

Ploughshare December 1998/January 1999 (scanned version from the original)

From the Rector

"As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end Amen."

Are any words more typically Anglican? For centuries they have been sung or said at the end of every Psalm and canticle - and they have a wonderful ring to them.

I sometimes think that people think it is the good old C of E which is as it was in the beginning! The Church should not change at all, it seems to say.

Yet it is not about the church at all. It's about God's glory. "Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit." This is the thing which "ever shall be, world without end". The Church has changed dramatically throughout its two millennia, sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse. In the 13 years in which I have been Rector, our churches in this parish have all changed significantly. If they stay the same, they will die.

God's glory, however, is totally unchanging. Jesus Christ is the "same yesterday, today and forever." The glory proclaimed from the heavens above the fields of Bethlehem when Christ our Saviour was born is the same glory which we glimpse every day - in the beauty of creation, an expression of practical loving concern, and most notably as a life is changed through an encounter with Jesus Christ.

Christmas demonstrates the glory of God as powerfully as anything. Look for it, sing carols about it and seek to experience some of it. "Glory to God in the highest and peace to His people on earth."

Happy Christmas, everyone.

Christopher Frith

St Thomas' Weekend at Scargill

Two contributions from members who went there for the first time.

The Scargill Experience

Being a newcomer to St Thomas' and the area of Chesterfield, I jumped at the chance of a relaxing weekend away. I was hoping to forge new friendships and strengthen my faith in the Lord and to 'learn'.

I achieved all these things and more. It turned out to be a brilliant weekend, very enlightening and wonderfully strong in the Spirit.

I hope to see you there next time we go.

Heather Lord

If you have never been to Scargill House, a conference and retreat centre run by a Christian Community in the Yorkshire Dales, you should consider doing yourself a big favour by booking accommodation there soon. It is an experience you deserve and one from which you will, no doubt, benefit.

We shared the experience with 40 others from the parish and a school party from Ripley St Thomas School, Lancaster. It was a memorable weekend for a variety of reasons. Keith the warden and his wife Mary, who is the lay chaplain, led us throughout with their sincere, warm and learned style. They breezed through a busy programme effortlessly. From prayers to notices, worship to workshops, study groups and the entertainment on Saturday evening, they devoted their talents to the group and made a huge contribution to the enjoyment of the weekend.

Every member of the group was free to do as much or as little as they chose. Our own choice was to join in with most of what was arranged and a sizeable majority of the group did likewise while some chose to explore or rest on their own. Scargill suits both tastes well.

After the welcome on Friday evening we were given a brief outline talk about the format for the weekend and those with children were reassured that proper provision had been made for the younger members including a special early meal if required. We said prayers and dispersed to our rooms for the night.

Dispersed is too gentle. You have to imagine people going in all directions, left, right, upstairs, downstairs, forward, backward because Scargill has an interesting layout. By the time you have solved the puzzle it is time to leave but there are numerous tea and coffee stations, scattered throughout the complex so you are never far from a kettle. A cow bell announces breakfast and all meals. The really fit and keen had, of course, already taken their exercise and no doubt, early morning tea or coffee at one of the stations. In any event soon we were all gathered in the dining room for our first fuel of the day and very good it was. Our party, the school group and one or two individual guests sharing the food and fellowship. Ruth, a widow from Folkestone joined us and stayed with the group throughout the weekend adding a lot to our enjoyment in her quiet way.

Off then to our initial study group "*Looking at life*" after a short act of worship. Our first opportunity to share thoughts and concerns on a bible theme. Continuing after coffee with "*Life together*" in a similar format. Good Leadership and lots of interesting contributions from the group.

A Dales walk followed lunch. The really fit, who had been out at sunrise running, jogging or walking as they do, probably chose the long arduous eight mile walk. Some chose the less arduous three mile and we ambled along the lane gently to Kettlewell, whilst others sat and chatted or didn't.

Having volunteered for hand bell ringing class as opposed to stone painting or prayer group we later made our way to 'The Upper Room' where Mary spent an hour and a quarter training us duffers to play three tunes which we somehow re-arranged as the musical expression goes. Great fun and a novel experience.

Dinner followed Evening Prayer and then the entertainment. Talent in abundance and dancing in the folksy country style. We had a poet, a guitarist, two pieces of drama and a monologue. There were also two quizzes and some of us thought they had replaced the hand bell ringing slot, but Mary knew best!

On Sunday we studied "*Life in Abundance*" during which session we were encouraged to identify with either Martha or Mary. Robin was more attracted to Lazarus but only because he had forgotten to pack his razor perhaps. After lunch we shared the celebration of Holy Communion in the breath takingly beautiful chapel. A very appropriate end to the weekend as we received from God and committed ourselves afresh to His service.

