

Ploughshare February/March 1995 (Scanned version from the original)

From the Rector

What is eternal life? Most people would say it means Heaven or life after death. Jesus, however, shows us that it is more than that. *"This is eternal life," he prayed, "that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."* (John 17:3)

A good definition of a Christian is someone who has eternal life, in other words it is someone who knows God and knows Jesus Christ.

Our motto for 1995 **'I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection'** encourages us to explore and develop this relationship. Friendships can be superficial and they can be deep, they can be ordinary and they can be special. How well do we know our Lord? How special is He to us? How deep are we prepared to go?

If we are serious about "going for growth in Christ", this is the heart of it. The Apostle Paul made it clear that nothing mattered more to him than knowing Christ. It had a "minus" side: sharing in His sufferings. There is no avoiding that for anyone taking the Christian way seriously. There is, however, wonderful "plus" side: experiencing His resurrection power. 1995 can be a year to concentrate on spirituality.

Christopher Frith

Jonty Frith in Uganda

Jonty enjoyed his African Christmas. He even produced the sketch "Angel face" in Namirembe Cathedral - he had performed in this at St Thomas' Carol Service three or four years ago.

He has recently participated in a Youth Camp. This was not an easy experience and it made him appreciate the biblical teaching and effective organization which he has grown used to at the Blaithwaite CYFA Venture.

The recent rainy season is also the grasshopper eating season. The insects gather in their thousands under the few street lights that have electricity and are easy to catch. Jonty has tried them and finds them rather crunchy!

Please pray that God will protect and use Jonty, especially as he preaches and meets regularly with various young men for one to one Bible reading.

Hope for Eastern Europe: A Journey in faith to Romania

Tuesday 16th August 1994

It was 12.30am when John (a member of our overland team) rang from Cluj to say they had arrived safely in Romania with the supplies. We were all very relieved as crossing the border into Romania is no easy task. We all thanked God for their safe arrival and spent the morning waiting for a second phone call. Mirella and I set off at 1.30pm to visit an orphanage where Mirella had previously worked. It was approximately 130 kilometres from Constanti. We were very warmly received and allowed to tour the building. This is an orphanage for children with mental disabilities. It had many basic physical needs.

Most of the beds in one wing had no mattresses, and there were very basic toilet facilities. The children appeared very happy, but with very worn clothes and shoes.

We were introduced to the lady doctor in charge, who came back with us to Constanti. She confided to us the problems they had encountered and the needs of the orphanage. We went back to Mirella's mum's home and waited for the team to make contact. John rang at 8.30pm to ask for directions into Constanti. We arranged to meet them on the border of Constanti that evening and linked up at 11.45pm. They were in very good spirits but very tired and hungry. They followed us to Lilley's home where she had prepared a lovely meal. She later introduced Ian and John to Dora, a friend who would be accommodating them.

Les, John and Ian shared with us their hazardous journey. It was wonderful to realize how God had met their every need in each situation they had encountered. We arranged to meet up the following day to transport the bulk of our supplies to Basarabi church where the local Christians had arranged to receive and sort them. The pastor and his family welcomed us warmly and helped unload the lorry.

Priority was given to the leper community at Tichelesti. Everyone was really helpful and thanked us for the quality of the supplies. We were assured that the needs of very poor families would be met with the remainder. Forty five boxes were labelled personally for the lepers. Twenty eight other families were supplied with food, baby milk, toiletries, toys, clothing and bedding. Richard, Mirella and myself then went into Constanti for lunch with Pastor Ghita and his family. We explained the purpose of our visit and he was most eager to help with the distribution of the supplies to the poor families, in his church.

As they were also quite poor and new to the area we felt led to help them with provisions and bible literature. He was very encouraged as he was working towards street evangelism, and the literature was an answer to prayer. It was a blessing to meet this family who had been led by faith to Constanti from a different area in North Romania, to establish a new church. They left everything behind, like Abraham, and trusted our Lord for every provision, a remarkable act of faith and courage!

On our return to Basarabi Church, we all sorted out the medical equipment and supplies ready for distribution to the hospitals. These were later stored safely at the foster home by agreement with Luci and Adi, until Doctor Marinela, on holiday that week, could receive and check them, and decide where best to send them.

