

Ploughshare December 1994/January 1995 (Scanned version from the original)

From the Rector

Rector's letters to church magazines vary from the trivial to the profound. They may be banal, boring or barmy. They may even manage to be interesting, to extend the horizons of readers, even to be prophetic. My contributions are usually in-house, with just an occasional swipe at the wider world, or church. I try to take seriously my responsibility to encourage unity and communication in our rather complicated set-up. This time in particular, I make no excuse for a domestic letter.

Philip Herrick is leaving his post as our co-ordinator to become company secretary for a local firm. In his three years with us, he has set up our Church Office and given the work of St Thomas' an excellent administrative foundation. He has worked long and hard with tremendous skill, in addition to giving us the benefit of his wonderful musical gifts and financial and word-processing knowledge.

Most readers will be aware of what a demanding six months the Herricks have been going through. Bethany, their third child, was born in May, with a non-functioning digestive system. (I have to rise non-medical terms!) Philip and Karen know the journey between Chesterfield and the Children's Hospital in Sheffield incredibly well as they constantly travel between the two. It has been amazing the way Philip has achieved so much on our behalf in this time.

So, I want to say first how very grateful we are to have had Philip on our staff. Secondly, it is great to know that Philip, Karen, Emma, Jonathan and Bethany are going to remain at St Thomas'.

Thirdly, for Philip's sake, for our Churches' sake and for the Kingdom of God's sake, it is vital the we build on his foundation. We can see that the administrative, Office Manager side of his role is working well. The other side, which Philip has always referred to as "the people side," now needs a great deal of attention.

Christopher Frith

Fair Trade, Traidcraft

The poor nations of the world will never be free from poverty unless consumers in wealthy nations pay a fair and higher price for the goods they buy from them. Giving aid is not enough by itself, and does not bring the justice and self respect which comes with being treated as an equal partner in trade. This does not necessarily mean that we have to pay more for our goods; it does mean that we must buy through organisations which pay higher prices to producers rather than making bigger profits for their shareholders.

Traidcraft plc is Britain's largest Christian fair trading company and needs your support to help combat world poverty. All you have to do is to buy what you would have bought anyway, but from Traidcraft. The small effort thousands of people make now to buy goods from Traidcraft reps and shops is worth millions of pounds to poor people around the world every year.

As Traidcraft voluntary sales reps you can buy Traidcraft goods through us at any time. We keep tea, coffee, foods, toilet and kitchen rolls, greetings cards, writing and wrapping paper (recycled paper goods) in stock all the time. Give us a call if you can't come to us then we can get the goods to you.

We are pleased to announce the **new Cafedirect freeze dried instant coffee** is now on sale from Traidcraft. This is a high quality instant coffee of a similar price and taste to Kenco, Nescafe, Gold Blend and other high quality brands.

The Methodist Conference have asked members of their churches to boycott all Nestle products, including Nescafe, because of their continuing unscrupulous and immoral trading practices in poor countries. So why not switch to Cafedirect and in a single move you can support fair trade, protest against Nestle's immoral business practice, and show unity with the Church.

Alison and Steve Woodgate

Looking Backwards, Looking Forwards.....

"Just when is the church's new year?" I was once asked. 1st January? Advent Sunday? The 9th Sunday before Christmas? Someone once suggested to me that Easter or Pentecost might be better. I also see 1st September as our parish 'New Year's Day' when everything seems to resume after the Summer holidays. Whatever date, we like to identify with a 'new beginning' as the old passes away and the freshness of the new and different beckons.

The start of 1995 will see several new beginnings. I move on in January from the Ministry Co-ordinator's post to a new job. There are other new beginnings in many different ways: for my replacement, whoever he or she (or they) might be, the staff team as they work with a staff change, and for the congregation with all that is in store with a new broom in the church office locker! Whichever, I see it as a new opportunity to be open to God.

I like to be organized in my life. So do many in all three of our churches. Occasionally I achieve it with some success, often adequately and sometimes I don't at all. What annoys me most is when the plan becomes unworkable and unpredictable. Some of us can work in an opportunistic way. I can't. I am not able to judge, but I wonder how God feels when we thwart his plan and a different tack has to emerge. Or when we don't have faith to walk in the steps he wants us to. On this occasion I am confident I am being obedient and I set out as 'salt and light' back into a secular job.

