

Ploughshare December 1992/January 1993

(Scanned version from the original)

From the Rector

Introducing Ploughshare

'Spearhead' our old magazine has been retired, after a varied, effective, award winning career.

The search has been on for a successor with a less aggressive and, possibly, racist image. A review group considered 28 different titles, suggested by members of the Church family, before settling on '**Ploughshare**' which came into contention by courtesy of the Editor's sister.

So we have a new identity. During 1993, we aim to produce an improved - even better! - magazine to go with the new title. Changes will come gradually, but we hope for better presentation, greater variety, more effective communication. It can be a vital tool in furthering God's work in our parish and beyond.

Ploughshares are mentioned in the Bible when the prophet Isaiah foretells the "last days" to be brought into being by the Prince of Peace:

"They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks". (Isaiah 2:4).

It's a beautiful picture. Weapons of violence become instruments of usefulness, as war gives way to peace.

It would be good if our magazine could be a ploughshare in our Lord's farming equipment, preparing the ground (by getting us thinking, anticipating, praying....) for the seed to be planted (God's Word in our minds and hearts).

Have a truly peaceful Christmas

Christopher Frith

What? "Ploughshare"?

My reaction was that of disbelief - and when I was asked, along with several others, to put together some ideas for the graphics of the new cover, I kept putting off the time to put pencil to paper.

When I could no longer delay the moment I sat with a blank sheet of paper before me and pencil in my hand telling God that I couldn't do this. I disliked the starkness of an image of cold steel to draw. Yet as I wrestled with not wanting to design the cover and disliking the name, God began to speak to me.

God reminded me that His word is *"sharper than any double edged sword"*; it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit; joints and marrow. It judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

Suddenly, the appropriateness of the name seemed to fit together and with other people's ideas in my head, the cover this month was the result of God's leading!

God's word isn't a soft option but hard and cutting to our very souls.

What? "Ploughshare"?

Lord, *"no one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the Kingdom of God."* [Luke 9 v 62.]

Give me strength to be your ploughman.

Karen Herrick

(Read more comments in the February/March 1993 edition of Ploughshare)

Book Review

"Explaining Your Faith Without Losing Your Friends"

by Alistair McGrath, £1.95

The book originated as a series of lectures to university students preparing for college mission. It was specifically intended for that age group but it does have wider appeal and it does lead in by looking at what most of us fear most about sharing the Christian faith...overcoming our own doubts and other's objections. 109 pages of helpful material probing and answering basic questions.

The Apostles - Who were they?

Who were the twelve men Jesus chose to be his closest friends and companions? What were they like, and what happened to them after Pentecost?

Matthew

Matthew appears in all the lists of the twelve apostles (Mt. 10:3; Mk. 3:18; Lk. 6:15; Acts 1:13). When recording Matthew's call to discipleship (Mt. 9:9), Mark and Luke speak of him as Levi (Mk. 2:13-14; Lk.5:27-28), a name connecting him with the tribe of Levi which was set apart for priestly work in the sanctuary. Whether Jesus changed the name to Matthew, or whether when he became a disciple of Jesus he chose it himself, we do not know. 'Matthew' means 'the gift of Jehovah', and it is by this name that he is best known. He was a Galilean, the son of Alphaeus (Mk. 2:14).

Matthew worked in the Custom House in Capernaum (Mt. 9:9), where he would collect the sales taxes, and custom duties. He was not one of the chief tax-collectors, like Zacchaeus, but a minor official - we would, perhaps, call him a Customs Officer. Although officially employed by Herod he would be regarded as a traitor and renegade, collecting taxes from his own people to give to the occupying Romans. He would mix on equal terms with Gentiles, Greeks and Syrians, and worst of all would disregard the Jewish Sabbath because although the Romans respected the religion of the Jews, business didn't come to a halt on the Sabbath and the Custom House would be open for business as usual.

Jesus would have known Matthew, perhaps paying his own taxes to him in person since moving from Nazareth to Capernaum. Matthew would have heard Jesus preaching and teaching. Peter and the other fishermen may also have spoken to him about Jesus, and he may have observed the change in their lives when they became disciples.

When Jesus approached Matthew, in the Custom House, and said 'Follow me', Matthew seems to have responded immediately, leaving behind everything but his pen and ink and followed Jesus (Lk. 5:28). To celebrate his new found faith he entertained Jesus, his disciples, and some of his tax-collector friends to a meal in his own house (Mt.9:10-13; Mk. 2:15-17; Lk. 5:29-32). It was an opportunity to introduce his old associates and friends to his new found Saviour. He knew that many would come to his house to meet Jesus who would not go to the synagogue to hear him.

No further mention is made of Matthew except his presence with the believers in Jerusalem waiting for the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:13).

