

Ploughshare December 1996/January 1997 (scanned version from the original)

From the Curate Pete Wilkinson

As I've been thinking again about the Christmas story, I've been pondering the part played in it by Mary. I don't often give much thought to Jesus' mother, but I've been struck by what an amazing privilege she had. Her cousin Elizabeth got it right when she said "*Blessed are you among women!*" (Luke 2:4)

To have had the One through whom the universe was made suckling at her breast, to have taught to speak the One whose word sustains the universe, to have enjoyed such intimacy with the Lord -that was a phenomenal blessing!

Later on in his Gospel, though, Luke records a striking little incident. A woman calls out to Jesus, "*Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you.*" Jesus makes this reply, "*Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it*" (Luke 11:27, 28). Amazingly, Jesus says it is possible to be even more blessed than the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is possible to enjoy an even more intimate relationship with Jesus. How? As we "hear the word of God and obey it."

This Christmas, therefore, as we marvel at how God became a man and dwelt among us, let's seek to be those who know that greater blessing that Jesus offers us. In the year (and years) ahead may we be those who listen carefully and obediently to his word. Come to think of it, that would be a good New Year's resolution.

Peter Wilkinson

The Church Family Weekend at Scarborough

Packing for a family of five is always tricky. By the time you have included everything from the teddy who can't possibly be left behind to the kagoules and wellingtons, it looks as if you have enough luggage to emigrate.

So it was that we set off for Scarborough. Staying away from home for our family because of Bethany's special needs is not easy and this was only the second time in two years we had attempted this delicate operation. Equipped for every eventuality we set off, hoping that the preparation would be worth it all.

We arrived in the dark and cold with three tired, hungry children and after unpacking the car in pouring rain we began to wonder if visiting Scarborough in the Autumn was a good idea after all. It took until the next day to really settle in. Although the accommodation was fairly basic we were comfortable and well fed and our older two children thought it wonderful to have the freedom of the entire hotel. The only grumblings in the morning were from Bethany who, having been told we were going to the seaside exhausted us with the question "where is the seaside?". She was not content with the very distant "sea view" being pointed out to her.

We had plenty of time before breakfast to peruse the weekend programme and work out where we would all be since an 8.45 breakfast for three children seemed like lunch time.

The children had their own programme of learning, based on the same theme of "**The Prodigal Son**" as the adults, but at each age group's own level. The children's sessions were very well run and gave both adults and children a sense of freedom and independence from each other at key points in the day yet coming together afterwards to share experiences.

Jonathan Jee's teaching on the Prodigal Son was excellent. He made us look in a new light at the parable, directing us to look not just at the younger son, but at the father and older son too. We were encouraged to see ourselves as relating to one of these characters and to work out what God was saying to each one of us, as individuals. Over the two days teaching, I think many people felt that God had spoken to them through the corporate teaching.

For the children, the highlights of the weekend were the children's teaching sessions, which encouraged friendships, fellowship and care across the age ranges; the swimming pool. (particularly being allowed to swim at night!), eating

toffee apples, down the Prom and riding on the big wheel (that Mum was too, scared to go on) and riding on Alan and Enid Sheldon's motor bike and sidecar down the sea front (I'm sure Alan could have made a profit if he had charged for rides!).

For me, I would say the best parts were the teaching; sessions, the Saturday evening entertainment to which many contributed, but mostly the hugely emotional Family Communion, which was wonderfully enhanced by all the children's groups. When Bethany, who is here and alive by the grace of God, stood up willingly in front of the church family, waving her home made banner, singing and dancing and wanting to, tell everyone what she had been learning about, alongside Emma and Jonathan, it made all the preparation worth while.

Karen Herrick

Send a Cow

Jesus makes all the difference to our giving. Our giving makes all the difference to others.

St John's Sunday Club have chosen "Send a Cow" to Uganda as their collection project for this year, or maybe more, to reach a target of £600! We take our daily pieta so much for granted it seemed good to focus on a part of the world where the gift of a cow can be a lifeline to a family out there, providing nutrients and cash.

