

PLOUGHSHARE

December 2008/January 2009

Volume 17, No 1



St Thomas' Brampton St Peter's, Holymoorside

Share the love of Jesus

*We aim to become more like Jesus every day
as we respond to His love for us and
as we share the good news of Him with others*



'Clearing and claiming the ground' -see pages 6 and 7



Remembrance Sunday at St Thomas' -see page 2

60p per copy (£3 per year)

Monthly Pattern of Sunday Services

There is a variety of services each Sunday in both our churches. Details are set out below. Please note that changes may occasionally occur at short notice. For the latest up to date information please check the weekly notice sheet or www.st-thomas-brampton.org.

St Thomas'

Sermon themes and readings are available in Church or at www.st-thomas-brampton.org/services.html

Podcasts of the sermons and readings are available at www.st-thomas-brampton.org/podcasts.html

- 9am** A fairly traditional service of Holy Communion every Sunday using 'Common Worship' and with a choir and organ.
- 11am** A more informal service than 9am usually with a music group. There are children's groups (3 to 10 plus years old) and a crèche.
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|---|-----------------|
| 1 st Sunday | All Age Worship |
| 2 nd Sunday | Holy Communion |
| 3 rd , 4 th (and 5 th) Sunday | Morning Worship |
- 6pm** A fairly informal service usually with a music group.
- | | |
|---|-----------------|
| 1 st , 2 nd , 3 rd (and 5 th) Sunday | Evening Worship |
| 4 th Sunday | Holy Communion |
- 4.30pm** 'energize -1' for 10-14 year olds
- 8pm** 'energize -2' for 14-18 year olds

St Peter's

- 9.30am** A fairly traditional service of Holy Communion every Sunday using 'Common Worship' and 'Mission Praise' and with an organ. There is Sunday Club (3 years old to school year 9) and a crèche.
- 6pm** A fairly traditional service of Evening Prayer using the '1662 Service' and 'Mission Praise' and with an organ
(Note: the evening service on the 4th Sunday of the month is held at Holymoorside Methodist Church.)

Please see the 'Diary' on page 19 for details of our Christmas Services and Events

Next edition: February/March 2009
Publication date: 1 February
Closing date for articles: 11 January



From the Rector

Dear Friends,

All we seem to hear about at the moment is the credit crunch –despite the government and all political parties trying to persuade us that they are the ones who can ‘look after us’ the reality is that many folks are facing a much reduced Christmas this year. I know of several people who have already lost their jobs and are finding it difficult to re-enter the market place. It’s one thing to be forced to ‘give up’ luxuries, it’s completely another to choose to do so.

At Christmas we remember how God made a conscious choice to ‘give up’ the glory of heaven in order to be born in a stable as a tiny baby. The bible reminds us that God ‘made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness’ (Phil 2:7). The question begs to be asked, “WHY?”

The answer is of course love –unless God did this thing then we would never be able to enjoy knowing God as our friend. That which began in a stable in Bethlehem ended on a cross in Jerusalem –the place where Jesus surrendered his life, in order for us all to truly know God and live.

We understand that whatever our circumstances we’re prepared to make sacrifices for our children at Christmas –how much more true is this of God who sacrificed himself that we might know him completely.

Confused? Amazed that God could do such a thing? Come along and join us at St. Thomas’ as we explore the depths of God’s love at Christmastide.

Have a very Happy Christmas and peace filled New Year.

Rev Matthew Barnes, Rector

Congratulations to.....

Irene and Ken Franklin from St Peter’s who celebrated their Ruby wedding anniversary on 29 September. They also had their marriage blessed and re-affirmed their vows at a service taken by Rev Audrey in front of their family and friends on Sunday 5 October. They followed this with a celebration buffet in Holymoorside Village Hall.

From the Editor

In my editorial last month I looked forward to the gift days for both our respective building projects at our churches. Well they happened. St Peter's have even built their new vestry (see picture on the back page.) St Thomas' have enough money to start building once the final legal hurdles have been overcome. (Read more on page 6 onwards.)