Being organized in life is supposed to be easier. We have all the tools to enable us to do it ... radio, television, newspapers. And what of the array of diaries ... fat diaries, thin diaries, loose leaf 'filofaxes', planners, wall charts and calendars with a column for everyone in the house! No excuse now. Sadly, I think it makes life more rushed and complicated. But how about being organized for God next year'? Has it been given a thought yet?

If I was asked to specify one word which was the aim of my time as Ministry Coordinator it would be 'fulfilment'. Not just for me but for the members of the congregation also. Bringing people into ministries was the nature of the appointment. In some ways it has worked, but in several others it has not. I ask all members of our congregation 'where their fulfilment might lie'?

But fulfilment is not the only aspect of church life. I heard on a training course four aspects of a spiritual life

* **Something Upwards** - being better in our personal and our corporate worship of our Lord, day by day, week by week, 'not conforming to the pattern of this world ... but being transformed by the renewing of your mind...', acknowledging that Christ is Lord of all.

* **Something Downwards** - being 'devoted to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship' - being rooted in Christ in all things.

* **Something Outwards** - our mission to the parish (our family, our friend, our workplace ...) I have several times been reminded that everything we do or say is a statement of who we are - we are witnesses, good or bad, like it or not.

* **Something Inwards** - our fulfilment - serving the Lord with gladness and coming before His presence with a song.

Like many ingredients of life, we can go without one aspect for a while but eventually an imbalance sets in. Too much praise and worship and nothing outwards is mere froth: all work and no root suggests activity without God's direction ... and so on.

I ask each of us to review our involvement and contribution, and as you write up your diary, calendar or planner how about a self assessment score of the pointers above. How balanced is your year going to be?

Philip Herrick

What Does it Mean?

The Opened Ear (Psalm 40:6)

Kath Steer concludes her series.

To understand this verse one must of necessity read Exodus 21:26 and Deuteronomy 15:16-17, where the Law concerning the 'Bond-slave' is explained. This law is most interesting, for it declares for us "**By Love Serve.**" To put things simply, a Hebrew servant having served for six years must then be set free on the 7th year, with one exception "*I love my Master. I will not go out free*". Timeless words indeed! From then on he was known as the bond (or love) slave. To indicate this, he would be led to the doorpost where his ear was pierced, and an earring inserted. This is known as **The Law of the Pierced Ear**, and is exactly what the words of Psalm 40: 6 mean.

"My ear Thou hast pierced"

In this case the words refer to the Lord Jesus Himself, for the text is requoted in Hebrews 10:5 although slightly different in its interpretation. A similar quote is found in Isaiah 50:5. The word 'opened' in Psalm 40 is exactly the same as that used for 'pierced' in Psalm 22, which concerns the piercing of Jesus' hands and feet.

Can we then regard Jesus in His earthly life as the Servant with the Pierced Ear the Love Servant? Well, we sing it.
"This is our God, the Servant King"

Reading again in Psalm 40 and Hebrews 10 we find the words "*Lo I come. I delight to Thy will O My God*" and in His own words "*I do always those things which please Him (The Father)*". Paul when writing to the Philippians said "*But made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a Servant, and was made in the likeness of men*" - and "*He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*", which He endured because of "*The joy set before Him*" and His love for His Father (John 17).

We look again at Philippians 2 "*Let this mind be in you - the Mind of Christ which we have.*" Again. Paul when writing to the Roman Church said. "*I beseech you brothers that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service*".

I believe the message is clear - we **must** go to the door-post, and we say "*I love my Master. I will not go out free*" - then with the pierced ear just like Jesus, we go out once more to serve by love for we are then love slaves. As we follow Him, He will "*Guide us with His eye*" - for the true love-slave sees the direction in which his Master is looking and does not even wait for the word but knows the will of His Master.

So we sing again applying the words personally:

This is my God, the Servant King, He calls me now to follow Him: To bring my life as a daily offering Of worship to the Servant King."

"I love my master, I will not go out free".

Link Missionaries, Andy and Mandy Lines

It is with great joy that we have now received the dates when Andrew, Mandy, Alex and Zoe Lines will be visiting Chesterfield whilst on furlough in the U.K. They leave Asuncion to begin their leave on 3rd Nov., and plans have been made for them to visit us from 27th Jan to 3rd Feb. 1995.