The place is a gem set in 24 carat landscape. The people would wash your feet if that was your need. The Holy Spirit inhabits every nook and cranny. Please join us in praying for the Christian Community that run Scargill House. They deserve our prayers and have touched our lives and we thank God for that blessing.

Bill and Pauline Woodend

Face to Face with Andrew Lockwood

Andrew Lockwood is married to Philippa with 3 children, and has been a member of St. John's for the last 4 years. He works as an Acoustic Engineer, but loves to sing whenever he gets the chance.

Andrew, tell us where were you born and brought up.

I was born locally in Milltown but we moved to Chesterfield soon after. We then moved to Sheffield and Doncaster before finally settling in Bournemouth when I was 9. I still feel homesick for the south coast at times, especially for the warmer weather!

So, were you brought up to go to Church?

Yes, I've always gone to Church. At 11, I was asked to join the choir at Christchurch Priory (the nearest thing in the area to a cathedral), and as a result, went less often to the local parish Church with the rest of my family. Although I loved the music at the Priory, I felt an increasing conflict between the traditional approach to worship there and the vitality of my local church. At 16, vitality finally won and I left the Priory for good.

At St John's you play the organ or keyboard most weeks. Has that always been the case?

Yes, I've never been able to go to church and fade into the background; one way or another, I have become involved in the music. I've been singing solos since about the age of 7, and playing the piano / keyboard (or organ under duress) since my mid teens.

How have you felt about this?

I do believe that God has given me these gifts to be used, although over the years, I've had to wrestle with what my real motivation is for using them in church. Being a musician means being a performer, and I have still not reached the stage where I can view my contribution to the music purely as an aid to corporate worship. I still struggle with being in church when I feel that I could "do it better" than the person at the front. However, the more I am able to view my music as an enabling ministry, as opposed to a performance, the more I am able to let others play, and to encourage the use of their gifts.

As far as my voice is concerned, it isn't brilliant but adequate for the concert type work I do. From as early as I can remember, I have always said to God that I want to use it wherever possible for Christian ministry. In recent years, the opportunity to work with Roger Jones (leader of Christian Music Ministries) has arisen, and it has been a partial fulfilment of that desire. Because his is not the sort of music to which my voice is best suited, I often feel that I do not add very much to his ministry. What really matters is whether it enables or enhances his ministry, and contrary to my own impressions, it apparently does. Coming to terms with this is quite difficult, but it does demonstrate that God can use the gifts he has given us in ways other than those we ourselves would either choose, or consider to be most appropriate.

You've been to Music College, tell us about that

After graduating in Engineering Acoustics, I applied as a post-graduate for a place at Music College as a singer, and was turned down by them all, so I ended up working as an Acoustic Consultant. I was very unhappy in the job. It was very stressful and caused much soul searching. I toyed with lots of possibilities, including ordination, because by that time, I had virtually resigned myself to the fact that my dream to sing professionally was dead.

One day, the Director of Ordinands asked me "Is ordination what you want more than anything else?" I had to honestly reply that no, it wasn't – I still wanted to sing. (It is an irrepressible desire that comes from deep within me). I eventually ended up applying to the Music Colleges again, and this time, they all offered me a place!

You went to the Royal Northern College of Music, what was it like?

Wonderful -it fulfilled my lifelong dream, but it was also very hard on us as a family. Philippa and I both gave up well paid jobs to move north, and Hannah was born only six weeks before the move. Although our families were supportive, it was hard as we had no regular financial income. I came from a family which was not well off, but we always had enough, so this was very much a learning experience. I had always thought that God was only really interested in the spiritual part of us. I came to realise that he is just as interested in the practical. Time and time again, when we had nearly nothing left, something turned up -usually in the form of a new job for me, or an offer of more teaching work for Philippa, and we never ran out.

And then back to Chesterfield?

Yes, I had started my own Acoustic Consultancy practice whilst in Manchester -it was still early days, and all the contacts I had made whilst in Manchester were at this end of the country. Although both of us would have preferred to move back down south, I didn't see it as a practical option. When my grandmother then offered us a barn here in Chesterfield, (which has since been turned into a house!), it seemed the right thing to do.

How do you find being self-employed?

It is very fulfilling. I like to be in control of things myself - its a rewarding challenge. I'm doing much the same thing as I was 10 years ago, but now, I enjoy it, and find it much less stressful, even though I have much more to do.

Also, it means that I can go off singing whenever the opportunity arises!

Link Mission Partners

Praise God for the ordination of Andrew as presbyter in Asuncion on 18th October. May his new responsibilities be well blessed.

The coming of Christmas is a wonderful time for us all, but please pray for Andrew, Mandy, Alex, Zoe and Elizabeth who will be unable to share this , special time with their families in the UK

Richard and Dorothy Banks

Trip to Iona

As a result of the Diocese offering a week away on the Isle of Iona in the form of a Pilgrimage, I decided to take advantage of the break and was fortunate to reserve a place. The trip was led by the Reverend Chris Dyer and Rev. Mike Alexander. I thought an account of my experiences would be of interest to readers.