It is with sadness we have to say goodbye to two of our church family. **Dawn Edingborough**, our Children's and Families' Worker, is moving to London to take up a new job there. **Eric Fogg**, one of our most senior members, is moving to Bristol to be nearer his family. We wish them well and pray for God's blessing on them as they start a new phase of their lives.

The **Remembrance Service** at St Thomas' was particularly special this year for a number of reasons. The Scouts, Cubs and Beavers played a big part doing a drama, reading the Bible and leading the prayers. They also paraded their colours. John Prentice sang a moving song and Matt gave a meaningful address. The service ended at the Cenotaph where we observed the two minute silence at 11am. Representatives of the Town, the Police and the congregation laid wreaths, including Eric Fogg –the last one he will lay at St Thomas'. Ten year old Courtney Collins played the 'Last Post' on her cornet.

However the most enduring memory for me was the cold. It was a chilly, blustery day but dry. We must have been outside at the Cenotaph for no more than fifteen minutes yet I was glad to get back inside and warm up. What it must have been like for those soldiers in the trenches I cannot imagine. They were there for months or years in the cold and wet and under shell fire –let alone living with rats and lice. Yet wars continue even today –why?

Listen to the Matt's address and see pictures of the service at www.st-thomas-brampton.org/gallery.html

Mark Hoare



Congratulations also to.....

Gemma Machin, our Youth Worker, who received her degree in November in *Youth, Community Work and Applied Theology*.

Gemma is pictured with Rachel Witham who accompanied her to the degree ceremony

My Christian Journey of Life -David Oldale

David and his wife Pam are longstanding members of St Thomas'. This is an abridged version of the testimony David gave at 'Rendezvous'.

I cannot tell you of a sudden flash of light or a sudden voice telling me that I should follow Jesus. My story is much more mundane. I suppose it can be said that I was born into a Christian life and, more or less, I have tried to continue on that path all my long life.



David and Pam

I was actually born on a Whit Monday in Sheffield as the local churches toured the streets singing their hymns. Some of those hymns were actually composed by my grandfather on my mother's side. He was a church organist and his wife, my grandmother, a Methodist Lay Preacher. My mother and father met at Firth Park Methodist Church in Sheffield and my Mother was their first May Queen! So the scene was set for a Christian upbringing.

From the age of five until I was seventeen we lived in Dronfield and most Sundays involved three visits to the Congregational chapel in Lea Road. I was in the choir for morning services, Sunday school in the afternoon and then evening service. I know that this puts many people off church but I have to say I really enjoyed it. Looking back, interwoven with the spiritual aspects we had a lot of fun! One of our young friends at the church lived almost next door at the bank. I remember, on a snowy Sunday night, rushing out of chapel early, climbing on to the bank's flat roof and directing snowballs on the rest of the congregation as they came out of chapel!

Another thing I remember was the time when a number of us were to present a short drama in the service and for some reason I failed to learn my words. I have to confess that my prayers on this occasion were answered as several members of the cast were taken ill and at the last minute the drama was cancelled!

I used to love the Church Anniversary when we sang and worshipped in celebration. I also have to confess that, for us lads, the fact that there were a few pretty girls around added to the fun! This may have been because I went to a boys' school in Sheffield! At that school we had assembly every morning and I can still recall singing number 701 in 'Songs of Praise', the last hymn in the book - 'Ye Holy Angels bright' and for that reason it is still one of my favourites.

<continued

So my school days were happy and comfortable but it built into me a strengthening faith. I thank my parents, grandparents and the Lord for that.

I left school at seventeen and became an articled clerk to a firm of accountants in the City of London. By this time, 1952, my mother's parents had retired south to Leatherhead in Surrey, and I spent the next five years studying in the evenings and living with my grandparents. I became a member of their Methodist church and learnt more about the bible as it continued to sign the path of life for me.