Early Christian writers, Papias (AD 150), Irenaeus (AD 180) and Origen (AD 230), each say that Matthew wrote a Gospel, or some sayings, in Hebrew or Aramaic. Some scholars take this to be the Gospel that bears his name. Others, however, believe the Gospel of Matthew was written by an unknown Christian who used Matthew's work extensively, and it became known as 'The Gospel According to Matthew'.

Traditions say that Matthew, the apostle, preached throughout Judea for 12 - 15 years before going as a missionary to Ethiopia, where he died as a martyr.

Keith Chappell

Going for Growth in Christ

The PCC held an Away Day at Foolow on Saturday 7 November 1992, with the title "**Seeking a Vision**". Following that day, and the subsequent PCC meeting, they have arrived at the following **vision statement** for our churches: '**Going for Growth in Christ**'.

We aim under God to grow:

- as we respond, individually and together, to the teaching of Jesus in holiness, worship, prayer, service
- and witness an: as we reach out with the Good News of Jesus.

The PCC hopes that all our members will adopt and seek to live by this aim.

St. John's Church Centre Opened and Dedicated 21 November 1992

There was a great buzz of excitement as the day we had planned for nearly five years approached. Sometimes over those years when nothing seemed to be happening, it was easy to think it never would!

Planning was one thing but it took a considerable act of faith for the PCC and DCC to agree in March this year that it was time to place an order for building to start. At that stage only half of the money had been given or pledged.

How the total cost would be met is now almost history. But the lessons of trust learnt by those involved must not be wasted as the future is faced, new developments planned and opportunities grasped.

The plaque unveiled on Saturday 21st is not a tomb stone but a constant reminder of how God wants us to respond to his goodness to us.

The expectation we felt when the foundation stone was laid on 17th June 1992 seems a long time ago. The last really warm evening of the summer! But the building grew in the rain and at last the car park was being surfaced and it was time to plant the 400 shrubs and trees required. About 60 people turned out on a cool November morning and the whole site, which had been looking a bit sorry for a while, was transformed in hours.

The following Saturday another band of helpers set about cleaning and dusting, a job continued off and on throughout that week. Then the usual last minute hitches beloved of house movers - when are the chairs coming? - how long does paint take to dry? - and when will these people make up their minds where they want the heating controls? And most importantly, how many cups of tea can we produce in ten minutes.

We had expected perhaps 250 to the opening. As numbers began to exceed 300 the contingency plan of a video link into the Church building was confirmed. In the event some 325 people were present to hear the Bishop of Derby, Peter, dedicate the new Church Centre to the service of God and declare it open for business!

The Special Service started with the Bishop ceremonally banging on the door of the Centre to be admitted by the St. John's Wardens. This year we have two lady wardens, Mavis Clough and Rosemary Reeve. Beforehand, the atmosphere of thanksgiving and praise had been reflected by the songs chosen by the Sowers and "Emmaus", the new St. John's Singing Group.

The service included prayers led by the St. John's Link Curate, Brian Porter, and younger members of the Church. Messages of goodwill were given from St. Thomas', the Parish Council and the Rural Dean.

Two essential participants in the project were given particular thanks. Derek Scattergood had been the Project Architect right from the first sketches of plans to extend the premises. Tom Stockton had also built the porch onto St. John's seven years ago, so he was an old friend of the Church. It was a pleasure to see his skills being put to use again.

Afterwards refreshments were served and everyone was able to have a good look around the new Centre and the Church to see how the greatly extended premises would compliment each other in providing for worship and service, the two aims of the project.

The congregation was also able to enjoy fellowship between members of our three Churches who had supported the project so magnificently.

In his address the Bishop spoke from 1 Peter, Chapter 2. He reminded us of the importance of right relationships within the family of the Church. He admired the new Building and thought people might come to it out of curiosity. However, they would only stay if they experienced a genuine welcome and the Love of Christ.

Continuing with the building image he also reminded us that we were each different with varied skills but each being an important part of the whole structure. He emphasised that everyone had to make a choice about Christ. He was either our firm foundations, the capstone, or he would become a stone to trip us up.

This is an appropriate end to the beginning of the story of St. John's Church Centre. The rain hadn't dampened our spirits and the congregation representing our three churches left refreshed and looking to the future with confidence.

Alan Wilson

Link Missionaries, Andy and Mandy Lines

Will yours be a traditional Christmas this year with family gatherings, exchanging presents, eating turkey, Christmas pudding, mince pies etc? This will not be the type of celebration Andrew, Mandy, Alex and Zoe Lines will be experiencing this year. The weather will be hot, the food different and their families will be thousands of miles away.

As we think of them at this time there will be one area where we will be as one, celebrating the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. As we sing our carols and attend the Christmas services let us rejoice in the fact that there are still people who are prepared to make great personal sacrifices so that others may hear about the good news of Jesus Christ.