They will be staying with us during this time, but to enable as many of our church family to meet them as possible, invitations for a meal or morning coffee would be much appreciated by them. If you feel you would like to do this please contact Rev. Sheila Pite (tel. 231089) who is planning their programme.

Richard and Dorothy Banks

Bible Society News

Changing lives, changing prisons

Argentina: In the Olmos prison, on the outskirts of La Plata, in the province of Buenos Aires, the deputy director said. **"Before the Gospel entered this prison we had a permanent staff of 300 wardens. Today we only need 30!** The total prison population amounts to 2,940, of which 854 are Bible-believing Christians. Their influence has transformed this prison, No revolt has taken place since 1987."

Many prisoners have become Christians as they read the Scriptures, provided by the Argentine Bible Society. It is usual to see the prisoners' Bibles literally worn out through regular use, while 130 inmates have enrolled in a Bible Institute course, and several prisoners have graduated in theological training. In fact, nationally, of the 200,000 - plus convicts in the country's 200 or so prisons, about 10% become Christians. This poses a great challenge to the Bible Society in having to place at least 1.000 Scriptures each month into the hands of new Christians, and this has become one of the Society's key free distribution programmes.

What happened...

1957: Samuel Desimone visited the Olmos prison to share God's word with its inmates. The reception was cold but as others got involved opportunities came. As the Bible Society provided Scriptures, some inmates used the pages to roll cigarettes - but others began to read them. Letters arrived at the Bible Society thanking it for the Scriptures and asking for more, and gradually prisoners became Christians, with some even holding Bible studies in their cells.

1985: a spiritual revival swept La Plata, many new churches sprung up around the prison, and the government, seeing the effect of the Bible in prisoners, appointed Mr Desimone as national chaplain, with freedom to work in all the nation's prisons. The gospel message spread to other prisons, lives were changed and new prison churches planted.

Farewell Gerald and Jan

It has been great to have Canon Gerald Beckett and his wife Jan with us for three months. They have fitted into things so well that it seems as though they have been here for ages. May God bless them and use them greatly as they return to Australia.

Welcome Back Brian and Barbara

Will Brian and Barbara Porter have picked up Australian accents? We look forward greatly to having them with us again from Sunday 11th December. It will be good to hear about their experience in the Sydney Diocese.

A Journey in Faith to Romania Part II

Sunday 14th August 1994

Coreni and Rodica, who kindly agreed to accommodate Les, Matthew and myself during our visit to Romania, invited Matthew and myself along with Mirela and Richard to an evening service at their church in Constanti. It gave us a wonderful opportunity to meet other British Christians - especially Joe and Chris who are working as nurses at the hospital for Aids children.

Four of the children who are being fostered by a Romanian family attended the service. We were able to share with the team about their work in Romania and the purpose of our visit. Mirela has lots of contacts and friends and is obviously a very respected person in Romania. Pastor Ghita Ritisan, and his wife Irina kindly invited us for lunch on Wednesday to give us an opportunity to share with them, as they were eager to help us reach the poor families in their community.

Matthew, our thirteen year old son, set off by train later that evening with Mirela's sister - Valley, and some Romanian children for a trip up North to stay with other Romanian families for one week. It was a wonderful opportunity for Matthew, and he was really eager to share in this venture.

Arrangements were made to visit the Municipal hospital for Aids children the following day in Constanti. Mirela introduced me to the senior nurse Helena, who kindly agreed for us to tour the unit. I was extremely moved by the appearance of the children - but encouraged by the dedication and devotion of the carers. We hope to support this hospital with specialized medicine and supplies - we pray that God will meet their every need. We took this opportunity to take photographs and talk to the children and carers.

After lunch Mirela and myself visited the foster home of the four children we met the previous evening. Luci and Adi are Romanian foster parents. Their home - purchased and funded by 'Help International' in Cas Cristina St. Chilie 23, is the first of its kind in the area. We were warmly welcomed and the couple shared with us their experience as foster parents in this newly established project. Luci, felt drained both spiritually and physically due to the demands made upon them. As with any new venture there are lots of hiccups.

A listening ear and sharing their difficulties helped strengthen them immensely. We really felt that we had been sent there for a purpose and later prayed that our Lord would move into their situation. The four children appeared very happy and loved. We felt encouraged to have the privilege of supporting them in prayer and supplies - especially baby milk and toiletries.