I qualified in 1957 and in 1958 her Majesty caught up with me for National Service and I joined the RAF. The first two months were quite a culture shock! Square bashing, being yelled at by NCOs, living twenty in a room with a whole variety of fellow airman was not easy. What did I do? I joined the camp's ecumenical church group and together we prayed and soon our problems disappeared and I thoroughly enjoyed my two years service. During the early days a few of us spent a weekend at a retreat in Conway, North Wales - a really uplifting spiritual time.

In 1960 I was demobbed and spent a couple of years back in London sharing accommodation first with my brothers then with an RAF friend. I have to admit I drifted away from church attendance.

But early in 1963, I decided I wanted to return north. My parents had started attending St John's in Dronfield and I remember being part of their stewardship campaign, visiting local families to seek their commitment to giving money and talents. Very soon however, we moved to Sheffield; Pam and I were engaged and we shifted our allegiance to her nearest church, St Swithin's in Holmesfield where in September 1964 we were married.

Later that year we moved to Dunston and in the next few years we were blessed with two children, Sue and Andrew. We introduced them to Sunday school at Newbold Church but I have to confess we were not very regular in our worship there.

1971 was an eventful year. First Pam's father and then my father died and in December we moved into our new house in Brampton, where we still live. A few years later, Andrew, who was attending Old Hall Junior School was recruited by a certain Reverend Vyvyan Watts-Jones into the choir at St Thomas'. We started attending here and I found myself becoming involved in the worship and the administration and by the end of the seventies I was a churchwarden. I remember that my first three year term as churchwarden was extended because there was an interregnum between Vyvyan leaving and Christopher Frith joining,

My day job involved working for an American firm based in Dronfield and Sheffield and included a fair amount of overseas travel, mainly to America. Whilst abroad, I would usually attend local services. In America this sometimes meant

getting early to church in order to get a seat. Once in Zambia I attended a marvelous outside gathering of hundreds of people of all ages all wearing their Sunday best.

Back at home, I became interested in Industrial Mission and was able to organise regular visits by local clergy to our company. This was appreciated by people I never expected to want to share their problems with church leaders. It is so easy for us to make false judgements.

I was able to take early retirement in 1993 and, since then, I have been able to serve the Lord in a few small ways. In particular with the elderly, by regular visits with a team from St Thomas' and St Peter's to the residential homes in the parish, and with St John's and St Peter's in the Wednesday Lunch Plus project at St John's (which has now run its course.) I am now also part of the team that organises the Rendezvous events.

It would be easy, I suppose, to get immersed in everything church but I have chosen rightly or wrongly to put a lot of effort into voluntary helping a number of charities (probably about fifteen currently, to a small or larger extent) by offering and using the talents which the Lord gave me on that Whit Monday many years ago.

I would like to end with verses from two of my favourite hymns.

This one we sang at our wedding:

Father hear the prayer we offer
Not for ease that prayer shall be
But that we may, forever
Live our lives courageously.

And the second from a favourite hymn of mine that we used to sing at the end of evening service so many years ago. It really helps me to appreciate the great God who rules over all:

So be it, Lord: thy throne shall never,
Like earth's proud empires, pass away.
Thy Kingdom stands, and grows forever,
Till all thy creatures own thy sway.

David Oldale

I think David has been a little modest in telling us what he has done for St Thomas'. He has spent many hours on church 'business'—including managing the churches finances in conjunction with Phil Johnson—Editor.

St Thomas' Development

Day of Commitment -Sunday 12 October 2008

The build up to the Day of Commitment started several weeks before hand. In fact it started just after Matt arrived when, at the June People @ Prayer meeting, we stood in Portacabin 2 and prayed. Matt prayed with such enthusiasm and conviction that I almost expected our new building to rise before our eyes!

A few weeks later Matt sketched out 'on the back of an envelope' a design for the new centre and over the next couple of months the Development Team came up with a workable design.

Although we had had many 'fun'd raising' events a large sum of money was still needed.

Towards the end of September we had a couple of sermons on the theme '*Investing in the Kingdom of God*' focusing on money –it belonging to God and giving it back to God. We were also encouraged to pray and pray and pray some more.