"Send a cow" aims to help poor families in a way which respects culture and lifestyle and offers at the same time empowerment and control, especially to the women and hence to the next generation through the availability of education. A jersey cow given to Mrs Geggnija, a Ugandan farmer in 1989 has since had 4 calves, two bulls were sold and one passed on to another family. With milk from her cow she has fed the calf and children, and with the profits from excess milk sold she has improved their housing and added more animals to the farm -the cow's name is Byakatonda which means, "All Belong to God" and in Uganda cows eat banana skins, potato peelings and maize stalks so nothing is wasted!

Questions about transportation, BSE etc. are answered in the "Just What I Always Wanted Project Information - anyone interested please ask Anna Wilson.

The message which goes with each cow:

"This animal is presented to you through 'Send a Cow' with love from people in Britain. May this animal always remind you of God who made it and of God's kindness in what He has given. We all depend on Him for rife and blessing. We give this because God gave to us. He gives us life itself and He sent us the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ, to live as our example and to die to take away our sins. We thank Him too, that His Holy Spirit enriches our lives with His purpose and power.

We pray that you will be faithful in your caring and successful in your management of it. May it live long to be a benefit to you and your family, and may you be a blessing to your friends and neighbours, all to the glory of God."

Link Missionary Partners

Since the last Ploughshare we have heard from Mandy who is recovering from a very bad illness, and is now just beginning to build up her strength again. We can all appreciate the strain this must have put on Andrew, though his work has carried on the letter writing had to take a back seat.

Please pray for Mandy's continued improvement and for the whole family as they carry out God's work in very difficult circumstances.

Richard and Dorothy Banks

Mission Through the Church

Is God calling You?

Please pray regularly that the Lord will send workers into His 'harvest field'. And please pray that this church will give the advice, support and care which will help them to work effectively.

When individual Church members are called by God to serve him in Christian service, in this country or abroad, it is the Church which is the sending body. We, who are the Church, have a responsibility to care for those who go at the Lord's direction.

We encourage anyone who is seeking God's will for their future, with Christian service as an option, to contact one of the senior staff in the parish. This will bring the help of a "Vocation Advisory Group" into the situation.

Such people, young or old, who may be considering this kind of work need the support and care of the Church. This partnership in mission will be effective throughout its term, short or long, if there is a sharing of experience, beginning at an early stage, between those called and the membership of the Church.

The Vocation Advisory Group is an extension of the parish World Mission Committee and has already begun to function. Its purpose is to help encourage and advise those members of the Church who sense a call from God to serve Him in Christian work or ministry, either in this country or overseas. This group aim to help church members to recognise their call and may suggest training, experience and other preparation needed to fulfil the ministry to which they are called. It will cooperate with any mission societies involved and through the World Mission Committee will be able to recommend the PCC's financial support as appropriate.

The Church will be informed appropriately at each stage to ensure that support of every kind is provided throughout the period of preparation and during the subsequent service. So please continue to pray that this Church will provide support for all those whom God is calling or preparing for His work.

Could it be You?

(This article has been contributed by **Horace Totterdell** and **John Goodacre** who have been involved in the 'Vocation Advisory Group' as members of the World Mission Committee.)

Football Match 27.10.96

Eyam v St Thomas'

Match report: Eyam 3 St Thomas' 3 (HT 3-2)

Following an invitation to play Eyam church, our players and supporters assembled at Eyam on a very blustery Sunday afternoon. The 14 to adults played a full match while our juniors played a series of mini-matches mixed in with Eyam juniors.

St Thomas' kicked off the first half into the strong wind. Their lack of practice together was apparent with the well marshalled players of Eyam having early domination. This brought two early goals from Eyam. Indeed for the first twenty minutes the ball was seldom outside the St Thomas' half.

These early set backs did not dishearten our players and gradually they became more cohesive and began to take the game to Eyam. A fine attacking move lead to Chris Cowley scoring a goal for St Thomas'. However Eyam struck again to re-establish their two goal advantage. Just before half time another excellent move set Chris free to slot his second goal past the Eyam goal keeper.