The party consisted of two coaches, approximately 90 Pilgrims leaving Derbyshire at midnight Friday 30th October. As we approached Iona by ferry the view was clouded by rain and an overcast sky so we were unable to take in the beauty of the island at first sight, but this did not mar our enthusiasm.

The Iona Community has two Centres quite close together. One being the Abbey, the other the Macleod Centre. The group was split between the two centres and I was given a room in the Abbey and quickly met those I would be sharing with. Namely, Helen, Jean and Pat. There was an instant feeling we would get on together. People staying at the Centres exist as a Community, grouped together with chores allocated by a member of the Community staff. A vegetarian diet is the norm except for Sundays and Wednesdays when meat is on the menu.

There was morning worship, then Thought for the Day given by leaders of our party, and evening worship to round off the day. There were also to be workshops offered by members of our own party and also by Community members, ranging from Arts/Crafts-Poetry-Music-DanceEmbroidery to island rambles and walks.

Sunday, we awoke to a lovely sunrise heralding a calm and peaceful day. I took a short early morning stroll to take in the lovely views of Mull across the water, before joining in breakfast chores, then breakfast. Our first Morning Service followed, which was a fulfilling introduction to Celtic spirituality, and we were soon aware that a robin was a regular visitor to the services. Coffee followed, with an encouragement to talk to someone we hadn't met before. The afternoon workshop I attended was Craft using rubber stamps and the different use you could put them to, with an emphasis on making greetings cards, etc. After the evening meal there were further workshops and I attended one offering Poetry, which I found extremely encouraging and came away with inspirations to pursue further. Communion followed, which was a tuneful and spiritual offering to the Lord and an introduction to Celtic songs which are very light, gentle and rhythmical.

Over lunch on Monday, it was announced that the proposed Tuesday boat trip to the isle of Staffa had been brought forward to that afternoon and those interested hurried through their meal to change into suitable waterproof clothing and head for the jetty, where the boat would pick us up at 2.15. The sea was crystal clear and that together with the sunshine encouraged us to feel that God really was close, that we would enjoy the afternoon, the friendships and His surprises in creation. Staffa is one of three small islands made of basalt and is well known for its organ-pipe rock formation and Fingal's cave. The length of stay on the island was just thirty minutes and although there would have been excellent views from the top of the island to Ulva, Skye and Mull unfortunately there wasn't time and we were quickly jumping back onto the boat with the prospect of a rough but safe journey back to Iona.

The island Pilgrimage on Wednesday was led by three members of the Community. This took in points of religious and historical interest. There was singing and prayer along the way which was a good encouragement to seek God's will in our everyday life as we walked. The scenery was breathtaking as we approached the coastal route which led onto fairly difficult walking terrain. This included rocks and marshland which provided some interesting remarks and "horizontal" performances by fellow pilgrims. Embarrassing when the outcome was muddy clothing but the Christian encouragement received helped them overcome their red faces and discomfort, fortunately no real harm was done. The latter part of the pilgrimage took us over Dun I which is the highest point on the island and gave good views across to Mull with shadows of other islands and mountains in the distance.

The highlight on Thursday was the Concert which was held in the Macleod Centre. There were twelve entries, offering their gifts in the spirit of the community. I was in a group which gave a light-hearted sketch which was easy to learn and well received. The evening came to a close with a Worship Service of Commitment in the Abbey, encouraging all of us to pray about the way we felt God was calling us

and to recommit ourselves to His work. Evening worship was provided by a small number of the Pilgrims and was moving and sensitively led. Alma took the role of leader, Helena reading the Bible followed by prayer. A worship group had been formed and Barbara lead a dance routine to accompany the Creed. The evening ended with a get together in the refectory for tea and coffee and to talk over the day. On Friday I took a walk to the White Strands and the North Shore. The sands are pure white as are all the beaches around Iona and there are interesting pebbles, shells, rocks, etc. to collect.

To sum up, for me the highlight of the Pilgrimage was the feeling of friendship between us all: the Celtic worship which must be experienced; having the opportunity of taking part in workshops; experiencing the Community life and enjoying it.

To close, as we were all bustling around to collect our baggage for our journey home, I happened to rush into the Common Room only to find one of the friendly robins which frequented the Abbey, flying around the room trying to get outside. As it fluttered to the glass door leading to the outside, another male robin flew to the door from the outside to help its friend. This innocent act of nature encompassed for me the message of the week. We are all here to help each other and through our faith it is even more possible. Needless to say, this Pilgrim resisted the temptation to rush to join the party but took the time to open the door for the robin, watching it fly to freedom and to its companion.

Sylvia Reynolds