **born of Mary and the Word** became flesh. But what is so incredible is that it happened at all. Is it not astounding, that Almighty God, the King of Kings, the one who created everything in existence, stepped into his own created world as a tiny, helpless baby, born in a filthy stable, to a poor, humble family?

As Philip Yancey put it in his book "The Jesus I never knew":

"It took courage, I believe, for God to lay aside power and glory and to take a place among human beings..."

Indeed, it did take courage, knowing the ultimate outcome, so why did God undertake such a mission? The answer is love. God loved us so much that he was prepared to sacrifice his only Son, to redeem us from our sins, and to give us the chance of spending eternity with him, if we should choose to accept his incredible gift. It was the ultimate rescue plan, to save the whole world.

So let us not forget, as we are surrounded by images of a sweet baby Jesus in a neat manger, the awesome reality of what *really* happened:

"One night in the cold, in the dark, among the wrinkled hills of Bethlehem, those two worlds [the earthly and the heavenly] came together at a dramatic point of intersection. God, who knows no before or after, entered time and space. God, who knows no boundaries took on the shocking confines of a baby's skin..." (Philip Yancey, "The Jesus I never knew")

Suddenly, all this rushing about doing Christmas shopping seems rather trivial...

Pat Clayton

(Written as part of her Readers' Training Course.)

St Thomas' organ Cleaning and Overhaul

People often wonder what it is about church organs that they need to have so much money spent on them. After all, it still plays and sounds all right, doesn't it? Well yes... and no. Like any machine it requires maintenance and there comes a time in any machine's life when major work has to be done. If not it will collapse in a heap. A few months ago it was decided that St Thomas's organ had reached that point. Outwardly the organ still plays and can produce a sound, but ask anyone who has played it and they will give the same opinion - it is in need of drastic life support. It's a bit like playing a guitar with a string or two missing, or playing a piano with a few sticking or missing notes. The church was faced with some choices: do we spend money giving it a major overhaul or forego the pipe organ altogether?

Faced with several choices the PCC has decided to go ahead with investing in the pipe organ. It is one of the largest (it contains over 1,500 pipes) and best examples of its type in Derbyshire, allowing a wide range of repertoire to be played from J.S.Bach (writing in the 18th century) to the present day. As well as an overhaul we are also taking the opportunity to improve the playability of the instrument and rearranging the pipe layout so that there is better sound projection into the body of the church.

The order for the work has now been placed with Henry Groves and Son of Nottingham who are particularly experienced in restoring our type of organ. The work is due to start in May 2002 and will take about four months to complete.

The cost of the job amounts to about £35,000 including VAT. Taking account of the money already invested in the Organ Fund and the pledges that were made a couple of years ago we still need to find another £10,000 or so. Every bit of support would be very welcome!

Music is an integral part of Christian worship, and for many the organ has an almost unique status amongst all the instruments used in church. St. Thomas prides itself on the variety of musical styles used in its worship, and invests a lot of time and money in ensuring that the music enriches church life at every level.

We have, I believe, an obligation to those who have invested in this instrument in the past - it is nearly 100 years old - as well as to those whom it will inspire in the future. It is a resource to the community at large. As well as Sunday worship it is used for weddings and funerals, and in concert work. This is the first major expenditure on the instrument for many years and by investing now, it should last another 100 years. Apart from regular tuning, there need be no further major expenditure for a generation or more.

Your support in the coming months for our "King of Instruments" would be very much appreciated.

Andrew Travis

Note: the work has been completed.

Visit to Romania August 10th to 2nd September 2001.

Background

Romania has a population of about 22.3m. of whom over half are nominally Romanian Orthodox, followed by just under 1m. Roman Catholics. However, it has Europe's third highest population of Evangelicals. Since the Revolution in 1989, it has seen a sustained church planting movement with an average of 5 churches opening every week.

We visited Dan, Pastor Tintean's son, in Callan in Transylvania, and he pastors a church with a seating capacity of over 500 and a membership of over 300, as well as pastoring a number of other churches!

Romania is a largely agricultural state on the lower Danube but divided in the middle by the Carpathian Mountains. It has rich deposits of minerals and oil but the economy was badly managed by a corrupt elite until the revolution in 1989. The unemployment level was 45% in 1998 and it is still very high today. Dina, who visited us last year, said that many Romanians are now nostalgic for the pre-Revolution days, when at least most people had food, a job and low cost accommodation.

The Journey

Les Gratten and John Deaville probably each drove 40% of the journey, (3865 miles, there and back,) leaving me to do the easier bits and mostly in daylight! Over 3 days we drove on motorways to Ramsgate, across on the ferry to Ostend, then on to Brussels, across Germany, through Austria, Hungary and finally across the border into Romania. So far there is only one stretch of motorway in Romania, though others are planned.

Though the roads have improved much in the last few years, the culture of Romanian driving takes some getting used to! Overtaking drivers appear to have right of way, so that on-coming drivers slow and vehicles being overtaken make a space for them -all without flashing lights or tooting horns!