In the second half St Thomas' had the wind behind them and we gradually began to control the game. About halfway through the half Nick Travis received a pass on the right wing and was able to power the ball through the Eyam keeper's legs to equalise.

As the final whistle went St Thomas' were mounting yet another attack on the Eyam goal. The final result was a fair reflection of the match.

St Thomas': Chris Cowley (capt), Phil Foster, Paul Benson, Mark Simpson, Steve Shemwell, Mark Torkington, Jonathan Calow, Daniel Frith, Philip Goodacre, Alistair Gordon, Nick Travis, Mark Hoare (Manager)

The juniors played a series of three mini matches which they all enjoyed. Those playing were Simon Calow, Ian Hoare, Douglas Gordon, Greg Shemwell, Paul and Ellen Smith.

After the match the players and spectators were given tea in Eyam Church Centre where Chris Cowley and Simon Calow were named man of the match in their respective games.

It is hoped to play a return match in the New Year.

Face to Face with Ray Hearn

Ray Hearn has recently joined our team of licensed Readers. He preaches and leads worship in each of our churches. He supports and trains our Pathfinder leaders and is committed to the Intercessory Prayer Group.

Ray, what was your profession?

A secondary school teacher. I graduated from the London School of Economics, starting my career in Hackney, East London. I was there for 8 years, teaching English and Maths to first generation West Indian and Pakistani immigrants. I became Head of RE and then changed to mammon, becoming head of the Commerce Department!

My emphasis was always more on the people I taught than the subject. Subsequently I worked 4 years in Dagenham, 4 years at Staveley Middlecroft and then for 8 years I was Head of Charles White School in Matlock until it closed through reorganisation.

What followed being a headmaster?

I became Coordinator for the new YTS, designing and supervising the development of training programmes in County Training workshops for trainees with special needs. Later I added the responsibility for the County's Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme and designed the Peak Award for people with special needs of all ages from about 11 years old.

You have had to cope with depression for several years, haven't you?

Depression has been my companion for 40 years or so. I was an inpatient before I even started teaching following a long illness with TB and renal problems. I took 7 years to get my degree! and I had to take early retirement because of depression. I describe depression this way -the past is unimaginable (you can't remember you've ever been normal) - the present is unbearable -and the future is unthinkable. There's nothing there but terror and darkness and utter powerlessness.

I had a spontaneous lift in March 1992 coming home from watching "Snowwhite and the Seven Dwarfs" with Doff, my wife and two of our grandchildren. Suddenly I felt free! There have been battles since, but the war has been won.

Have you learned anything through your depression?

Yes. Depression is a clinical illness over which the sufferer has no more control than over appendicitis. Christians who say that all you need is faith to recover have never experienced clinical depression. A depressed person needs lifting to the feet of Jesus as surely as the paralysed man was by his 4 friends.

My survival has depended on God's faithfulness. He hung on to me. The second verse I ever learnt off by heart was 1 Corinthians 10:13 *"No temptation has taken you that is not common to man. GOD IS FAITHFUL He will not let you be tested beyond your strength. With the temptation He will give you the strength to bear it, that you may stand up under it."* God is faithful and His Word is a living weapon for defence and attack.

When did you become a Christian?

In 1954, I was 21. It was through a Christian involved in inviting Billy Graham to Harringay. I objected to an American coming over to sell Jesus like a bar of soap but God stepped in and made Himself real to me through Luke 11:13. At about 16 I had stopped going to Church. About 3 years later in hospital with TB, I started my way back to God. Two years later I arrived "Home"

You and Doff enjoy art. Has it helped you?

I've been painting for 20 years or more but it has come into its own since my recovery. It's a wonderful way to express what is happening through word, music and pictures, both painting and photography. Every Tuesday we go to the Cutthorpe Art Group. We all meet each other and enjoy being together with no obligations. Art and bowls with swimming every Wednesday make great therapy.

From your vantage point as a Reader, how do you see St Thomas'?

