

# Ploughshare December 1999/January 2000

(scanned version from the original)

## From the Rector

During October we did something unusual at St Thomas' (for a change!)

On three Sundays, at each of the three services, we had a very short sermon followed by contributions from two or three members of the congregation. They gave their "testimonies", explaining simply how their faith had materialised and what a difference it was making.

The title, "*The Lord has done great things for us*" proved apt. Each story was remarkably moving. We heard how faith in Jesus had developed very gradually and how it had come fairly suddenly after bereavement. We heard about the excitement of Christian service; facing failure at work and seeking demotion; coping with a broken marriage; being a single parent; having a very sick wife; coping with extreme stress at work; the benefit of doing an Alpha Course and, in one case, doing it a second time.

Our Lord has shown himself to be real in all these everyday situations, and was making a difference in ordinary people's lives. It did me good to hear it. I am genuinely encouraged in my Christian pilgrimage. And so, I believe, are many of us.

It's what Christmas is about. The Word has become flesh and lived among us. God is still very near, two millennia later, still making a profound impact on the world, still just one prayer away from every single person.

Happy Christmas! May the Lord Jesus make a big difference for you.

**Christopher Frith**

## An amazing ministry

Judith and her dear friend Jane Caley have been with us for a rapid seven years. They appeared almost out of the blue - I consistently called Judith a "windfall" - and from the word "go" were almost too good to be true.

To start with, Judith gave a great deal to St Thomas' and St John's, as well as having full responsibility for St Peter's. In recent years, health has dictated that her energy has had to be almost exclusively devoted to Holymoorside.

First and foremost, Judith has been a "people" person, especially giving herself to those who have been hurting: bereaved, ill, depressed, unhappy folk have found her to be a real friend, supporting and encouraging in any way she could. Often, Judith has herself been battling with these same things.

Secondly, Judith has been devoted to the church - the body of Christ working, praying, and teaching so that it might be built up. The steady growth of St Peter's bears testimony to this.

Thirdly she has been part of the village community of Holymoorside, a friend to everyone, involved up to and over her eyebrows. Children at the school have particularly loved her, and so have parents and tots, so have elderly folk - and so have I (from a couple of miles down the road).

I know no one like Judith. Like many in our parish I praise God for her. May her retirement to Dorset be long, happy, fruitful - and not too busy! Thank you so much, Judith - God bless you.

Jane Caley also leaves a large gap. Her marvellous musical ability has enriched St Peter's worship hugely and will be greatly missed. Her organising ability, her energy, her willingness to get involved in anything going have been appreciated by so many.

God bless you, too, Jane.

**Christopher Frith**

## **St Peter's**

By the time this is in print St Peter's will have been rebuilt, renewed and rededicated.

It has been beautifully done thanks to the skill of Tom Stockton, master stonemason, his son John, co-worker Tim, plasterers, electricians and a willing band of cheerful church workers.

Along the way there have been a few shocks.

Tom's van plus tools were stolen from outside the church. The existing roof and guttering were found to be in need of repair and replacement. The floor in the old building was discovered to be rotten underneath and also needed to be replaced. A passing hay-wagon strayed too close to the church wall and smashed a window.

On a happier note, the weather stayed dry until the roof was safely covered and we all gave thanks.

Bill Madin, who had kindly lent us his cowshed as storage for St Thomas' pews needed to get his cows back into their winter quarters. This proved fortuitous since we then discovered that the pews were too wide for St Peter's and would need shortening, with time fast running out.

On the funnier side, Harry nearly lost his job as volunteer teaboy having produced a brew, which Tom (a connoisseur of tea) declared to be undrinkable.

Roger inadvertently poured a tin of black paint (fortunately waterbased) over his head.

Despite all these happenings there has been a great sense of togetherness and enjoyment. The plasterers said they didn't often get the pleasure of doing such quality work. The electrician appreciated the company and laughter of a stalwart band of lady decorators. Roland who cares for our churchyard and is recovering from surgery, came almost every day to check on our progress, chat and encourage. Lots of passing people called in to have a look and admire the work.

On one Sunday when rebuilding had scarcely begun and the church was looking like a ruined barn, Midge and Roy Thompson's grandchildren came to look and held an impromptu little service of their own. By such things are buildings surely hallowed.

Now we look forward to the future with gratitude to the United Reformed Church for their hospitality over the past months and to many people who have given all kinds of support.

St Peter's will now have extra space and better facilities for children and the clergy. We trust that our beautiful church will be of service to our community in times of joy and sadness, welcoming to all, a place of light and serenity to the glory of God.

## **Andrew and Mandy Lines are Coming Home**

The Lines Family are currently packing up and preparing to leave Paraguay on 25 November. As they do so, they would very much value our continued prayer support, not only for them but also for the church, community and country they will be leaving behind.

Andrew's October "update" letter tells us that they are packing up whilst at the same time trying to leave open the various projects they have worked hard on.