Gemma Machin and Kat Witham put together a video to the slightly adapted words of the song '*God in this City*'. This video showed pictures of some of the things we had done at St Thomas' over the past few years. Gemma said "The key lines are: [song in full on page 8]

*Greater things have yet to come,
Greater things have still to be done in this city
Greater things have yet to come,
Greater things have still to be done in St Thomas'.*

In order to do greater things at St Thomas' for the young, old, in between, community etc. we have to replace the portacabins with a new and purpose built building."



Preparing
the ground



A couple of weeks before the Day of Commitment we 'prepared the ground'. The footprint of the building was marked out and the ground cleared of undergrowth.

Starting on the Friday evening before the Day of Commitment we had 24 hours of prayer. We were asked to fill fifteen minute slots with prayer. Also there was a service of prayer at the start of the 24 hours, a Eucharist part way through and a celebration service at the end of the 24 hours.

We also 'claimed the ground' after the Friday evening service around a bonfire in the church grounds and a few hardy souls, young and old, claimed it some more by camping out in the grounds! Most of the campers were kept awake by the church clock chiming on the hour but were rewarded in the morning by plates of bacon sandwiches.

The Day of Commitment dawned bright and sunny for our service. It was a combined service at 10.30am for both our morning congregations. As we came into church we were given a stone taken from the church yard and during the service we built a cairn out of them –the stones representing 'Living Stones', members of our church family. (See the article on page 18 '*Living Stones-a Parable of Church*' for a full explanation.)

During the uplifting service our donations and pledges were counted and Phil Johnson, the Church Treasurer, announced the amount, **£250,000**. What an achievement and witness particularly as the Day of Commitment came after one of the worst financial weeks the country has ever known.

Adding this amount to the amount already in the Development Fund we now have some £700,000. Enough to go forward with our building –praise the Lord!

You can see more photographs, watch the '*God in this City*' video, listen to the teaching and much more at www.st-thomas-brampton.org/commitment



Claiming the ground



God of this City

You're the God of this city
You're the king of these people
You're the Lord of this nation
You are.

You're the light in this darkness
You're the hope to the hopeless
You're the peace to the restless
You are.

There is no one like our God
There is no one like you God

Greater things have yet to come
Greater things have still to be done in this city
Greater things have yet to come
Greater things have still' to be done at St Thomas'.

You're the Lord of creation
The creator of all things
You're the King above all Kings
You are'

You're the strength in the weakness
You're the love to the broken
You're the joy in the sadness
You are.

There is no one like our God
There is no one like you God.

Greater things have yet to come
Greater things have still to be done in this city
Where glory shines from hearts alive
With praise for you and love for you at St Thomas'.

Greater things have yet to come
Greater things have still to be done in this city
Greater things have yet to come
Greater things have still to be done at St Thomas'.

Still to be done here
Still to be done here
Still to be done here

St Thomas' Development

What are we Planning to Build?

Paul Benson, Chair of the Sub-development Committee explains

We plan to keep the existing meeting room and replace the portakabins with a modern, accessible, single building using renewable energy sources and sustainable materials. The building will provide flexible space so that different activities will be able to take place at the same time.

The building will support the following activities:

- A café area;
- A space for recreation, church parties, socials, etc;
- Work with the elderly (over 55's club, etc);
- Work with children and young people;
- Small meeting and conference facilities;
- A venue for alternative worship;
- Space that could be easily made available for local community groups;
- Office facilities.

The building will be sympathetic to its location, taking full advantage of its natural surroundings and forming a central courtyard, which will act as a focal point for the church.

If you want to discuss the building in more detail you can contact myself [Paul Benson] or a member of the Sub-development Committee – Emma Atkinson, Matt Barnes, Bernard Blanksby, Angela Gregory, Phil Johnson, Karen and Phil Riley or a member of the PCC.

More information can be found at the back of St Thomas' Church and at www.st-thomas-brampton.org/sttdev



A computer generated impression of the new centre

Living Stones -Walking the Cumbria Way

In the first ten days of October this year I completed a sponsored walk along the beautiful Cumbria Way, the long distance footpath through the Lake District, in aid of the Living Stones Project.