Arrangements had been made for us to attend a local house group that evening. The home we were to visit, I was told, was very poor and in desperate need. The family, consisting of a young widow - Tanta -, two young children, brother and elderly mother were living in a shack by a railway line. I was told to prepare myself for a shock. As I entered the home, I felt very humble and moved by the support and love of the house group towards this family.

Songs of praise - prayers and thanks to God were offered in this very humble home. The family are living together in these conditions because their original home, built of mud and straw blocks, was destroyed two years ago in a storm. They have nowhere else to live and are in desperate need of help to rebuild. The foundations are laid and plans passed to rebuild - but they have no money for materials.

I felt God speak to me personally that evening and say 'Please help this poor family. Leave what money you can behind and share your experience on your return to England!' So here I am - can you possibly find room in your heart to help these poor desperate people in a positive way. The weather conditions are extremely severe in winter - 20 degrees centigrade. Can you imagine living in those conditions without proper facilities on the Russian border?

The proposed new home will be built of breeze blocks and will cost approximately £4000. The labour will be freely given by Romanian Christians and progress reports and photographs will be forwarded at regular intervals. Please pray that this family will have their prayers answered very soon with our help. Nothing is impossible with God. He just needs us to listen and obey, so that His Will may be done on earth. Please continue to pray for Romania and the support work. Remember the words of our Lord Jesus "It is more blessed to give than to receive".

May God Bless you all

Pamela Gratton

This story is to be continued in the next edition of Ploughshare.

Who's Who in the Parish, David Oldale

David, how long have you belonged to St Thomas'?

Nearly 20 years, I think. Pam and I started coming when our son Andrew joined the choir and we joined an adult confirmation group together.

Before you retired eighteen months ago, what did you do?

I was Managing Director of two local engineering and steel companies for 10 years. I took early retirement when our American owners sold out to another American firm.

How are you finding retirement?

I'm enjoying it very much. It's very full. I have two small part-time jobs as a consultant for the Training and Enterprise Council and a non-executive director of Chesterfield Transport. In addition, I have accumulated a number of very interesting voluntary things: I'm chairman of the East Midlands Panel of judges for the National Training awards, on the management committee of Ashgate Hospice and am actively involved as Treasurer of a number of charitable organisations.

But, I do find time to enjoy being a granddad and I am still a season ticket holder at Bramall Lane - I have been for many, many years.

You have been part of the Bishop's working party working out a strategy for our Diocese. How have you found that?
It's been a real eye opener. I had no idea beforehand about the Church beyond our parish. The Church faces a huge challenge - to support itself financially, now that it can't be subsidised. I enjoyed the experience of the working party. I was impressed by the excellent work at the centre of the Diocese. But we had to ask how it was being steered and resourced.

As chairman of our Finance Committee, how do you feel about our financial situation?

We can't be complacent, We're in better shape than the church in many places, but perhaps we should be in this kind of area. At St Thomas', we're looking for an increase of 11% in giving next year and that's a challenge. I think an even bigger challenge is for more of our members to give more of their time, effort and talents.

What does your faith mean to you, David?

A great deal; particularly at the difficult times in my life when I've found my faith has really made a big difference. But I always seem to feel a need to worship, a need to pray regularly - and to thank the Lord that I have been blessed so much.

I believe very much in the mission of the church. This means going into new and different areas - and especially industry. I feel that I am to try to help to spread the Word through my life and example.

Jonty Frith is Learning a New Language

Jonty Frith has been in Uganda for over three months now. It hasn't always been easy to adapt to a new culture, but he is having many exciting and educative experiences.

He can hold his own in the local language, Luganda, now. His three lessons a week have obviously been effective. In the market place, he was buying a bicycle pump and people gathered round, impressed with his language!

He has had several opportunities to preach, take school assemblies and visit people in their homes. He has learned to ride his motorbike and only been knocked off once!

Christmas Appeal –Why Touchstone?

After due deliberation the Church Council has agreed to devote the proceeds of the Christmas appeal this year to our own Community Enterprise Project - "Touchstone" (previously known as S.T.E.P.)