We had the privilege later to help deliver food parcels to the poor families in the area. My heart went out to these very poor - but faith-filled people who are so blessed by any small gift and eager to share what they have with you. Mirella and Richard have taken slides of many of these families so that our experiences and many blessings can be shared here in England.

Les and myself are available to share these slides and a talk with interested people by mutual arrangement.

Please continue to pray for Romania

May our Lord bless you all.

Pamela Gratton

Australian Diary, by Brian and Barbara Porter

It is well known that Australia is many thousands of miles away from the U.K. and that it is inhabited mainly by men in wide brimmed hats, complete of course with corks, who gather regularly in male only bars to consume large quantities of a particular brand of beer and to denigrate society in general and Poms (that's us) in particular. So when Christopher asked me if I would like to replace another local clergyman who had arranged a working exchange in the diocese of Sydney but who was no longer available to go, I readily accepted the opportunity to see for myself whether this archetypal Australian actually existed.

And so, early one morning last September Barbara and I found ourselves at Sydney Airport having been told that when we had pushed our baggage trolley past the immigration desks and the customs procedures (both manned by people of excellent courtesy) that we would find Graham and Jan Brown, who were to be our hosts for something like three months. We were supposed to recognise them by a placard they would be carrying bearing our names, but we spotted each other spontaneously. Little did we then know that they were to look after us so thoroughly, so generously and so amusingly that our friendship was to be the highlight of our stay in the parish of Dural and Arcadia.

So we were driven on that first morning from the airport to Dural, a journey of just under an hour; it gave us our first glimpse of Sydney harbour: the blue of the water sparkling in the sunshine of early Spring; and reflected in it the dramatic, sail-like outline of the Sydney Opera House. It was a sight which was to become for both of us increasingly addictive as the weeks unfolded.

Within two hours of our arrival in the parish I was receiving a first briefing from one of the churchwardens. Life in the parish was to prove busy, exciting and rewarding.

Visiting people in their homes was always an interesting prospect because many in the parish live on five acre blocks and access roads are mostly dirt tracks through the bush. I arrived often with a sense of relief: whew! I've made it. I have to say the 'after dark visiting' only happened very occasionally.

The parish is large (as everything in Australia seems to be) with two centres of worship: St Judes Dural at the southerly end with St Columbs some six miles or so to the north. Sometimes on a Sunday morning it was necessary to dash from one to the other (by car of course) arriving, even so, quite breathless at St Columb's. The usual pattern of worship involved me in two, sometimes three morning services and one evening service. There was a great demand for baptism during our stay and families were encouraged to come for this at a special service at 11.15am, following the main service. One of the highlights during the exchange was a combined service to celebrate 148 years of worship at St Jude's Church: people came from all corners of the parish and we all packed into the large hall for a great time of praise and thanksgiving.

Within ten days of our arrival in New South Wales there came the opportunity to attend the Annual diocesan clergy conference. Sydney diocese covers a large area and therefore divides its meeting into regions and so it was the Western Region Conference I attended. It was good to meet with clergy in this way and to hear of their perspectives of ministry and to share in fellowship with them. Sydney diocese is strong in its evangelicalism and this showed in the times of Bible study and prayer we enjoyed together. As the only Englishman present I was made extremely welcome and was given many opportunities to exchange views in small groups and with individuals.

As someone who enjoys more than anything else to be with people it was an event I enjoyed immensely and from which I hope I learned much; it was over all too soon.

In Australia, the adage work hard, play hard took on a new reality, perhaps it had something to do with the climate but after a full day's work it always seemed more possible to engage in some sort of active relaxation, whether it was helping our hosts in the paddocks as they fed and watered their horses (paddock = field and horses abound in N.S.W.) or being taken by friends to a nearby golf course for a few holes; early Saturday morning starts were also built into the programme, for instance speaking at 7.00 am at an outdoor men's breakfast and then setting off into the bush for an exhausting hike as the sun gets higher and hotter.