St Thomas' is a community which contains an enormous range of Christian experience. It is difficult to describe its identity with so many backgrounds, approaches and understanding. Such a diverse church challenges me to present Jesus, clearly and simply. Love has to be demonstrated and Jesus is the living demonstration of God's love. (Romans 5:8)

Continuing Kath Steer's Nature Studies:

Famed for their magnificent appearance, strength, speed and effortless flight, Eagles are symbols of empires and religions.

For our benefit, however, we find them flying through the pages of Scripture, there being at least 32 references to them, mainly in the Old Testament. We will consider a few of these in the order of:

THE GROWTH OF THE EAGLE together with the spiritual lessons the passages contain.

1. Deuteronomy 32 v 11, "As an eagle stirs up her nest, flutters over her young, spreads abroad her wings, takes them, bears them on her wings".

With no more than two in her nest, the young eaglets have a wonderful time during their first six months of life, then they must grow up! Likewise, as Believers, after first misting in Christ, we "go on to maturity" (see Hebrews 6:1 and 1 Peter 2:2.) Growth in Christ is essential. In order to induce the eaglets to fly, the mother eagle begins to break up the nest, and, nosing them to the edge of the cliff, accompanied by much squealing from the eaglets, she gives the final push and down, down, down they go. Security is there as the mother eagle swoops under them and they come to rest "between her shoulders". (Deuteronomy 33 v 12).

After repeating this several times, the eaglets find to their joy that they too have power to fly. I find this to be strangely reminiscent of the Early Church, who having been in the depths of despair, suddenly realise the POWER is there -they must use it. This still applies!

2. Exodus 19 v 4, "I bare you on eagles' wings and brought you unto myself."

Israel was comfortable in Goshen, but their 'nest' having been stirred up, for Canaan was the Land of Promise, they desperately needed the divine security and support which only the Lord could give. The above promise of that security was given as they encamped at Sinai and as they trekked through the wilderness. Have you noticed how the Lord always uses language that His people can understand. Yes - these people knew all about the eagle, do we? All this is a great message of strength to Believers everywhere, especially is it so, when all things seem to be against us: it is then that we become conscious of divine support, and rejoice in His love and His grace. We emerge, having learned that we can "run and not be weary, walk and not faint".

3. Isaiah 40 v 31, "They shall mount up with wings as eagles".

Having realised that power is there and that divine security remains for all who put their trust in the Lord, we now look at those two little words "MOUNT UP". The eagle has great strength but it does not waste it -just look at those wings as, sitting on a rock, the eagle flaps them up and down. What is it doing? It awaits the right current of air which will give it the 'lift' it requires, then it will ascend to the heights without effort. This of course is the meaning of 'Mount up with wings as eagles'. It is a most remarkable lesson to us as Believers. Just glance at the context of this verse in Isaiah "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might, He increases strength" -so "they that wait upon the Lord shall increase their strength". The lesson then is "Wait I say, on the Lord". I find this aspect of "Mount Up"

most particularly wonderful when it comes to real worship -we wait for the "moving of the Spirit" and then rise into the presence of the Lord.

4. Micah 1 v 16, "*The baldness of the eagle*"

This is a strange expression until one begins to understand, for it alludes to the time when the eagle moults. Like us at times, it does grow faint and weary. How does it overcome? Well, while losing its feathers, it finds its place in the sun and **quietly** rests, eating very little food (if any). Then while it 'waits' it is renewed so that taking off again, its youth is renewed.

5. Psalm 103 v 5, "*So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's*".

The context of Psalm 103 v 5 is that of being supplied with "good things": undoubtedly it eats ravenously after its 'waiting' time. Lets look at both these passages for a wonderful lesson contained therein.

Often, when in the Lord's service, whatever the 'calling', we fail to 'mount up' -and aiming to serve in our own strength we grow weary and give in. Most surely this is the time to find one's place in the sun and wait upon the Lord. We "long to scale the utmost height and catch a glimpse of glory bright". Such people as Isaiah, Daniel, Habbakuk, Jeremiah and Paul, found it essential -and so afterwards they could 'mount up' -run and not be weary, walk and not faint. After this renewal then -we run. Read Hebrews 12:1-3 - the 'marathon' still continues! With regard to renewed appetite -"*Thy words were, I bund and I did eat them*".