I have to admit that patience is a virtue I lack, and I found the waiting in customs rather trying -4 hours at the Hungarian border and nearly 5 hours at the Romanian one. I echoed the monk on a poster Fiona once gave to Jill and myself -"Lord give me patience -and I want it now!!" On one occasion we felt the customs officer was going slow and angling for higher returnable deposit was required through Hungary. After some delay, trying to sort out enough Dollars and Marks, the

official then changed his mind! A third official required extra documentation, which needed a fax from the church in Basarabil On this and a number of occasions we were aware that some people wanted to hinder us and then from nowhere another would come who wanted to help!

I am sure that God was answering the prayers made before and during the journey as we encountered difficulties! When we were lost outside Budapest in Hungary a man appeared when we had stopped, but before we even got our map out, to ask us if he could help. He then took us 15 minutes out of his way to put us on the right road. His action seemed to fit the Bible verse " before you have asked I have answered"!

Again in the centre of Bucharest, when road signs were none existent, a taxi driver refused to help. However, immediately outside my window, a man walking his dog not only understood English, but also pointed us in the right direction - much to the annoyance of the taxi driver, who had changed his mind and, for a fee, wanted to show us the way!

Tinca.

We arrived at Pastor Eugene's house where we were subjected to 2 hours of aggressive begging by the local gypsy colony before he returned! I found this very difficult, knowing that if we gave out even a sweet, 30 more gypsies would appear from nowhere and beg for more! As it was, an adult distracted us by getting a young girl to sing a Christian chorus while the older children crept under the lorry. They managed to steal my bag containing a change of clothing and my towel, pyjamas, and shaving things from behind the locker on the side of the lorry. We had to admire the skill with which they did this since we did not miss my things until bedtime, later that evening.

What can you do, humanly speaking, if you have no job or permanent home, except either beg or steal? During the night, not only did bed bugs bite John and Les, but also the water was cut off so we could not take a shower! After

24 hours in hot weather, without a change of clothing or a shower, I considered myself an honorary gypsy! During our drive across Europe I had been praying that God would confirm to me that we were still doing things His way because the costs of transporting the lorry's contents across Europe seemed so expensive. In a strange way, having to live like a gypsy for 24 hours not only made me sympathetic to their situation but was also an answer to my prayer, that what we were doing was meeting a real need!

Basarabi

We stayed with Pastor Dimitru Tintean and his wife in Basarabi and they and their daughters, gave us very generous hospitality - including Dinar, who did most of the translation during our visit. It is difficult to pick out the highlights, since almost every day we experienced moving scenes and events. On one day we were interviewing Dan for a job as supervisor for the safe-house project but feeling that it was premature to offer him the job. During the discussion we found out that his electricity had been cut off that morning, and it seemed rather more important to clear that debt for him. We also agreed to pay for him to train for a heavy goods vehicle licence so that he could get a permanent job.

On another day Pam and some of the others visited a lady who was badly in debt, and had prayed in desperation for help the day before. When Pam arrived she had enough money, already given, to be able to pay the lady's debts. Another memory was of the church-plant village of Ciocarlea de Jos, where a man and his family were living in a very run down mud brick and was due for demolition shortly. When we met him in the evening, he was helping put finishing touches to the recently completed church, where he was a member. During the day he was making mud bricks for his new house on land bought by the church, with money given by us. At night he slept on top of the bricks to prevent them being stolen and in his absence they were guarded by his dog! Since we got back we have learned that he has completed his house. It is planned that he will be paid to help build the remaining six houses.

For the future, it is obvious we need also to think about ways of helping to create jobs. Perhaps we can take sewing machines so that some women can make clothes for themselves and also sell them to others. Perhaps we can also help finance the setting up of a small pig-breeding unit at Nazarcea in the former State Pig Farm buildings. As a result of visiting Romania, one of my personal objectives is to try to live more simply in our consumer oriented society so that I can give more to those more desperately in need.

Richard Robinson

Advent

The year narrows to its conclusion
And days are compressed to a shorter span.
Landscapes take on a bleaker aspect
While congenial lamps shed a welcome light.

Beyond our comforting and well lit homes
The universe appears vast and unmeasured.
Light pulsates from distant pale nebulae
And minds reach out to grasp its meaning.
Will the Father's handwriting seen
In distant constellations speak to us?
We are awed, troubled and overwhelmed
Yet universal in its scope and meaning.
A young woman sees fulfilled The words of an angelic messenger
As she folds in her arms a newborn child.

Lighthouse party 2001

We had a party on the 31 October to celebrate light and God! It was called the Lighthouse Party and about 100 children came along to join in the fun.

We had puppets, music and songs, and we even had some very special flag waving.

There was craft, parachutes, flip the kipper, video, food and sweets, and a game involving hoops which I never really fully understood! It was a great night for all and I would like to thank all those who came along to help as well as all those who joined in.

Neil Roper