The CALEB courses are likely to continue and improve, thanks to commitment from the new diocesan executive and help from the Diocese of Chile. The future of St Andrew's and of the housegroup are somewhat in doubt, with changes in personnel likely and a lack of pastoral leaders coming forward, particularly men. Do please go on praying about these issues. An Auxiliary Paraguayan bishop has recently been elected and Andrew reports that "the churches are in reasonably good shape, even if the country continues on from crisis to crisis." Economic depression and disillusionment with the coalition government are the most pressing problems in Paraguay.

Personally, they are in a positive mood, despite the inevitable frustrations with moving. Mandy is still having difficulties with documentation and the children have to stay on at school - Zoe has exams coming up. It is obviously going to be a wrench to leave Paraguay, but their last weeks look as if they will be full of farewell parties and events.

Once back in Britain, the first 6 months' programme looks fairly settled, with the first month earmarked for holiday (in theory!). Family visits, job interviews and getting the children settled into new schools will naturally take up a good deal of time, but they are in good heart.

The Lines' will be visiting our parish on 20 February 2000 and we look forward to seeing them then.

## Millennium

What springs to mind when you hear that word?

Big dome? Millennium bug? 2000th birthday of Jesus Christ?

Scripture Union surveyed 687 7-11 year olds with the question: "When you hear the word "Millennium" what is the first thing you think of?" Only seven mentioned Jesus.

The task of the churches in the Millennium is to forge a link in people's minds between the year 2000 and the name of Jesus Christ, and the possibility of personal meaning and public hope.

How can our churches use the Millennium to make Jesus known? In 2 Corinthians 5:17 we read "*If anyone is in Christ he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come.*" Paul goes on to say in v.20 "*We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.*" We need to take this wonderful message of Christ, and what he has done for us, to others.

The Millennium is a marvellous opportunity for the church because it is the 2000<sup>th</sup> birthday of Jesus Christ the Lord of the church. The Millennium signs outside our churches remind us and others of this.

Special Millennium events have been organised by all three churches and listed below are dates and activities for December 1999 and January 2000. An invitation to attend is extended to you and your family and friends.

Millennium candles or gospels are being distributed in the parish during December along with the annual Mustard Seed publication.

## Fifty Years of Scouting in Brampton

A Scout group launched by a former Brampton Rector, Canon John Dawson Hooley, as a St Thomas' Church venture, recently marked its golden anniversary with a reunion. It brought together many people proud to have been associated with the 3rd Brampton Scout Troop over the past 50 years.

It was a heart-warming occasion with everyone acknowledging that the group has done remarkable things for local boys and won many awards along the way.

As part of the celebration I was delighted to meet up again after 45 years with my childhood friend and fellow St Thomas' chorister Paddy Hooley, who was the true founder of the group, having forced his father's hand by his constant 'persuasion'.

Paddy, who has since travelled the world as an orchestral musician, came from Somerset to attend the reunion. Another guest was Noel Smith and he, Paddy and I were among a handful of first recruits in 1949. We met in the old school room at Barker Lane and our numbers quickly expanded as Brampton boys came to appreciate Scouting's great values.

Despite his busy pastoral work, Canon Hooley ran the group himself until Vic Creswick (Skip) an experienced Scout, came to Brampton. His timely arrival, and his willingness to take over, were always seen as an answer to the Rector's prayers.

Now nearly 80. Vic greeted everyone at the reunion with the fellowship and warmth that was typical of him, and not least did he welcome Paddy, who became the group's first Queen's Scout.

Older parishioners with the memories of Canon Hooley's fruitful years in Brampton may like to know that as a part of the anniversary Paddy and I visited Church Wilne, near Draycott, Derby, to lay flowers on the Ex-Rector's grave. The enduring success of the group he launched with modest numbers but a truly brave spirit would have gladdened his heart.

**Spencer Spooner**

*(St Thomas' Church chorister 1947-1964)*

## **Windows on the Cross by Tom Smail**

Society today shows signs of disintegration. Institutions such as the Monarchy, Parliament and the Church itself have come under intense scrutiny and deeply disturbing weaknesses have been exposed. We are bombarded with news of wars and injustice. The advance of science poses new moral dilemmas that leave us confused and looking for help.

In the midst of such perplexity Tom Smail invites us to "survey the wondrous cross", not he says to find instant answers to particular questions, but so that we can find our bearings and our confidence in the way God deals with the confusion and destructiveness in the world. We can also discover there clues about how we might respond to the difficult situations we have to face

The book examines many different perspectives of the cross: from the New Testament themes of reconciliation, sacrifice, justice and freedom to the more contemporary approaches of sharing of suffering and victory over sin. Throughout Tom Smail seeks to instruct and explain the biblical teaching, unlocking its meaning and motivating us to a fresh devotional and practical response to what God has done for us in the death of Jesus.

Publishers: Danton Longman & Todd

**Enid Sheldon**