A few facts about the path include:

- It starts in Ulverston on the south west of the Lake District and close to the shores of Morecambe Bay;
- It concludes at the Market Cross in Carlisle on the Scottish Borders;
- It is 75 miles long;
- The terrain covered included farm land, open fell and moor land and high craggy peaks.

A few other pieces of information that I was not expecting:

- The Way is often blocked by flooded paths and road ways;
- Within the first three miles you can be bitten by a farm dog, rounding me up like a sheep!
- Tea rooms tend to shut at 4pm, whilst I am still walking!
- I was actually pleased to be in Carlisle!
- Completing three climbs of over 2000ft make me puff (a lot!);
- The majority of people are very kind and helpful;
- The autumn colours in the Lake District are stunning.



Beautiful views

So why do it? Because it is there -and walking at a steady pace through one of our National Parks allows you see and feel things that are shut away from the motorist and those too busy to spend some time in just standing and staring.

Amongst the unusual things found on the way;

- A museum to Laurel and Hardy;
- A museum of pencils;
- Sculptures of wood and fabric in woods, lakes and open countryside, to fit in with the environment;
- A stone for school children to spit at as it is said to keep the worst of the winter away;
- One of the most visited tarns in the Lake District that is entirely man made and did not exist before 1914!
- A pool in a fast following river for baptising converts to Christianity;
- About half the population of Carlisle do not believe there is a Market Cross in the town!

Time for reflection allows for an appreciation of the wonders of creation. I believe this shows us much about the Heart of God. Time also is used for considering my own values and place in the grander scheme of things. Perhaps I'm not as important as I would like to think! But perhaps things that are very important are glossed over in the business of a working life and the demands we seek to impose on ourselves. These things need time to be digested and reflected on, so more of that another time.

The sponsorship drove me on and when I wanted to give up I was determined to complete the course. Many thanks to all of you who sponsored me, over £400 was raised for the Development Project.

I also learnt that individual raindrops when brought together lead to great lakes and also a good soaking for me!

John Small

Enjoying a well earned rest!



From 'Bela' Russia with love

Don and Lorna Wild have hosted Sasha Danilenko, a 'Chernobyl Child,' for eleven years.

For eleven years we have hosted Sasha, initially through Friends of Chernobyl's Children (FOCC) then on private visits, the last occasion being Christmas 2007.

By way of background the charity had been formed to bring deserving children to Britain from Belarus to have a month of good food, fresh air and exercise to help build up their immune system. It has been estimated that 70% of the radiation from the 1986 Chernobyl Nuclear disaster in neighbouring Ukraine fell on Belarus and many children suffer from acute thyroid, respiratory and immune system problems. (There has been a 24 fold rise in the incidence of thyroid cancer). Those children who have benefited from the FOCC programme and many other similar charities have been seen to be much more resistant to serious illness.

At the formation of the Chesterfield/Dronfield FOCC Group we had responded to a local newspaper advert seeking 'host families' for a four week period in October 1997. Prior to the visit we had a brief introduction to the Russian language and funds had been raised locally via Rotary in particular to meet the cost of the visit.

The children's arrival had been awaited with increasing apprehension as the date approached. The fifteen children with a teacher/interpreter ultimately arrived very late in the evening after a 36 hour journey via Lithuania and flight to Gatwick. The children were very tired and nervous, and, following limited



Sasha on his first visit
in 1997, age 6



Sasha with Don and Lorna
in 2007, age 16

formalities, we were introduced to Sasha. We had opted for a boy as Don felt, whatever the communication problem, football was a universal language and this proved quite exhausting over the years!