Richard and Dorothy Banks

CPAS Workshops

Saturday 10 October 1992 at St. Chad's Derby
Christian Discipleship Today : Exploring Micah 6 v 8

The aim of the day was to help us think about our Christian discipleship today and to apply that to our church membership and witness in the local community as well as personal and family life.

Three of us attended the day each pursuing a different seminar. We have tried to portray what we felt God was saying to us.

"And what does the Lord require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God..."

Micah 5 v 8

Act Justly –looking at the way we live today; our personal lifestyles and our responsibilities to others. Exploring the use of time, world resources, the needs of others.

Here holding in my head
The knowledge of injustice.

Rich;

So poor in spirit.

Sear my heart

Pierce the and hardness

And layered selfishness.

Break through the wall of possessions and desire.

I build to separate

Myself from the need of others.

Lord, untangle my self imposed complicated lifestyle

To have in my heart and hands the means to justice.

Love Mercy -considering God's generosity to us and how we need to respond to that in personal, family and community life.

The workshop examined what the Bible actually says about forgiveness. Forgiveness is a thorough acknowledgement of our pain and anger and not simply about forgetting. It entitles us to say "yes, it does matter, but I choose to lay aside my pain in order to restore a relationship with you". God has ordained forgiveness not just as a responsibility but as a release.

Walk Humbly -exploring a closer relationship with God through prayer, fasting, Bible reading and meditation.

We first talked about prayer; the practicalities and possibilities. Most of the group opted to briefly look at meditation. The meditation was led by a lovely, gracious, retired couple named Joan and Matthew. Joan gave us a creative picture of a bridge flowing over a clean, fresh stream and the associated images she talked through really helped us to concentrate and enjoy our Lord's presence as He became more real to us through creation. Matthew led us in a meditation based on a New Testament passage. The quietness and reverence in his delivery of the text and his thoughtful comments were marvellous. All in all a wonderful growth experience on reflection.

Karen Herrick and others

St. Peter's News

Changing scenes - travelling up Cotton Mill Hill past the Church you cannot fail to notice the recent change in scenery. This has been occasioned by the felling of all the large sycamore trees adjacent to the road.

For many years the roots of these rather unsightly trees have been pushing the churchyard wall into the roadway. After consultation with the Parish and N.E. Derbyshire Council, it was agreed:

- a) there was no alternative but to fell the trees.
- and
- b) that this was the responsibility of the church.

Consequently a working party has been meeting during the summer and autumn to tackle this problem.

Having felled and removed the trees, the next step will be to excavate the roots and rebuild the wall where necessary. Further clearing of overgrown shrubs round Rose Cottage has greatly improved the view and will hopefully extend to considerable churchyard improvements.

It is significant that in our village community as many people visit the churchyard during the week as attend church on a Sunday. As one of our five year olds in the congregation put it, "Dead people live in our churchyard". What a challenge!

Judith and Jane have brought further changes to our parish scene and to Rose Cottage. The village is privileged to have their experience and cheerful fellowship. This together with the welcome support of the Revd. Geoffrey and Eileen Wilbourne will give St. Peter's more stability and hopefully reduce the pressure on Christopher.

One scene that never changes - The Nativity Scene. This will be blessed at 12.00 noon on Sunday, 13th December. Don't miss it.

Adrian Marsden-Jones

Book Review A Passion for Holiness

by J.I. Packer (Crossway Books, £5.99)

If we happen to be among those who view holiness as an affliction of the over-pious, or as an excess to be avoided with pride, we may find the title of this book somewhat off putting.

However, one thing becomes clear after only a single reading through. "A Passion for Holiness", to borrow words from the marriage service, "*...is not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly*". It is challenging, heart-searching, thought provoking and thoroughly practical; practical, not in the sense of being a D.I.Y. manual for spiritual growth, but in rescuing the idea of holiness from being a monastic speciality. It is for you and me now, in 1992, in Chesterfield. In no way does it recommend a retreat from daily life. The Gospel message, ourselves and our daily living in response to our Holy God are discussed with almost prophetic frankness.

Of the word 'holiness', the author says: "In its application to people, God's 'holy ones' or 'saints', the word implies both devotion and assimilation: devotion, in the sense of a life of service to God; assimilation, in the sense of imitating, conforming to and becoming like the God one serves. For Christians, this means taking God's moral laws as our rule and God's incarnate Son as our model; this is where our analysis of holiness must **start**".

In all, this is not a book to read should we wish to remain static in our Christian life or outside it as a critical spectator. Here is a call for personal commitment, in all moral seriousness, to living humbly and obediently before God. Indeed, J.I. Packer does "bring us back to where God wants us to be " a holy people.

Speaking of this book, Richard Foster, author of "A Celebration of Discipline" (which we studied in Open House Groups a while back), says:"This (book) will take our best thinking and our most faithful living". We have been warned.

David Smith.