There remains yet two more characteristics of the eagle which are not mentioned in Scripture but are very worthy of consideration: **DOUBLE EYELIDS : CLOSING EYELIDS**

Double Eyelids:

Being a high flyer and soaring through the air with the greatest of ease, special sight is required in order to absorb the glory of the sun. The eagle then closes its earthly eyes as the double eyelids protect the heavenly sight. Isaiah had such an experience being the high flyer of Judah that he was. (See Isaiah 6 and 33 v 16-17). We find that the prophet did ascend to the High Places and his earthly sight overcome by the heavenly (double) - he did "*See the King in His beauty and the land that was very far off*".

The Apostle Paul had a very similar experience. Likewise Peter, James and John could testify to this also, for on the mount of transfiguration they "Beheld the king in His beauty" -and now they enjoy the presence of the King in that land "afar Off". John also used double eyelids on the Lord's Day on Patmos, where he most certainly viewed the heavenlies.

Closing Eyelids:

Once again the eagle ascends to the heavens and fixing its eyes on the sun it awaits the sunset -the hour of its death, which it instinctively knows. It literally dies facing the sun. Acts 7 v 55-60 speaks of a similar incident, where the very Godly deacon Stephen, being falsely accused and brutally treated, saw the glory of Jesus and died "**Facing the Son.**"

What is Novimost International?

Novimost International is a Christian charity, which was established at the height of the war in Bosnia when a newly married Christian couple, Nikola and Sandra Skrinjaric, moved into Mostar. Since 1993 their work of bringing hope, love, reconciliation, healing and church planting has developed in a miraculous way.

Novimost is now involved in supporting and resourcing the work of Nikola and Sandra not only in Mostar but in many other Bosnian cities and towns.

As well as sending humanitarian aid Novimost

- is fully behind Nikola and Sandra's church-planting ministry.
- is involved in the construction of Bosnia's only Christian training centre.
- has a developing role with the long-term treatment of traumatised children in Bosnia
- is involved in evangelism and Christian sports ministry
- is seeking to mobilise prayer in Britain and around the world for God's Kingdom to reign in Bosnia.

As we busily prepare for Christmas, please can we spare time to pray for these specific prayer needs.

1. Traumatized children:

Pray for people and funding for long-term work with damaged children throughout Bosnia.

2. Bosnia's first ever Christian training centre:

This was due to open in Mostar in mid-November. Pray for the students (potential leaders nominated by churches in Mostar, Sarajevo and Tuzla) who are undertaking practical studies in Christian Leadership and Evangelism.

3. Christians in Britain and around the world who will seriously commit themselves to prayerful and financial support for God's work in Bosnia.

Please see the St. Thomas' mission notice board for the most recent prayer briefings -it changes most weeks.

For any further information please contact **Barbara Goodacre**

Bible Society Poem

I meant to read my Bible today,
but I got up far too late;
The family needed breakfast of course,
they couldn't wait!

I meant to read my Bible today, but
then a friend turned up,
And when he went, I had to do
a lot of washing up.

I meant to read my Bible today,
instead I watched the news.
Well, after all, one must keep up
with everybody's views.

I meant to read my Bible today,
but lunch was calling me,
So off I went, and didn't get home
till nearly half past three.

I meant to read my Bible today,
but children came home from school,
Lively boisterous, full of fun
I almost lost my cool.

I meant to read my Bible today,
but now it was time for tea,
Then clear away the dishes

so little time for ME.

I meant to read my Bible today,
but there was football on TV.
An international match
which England lost 2-3.

I meant to read my Bible today,
but it's nearly bedtime now.
I'm oh, so tired at the end of the day
that I hardly remember how ...ZZZZ

Anonymous (for obvious reasons!)