On arrival Sasha had been dressed for the Russian winter. Only when we reached home and unwound his hat and scarf did we discover a great 6 year old boy with beautiful blond hair. He tentatively took from us a 'Lion King' cuddly toy, only to pass it back as he could not comprehend that the gift was for him. He had experienced his first journey in a car with seat belts and our home must have seemed like a palace to him compared with Belarus. There he lived in one room in a hostel with his mother with a communal kitchen down the dimly lit corridor along with appalling bathroom facilities. Sasha was amazed to experience hot water from the taps and a properly flushing toilet.

That first night we did not know whether to feed him, bath him or get him to bed as it was nearly midnight. We chose food first and watched him eat everything we put before him. (We suspected he had not eaten since leaving Belarus.) Our communication that night was by sign language, actions with lots of smiles and ultimately we put him to bed with a gentle goodnight kiss on the forehead.

We had not known what to expect, being apprehensive of tears, tantrums and bewilderment. We really need not have worried as Sasha was a joy from day one, being eager to learn English and we quickly discarded the Russian phrase book. There followed four subsequent visits with the charity and three private visits. We saw Sasha develop into an affectionate, intelligent young man who has just started University in Belarus. Additionally last December he was involved with the distribution of shoe boxes for Operation Christmas Child in his home town of Mogalev.

During this period Don and I have had the privilege of visiting Belarus with the Group Chairman of FOCC on goodwill visits to meet the families of the visiting children. This enabled us to meet up with Sasha's family and experience the severe conditions in Belarus at first hand.

When we first agreed to host a Chernobyl Child we never anticipated the bond that would be developed with Sasha and the long lasting relationship with a family in Belarus. This has not just involved ourselves but our whole family and many of our friends. Sasha now appears to be in good health with a bright future ahead of him.

Lorna Wild

You can read about a visit Don made to Belarus in the October 2004 edition of Ploughshare or at www.st-thomas-brampton.org/mission1.html

The Women's World Day

Friday 6 March 2009

The **Women's World Day Of Prayer** is a worldwide Inter-denominational movement of Christian women of many traditions who come together to observe a common day of prayer on the first Friday in March every year.



It began in 1887 in a small New York community. Today more than 170 countries and islands take part, and the international Order of Service is translated into more than 60 languages and 1000 dialects.

The Day of Prayer begins on the International Dateline. The first service is held at dawn in Queen Salote's School in Tonga. Then as the earth rotates a great 'Mexican Wave' of prayer rises through the Pacific and Asia, through Fiji, New Zealand, Japan, Philippines, Korea and Bangladesh to Africa; through the Middle East, Lebanon, Egypt and Cyprus to Europe East and West; across the Atlantic to the Caribbean, South, Central and North America, until the last service of the day is held on an island off the coast of Alaska.

The 2009 order of service has been prepared by the Christian Women of Papua New Guinea. The theme is '**In Christ There Are Many Members But Only One Body**'. All services will take place on Friday 6 March 2009, and men, women and children of all ages are welcome!

In 2009 St Thomas' will be hosting a 10.30am service. The speaker will be Major Caddoggan. There are about a dozen speaking parts in the order of service. It is normal practice for the parts to be taken by members of the host church and other churches, and for a rehearsal to take place a week before.

Please make a note of the date in your diary, and prayerfully consider whether you'd like to take part.

More details including and order of service can be found at www.wwdp-natcomm.org

Kathryn Shemwell

Holymoorside Well Dressing 2008

Steam –a Bygone Age

This is the text that accompanied the Main Well picture (see back page).

Forty years ago, the last steam train ran its final journey. It was the end of the age of the steam train.

The last steam engine was called the 'Oliver Cromwell'. The well dressers make no apology for not depicting this particular engine on our well dressing. We decided that 'Oliver Cromwell' was not the type of steam engine we can remember from our childhood (yes, we are that old!). Our attempt to portray a steam engine may not be accurate to every detail, but we hope to have captured the essence of these magnificent machines.

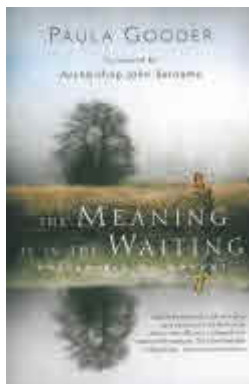
George Stephenson, the railway pioneer, built his first steam engine 'Rocket' in 1829. He settled in Chesterfield and was buried in Trinity Church in 1848.