Unemployment is a very debilitating 'disease' which strikes without discrimination at the very sole of our community. As well as the mine closures, major engineering firms in Chesterfield have suffered severely with knock on effect to small businesses, the building trade and retailers. The consequence for many individuals and families has been devastating; skilled engineers and tradesmen find themselves redundant after 10 - 20 years of continuous employment, never having known what it means to exist on benefits alone. To cope with this new situation many unemployed, particularly the long term, need support and confidence building to tackle the consequent financial, social and rehabilitation problems.

Touchstone, now a Limited Company, intends to address these needs as part of our Christian mission. We cannot achieve this on our own, but we are unique in offering comprehensive, individual support and counselling in partnership with our local council and statutory bodies. In the longer term we seek to bring grant funding into the community to stimulate local enterprise.

Please look carefully at our Ploughshare cover. This represents our parish which we serve, or do we? Oh yes, the Church is always there, but are we stepping out in response to those in need as Jesus asks us to? Are we not being challenged each in our own way to put our weight to the plough, to use our skills and resources to till the soil, and create and environment where, as his disciples, we will support and encourage those in need?

What will this Christmas Appeal be used for?

This year we have raised nearly £6000 in fund raising efforts and donations. £2000 of this has been spent on administration such as insurance, legal expenses, travel, telephone etc. Progress so far has been entirely by a team of dedicated volunteers. The management team have decided that with three trainees and the establishment of our gardening and community care enterprise, the time is right for the appointment of the Enterprise Development Manager. The £15,000 from the Bishop of Derby's Urban Fund was allocated specifically for this purpose. However, appointment must be supported by a further £15,000 during the coming year to provide support costs and premises. We are of course looking to grants and financial support from outside agencies and in the long European Funding. **£5000 now will fund the premises** and enable immediately for the project to really take off in the New Year.

Where Children and Donkeys Help Each Other The Michael Elliott Trust

As I drive up the farm road I meet a family with two children encouraging an elderly donkey to leave the luscious grass at the side of the road, and to "walk on". The donkey looks at them with happy eyes and eagerly walks further into the grass in order to let me pass. A sign that I am nearing Lodes Barn Farm the home of the Michael Elliott Trust.

Walking into the farmyard. I am met with a familiar busy scene. A group of adults sit around a picnic table cutting up a bag of carrots ---around the edge of the yard various sized and coloured donkeys are tied up for eager children to brush and groom them ---- a group in one corner wearing hard hats are being assisted to mount donkeys. Their big ears twitch as the children call them by name and stroke them gently. Annie whose life is given to this venture - marshals them all. gives last minute instructions to the accompanying adults, and the line sets off

The Michael Elliott Trust was founded in 1990 with these aims:

"That a child with any special needs may come to us for a seven day holiday, - adopt a donkey, and live and care for that donkey for the duration of their stay."

The Trust enables the donkey to be rescued, to be able to help the child who most needs its company and therapeutic value, and to build up and share a very special trust that will make it's mark of along time to come. The Trust has recently moved to Lodes Barn Farm at Peak Forest, and has the accommodation to fulfil it's aims, but needs funds to adapt the existing farm house for the children with special needs.

To this end there is to be an event at St. John's Church Centre, Walton, on **Saturday, 7th Jan 1995 at 3pm** John Stirling, the Administrator of the Trust, will bring a donkey and will tell the story of "The Small Miracle".

Steve Marsh, who lives locally and teaches, plays and composes for the acoustic guitar will be with John. Together, they make a memorable team. The tickets will cost £3 for an adult and £1 for a child, and after expenses for the hall have been deducted, the remainder of the money will go towards equipping of the house for the children with specials needs. Do join us - to listen - to talk to the donkey - and to enjoy a cup of tea or coffee afterwards.

Cornerstone Bookshop and Coffee Bar.

Cornerstone is part of Central Methodist Church and exists to serve the local community. We provide a friendly Coffee Bar which is a meeting point and a place to make friends. The Bookshop stocks Christian Literature. Music, Posters and Stationery. Orders can be placed for specific items or regular publications. Cornerstone is staffed entirely by volunteers. All profit is used for Christian Outreach.

We offer a service to all Christians in the Chesterfield area. If you are not yet a customer, we encourage you to come in for refreshments and to browse our range of Christian literature and other items. Our staff will also be glad to tell you more about the work of Cornerstone.

Where are we?

Cornerstone is on Saltergate. You will find the entrance on the right hand side of the Central Methodist Church building.