This year our chosen charity is NEDSCAN which has raised money for the Scanning Suite at Chesterfield Royal Hospital. All donations will be given to NEDSCAN.

Last year, donations and proceeds from the sale of photographs raised £500 for PATHWAYS -an organisation to help the homeless in Chesterfield.

Two Books to Read for Advent

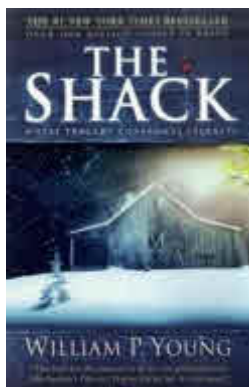
Advent is traditionally a season of spiritual preparation for the coming of Jesus. I would like to invite you to consider two books to read together during this time to help us be ready in a new way for an old truth. **-Matt Barnes**



Paula Gooder's book 'The Meaning is in the Waiting: The Spirit of Advent' is a traditional Advent volume helping us to see 'waiting' as not 'wasting' time. Paula is a very deep theologian but her learning is not overbearing in this very accessible devotional read, divided into 24 short meditations. Helpful, insightful and well written, you can't go wrong! (See review opposite.)

Go for this if:

- You're too busy to read an Advent book;
- You like more traditional Christian literature;
- You're looking for biblical insights.



As my 'left-field' choice I offer you '**The Shack**' by **William P. Young**. It's a novel; it will not be what you expect. It may be uncomfortable and it is certainly not conventional as it's not theology as we probably think of it. It should be said that it's loved and loathed in equal measure, but for my money its attempt to communicate something about God in such a fresh and unusual way is worth a read. Watch out for the interesting insights into the incarnation and the nature of the relationship between the Trinity.

Go for this if:

- You like novels;
- You're struggling with pain in your life;
- You enjoy being challenged to think 'outside the box'.

For those who are interested, I'd be pleased to invite anyone who would like to come and discuss these books together to do so at the Rectory on **Monday, 22 December at 8pm**. Sherry and mince pies will be available!

For more information, price and an order form see the leaflet in our churches or at www.st-thomas-brampton.org/adventread.pdf

The Meaning is in the Waiting

by Paula Gooder

Paula Gooder's premise that Advent is a time to anticipate the coming of Christ prayerfully and celebratory is a timely reminder to Christians that we are in the world, but not of it and that deferring gratification may be a key to spiritual growth.

The preface, written by Dr John Sentamu the Archbishop of York, calls the book 'a masterly bulwark' and encourages us to 'make it last through Advent'. However, on your behalf, I read it in one week.

It is a traditional potted history of major and some minor players in the Advent narrative using the Advent wreath as a device to illuminate (pardon the pun) the journey to Bethlehem.

The text begins with some musings on the purpose of 'waiting', suggesting that 'the meaning is in the waiting' and can be an activity filled with possibility rather than passively hanging around, longing for the main event. An accessible meditation both for the uninitiated and readers familiar with the intricacies of the House of David's line: we start with Abraham and Sarah and meander to Mary. Pausing to ponder the Prophets and contemplate that most patient of men: John the Baptist, along the way.

Gooder encourages us to look at Advent as a time of 'nurture' and 'valuable in its own right' and considers that to be unable to wait might preclude us from being fully present in the now. The further reading suggestions are useful and increase the opportunities for reflection, meditation and contemplation. The text is an ideal companion for active waiting.

Each one of us has a way of engaging with Advent; mine is finding a *Messiah* from scratch to attend during December. In addition, I play my recording of Handel's divine oratorio sung by the Huddersfield choir, until my husband begs for mercy. As the tenor voice opens with 'Comfort thee...' the hairs on the back of my neck stand up and my eyes fill with tears.

So, this Advent don't just ignore the biscuits shaped like snowmen and the gaudy tinsel strands coming soon to a supermarket near you. Refuse to enter into those brain numbing 'ready for Christmas yet?' conversations and become an active 'waiter' for Christ and a prayerful reader of the Advent story. Gooder's text may supply a new way of looking at this important time in the Christian calendar.

Reviewed by Millie Guthrie

Published by Canterbury Press £8.99, ISBN No: 9781853119088

Living Stones -a Parable of Church.

Prior to his induction as our Rector, Matt, went on retreat to the Holy Island of Lindisfarne. Whilst away he took a walk along the beach.

“Help me build a church” said the Lord, “I’ll try”, I replied, “What should I build with and how should I build?” The Lord was clear, “Build with these stones, they’re living stones – love them”. As I walked the beach there were thousands upon thousands of stones all spread out on top of one another as far as the eye could see. In one sense there was very little to distinguish one from the other but as I looked more closely I saw how each stone was completely unique. Some were large and some were small, some were smooth to the touch and some were less so. Some had sharp, protruding points and some were perfectly rounded.

I began to reach out and touch and hold the stones and began to form them into a pile. A cairn quickly began to rise from the ground, a marker, a gathering. As I built I became aware how nothing was holding these stones together other than one another –smaller stones sat between larger ones, larger ones supported smaller ones –some touched the other stones around them very closely as if they had always been together. For others the join looked awkward and uneven yet even in the awkwardness as the cairn was formed had I attempted to remove those that jarred the cairn could easily have collapsed –in their difference they provided a hidden strength.

As I stacked stones onto the cairn some rolled off and away out of the grasp of my hand, as I turned to collect other stones some seemed to will my hand to gather them. I was drawn to pray for the people of St Thomas’ and St Peter’s and the Parish of Brampton –by name for those I knew.

When I had finished my work and looked at what had been done, still many more stones lay on the beach not built into my afternoon’s work. The stones in themselves in the cairn hadn’t changed but their impact on the beach was significant. Together they stood out in a way that on their own they did not. Deeply rooted on the earth but pointing to heaven they meant something, they stood tall and proud together.

As I stood, I prayed again, my hands and back both sore. “Lord, is that it? Is your church built?”. “Well”, said the Lord, “maybe room for a few more!”

This is from the Commitment Sunday. Listen at www.st-thomas-brampton.org/podcasts2008.html#30



Work in progress -with a list of the names of the the church members I was praying for.

Christmas Diary Dates

Saturday 6 December

2-4pm Christmas Craft Activities and Market, St Thomas'

7pm Christmas Celebration Concert, St Peter's

Sunday 7 December

9.30am Family Nativity Service, Holymoorside United Reform Church

Friday 12 December

7.30pm Christmas Concert, St Thomas' with the Phoenix Concert Band

Saturday 13 December

7.30pm Christmas Concert, St Thomas' with the Holymoorside Choral Society

Sunday 14 December

4pm Christingle Service, St Thomas'

4pm Christingle Service, St Peter's

Friday 19 December

Christmas Youth Ball, St Thomas'

Saturday 20 December

7pm Christmas Concert, St Thomas', Chesterfield Co-op Choral Society

Sunday 21 December

10am Nativity Service, St Peter's

11am Nativity Service, St Thomas'

6pm Carol Service, St Peter's

6.30pm Carols by Candlelight, St Thomas'

Wednesday 24 December, Christmas Eve

St Thomas'

6pm All Age Carol Service

11.30pm Holy Communion

St Peter's

7pm Village Carol Service

11.30pm Holy Communion

Thursday 25 December, Christmas Day

St Thomas'

10.30am Family Communion Service

St Peter's

9.30am Service (at the URC)

Open Congregational Update Meeting

Monday 8 December, St Thomas' Church

An opportunity to hear the Rector's Report following his '100 days of Listening'. Everyone is welcome.

Holymoorside Well Dressing 2008



The Main Well depicted the bygone age of steam. (More about the picture page 15.)



The Children's Well depicted 50 years of Paddington Bear.

Re-building St Peter's Vestry