And then there was the ubiquitous dinner invitation - it really did come at us from all angles. The Australians we met were hospitality personified. As an occasion dinner in N.S.W. is quite formal; in our experience the barbecue with everyone in shorts and tee shirt happened only sometimes, but dinner was different; dress; casual but very smart (we travelled unprepared for this, fortunately our hosts, Graham and Jan, kindly came to the rescue) cuisine : varied, elegant appetizing and designed to put on the inches very quickly. We enjoyed some delightful evenings getting to know the hopes, fears and concerns of people who at grass roots level continue to value the links and traditions received from the U.K. even though at a more public and federal level these elements are frequently disparaged.

The weeks soon slipped by, the camera clicked away as we sought to record a kaleidoscope of events. In order to share all that was happening, whenever it was possible Barbara and I exercised a joint ministry. When it was not, Barbara made her own opportunities: among others by arranging to be shown around a local Anglican retirement village (a local phenomenon about which we have minced feelings). The privilege of being allowed to teach scripture in schools was another area in which we were pleased to be involved.

Our visit contained a civic element because as his chaplain this year I had been asked by the Mayor of Chesterfield to take his formal greetings to the Mayor of Hornsby (the nearest local equivalent of Chesterfield) and to present to him a commemorative plate. This happened within the context of a meeting of the Hornsby Borough Council. This proved to be a splendid parish occasion as the church wardens and gardening team of St Judes were also present to receive an award for the best kept local church gardens.

On our days off we travelled to the Blue Mountains (about one hour distant) with their dramatic sheer rock faces and amazing views over miles and miles of eucalyptus forest. We saw the devastating results of the forest fires of January 1994. We swam from the glorious beaches of the central coast, some fifty miles north of Sydney.

We wondered at the clarity of the light, especially in the morning and in the evening; and at the abundance of exotic birdlife, enjoying most of all the kookaburras with their infectious laughter-like calls,. Again and again we returned to Sydney, just. 40 minutes away, to revel in the glorious setting of the harbour, the bridge, the Opera House and the dynamic, vibrant city.

However it is the people we shall remember most of all, the friendships made, the fellowship enjoyed whether at house groups, around the dinner table or in the course of numerous activities. Their foci are no different to ours: The Lord Jesus Christ, who calls us all do Himself to receive from him abundant life; Scripture, the means by which God communicates and reveals Himself to us by His Holy Spirit; the Church, the Body of Christ.

The caricature of the Australian I started with very quickly evaporated as we experienced a little of Australia and met some of the people of that great country. And that I believe is what such an exchange is all about: to break down and dispel misunderstanding, to open up avenues of communication and to build up and encourage one another in our shared Christian heritage.

Brian Porter

Two Australians in Chesterfield

Gerald and Jan Beckett, from the parish of Dural in the Sydney diocese, were in the parish from September to November, on an exchange with Brian and Barbara Porter. Gerald sends us these reflections.

Jan and I have just completed 3 months amongst you and have been asked to share a few impressions of our time here, so I'll begin where everybody begins, with the weather. We hope that we will be able to take home some of the rain with us to Australia. We have been intrigued with your capacity to walk in all kinds of weather. We have photos to prove our point.

We will go home with many special memories like our time on the Continent, on the Rhine and in Amsterdam, of our arrival in Chesterfield - the market, the Crooked Spire, Brookside Glen. Also our excursions to surrounding places - the Peak National Park, Haddon Hall, Chatsworth House, Bakewell, steam train rides at Darley Dale, tram rides at Crich, the theatre in Sheffield, and special times like the two hours we spent with the Mayor of Chesterfield. We appreciated the opportunity to preach at the Crooked Spire on Remembrance Sunday, our stay with a lovely Christian family in Ireland, a visit to my 94 year old Aunt in Wolverhampton, Jan's parenting evening at St Johns.

Our special memories will be of the people of God here. One of our first impressions of Church life in Chesterfield was the Family Service at St Thomas' which concluded the summer children's programme. It was a real encouragement to see so much life and enthusiasm. I remember writing home and saying that the church is alive and well in England if that service is any indication.

It has been wonderful to be welcomed into people's homes and lives. We have made many new friendships which I am sure we will keep for the rest of our lives. But not only have individuals encouraged us so has the whole church. It has been good to worship with you and be encouraged by the fellowship here.

Our special responsibility has been for St John's and we have developed a real affection for the people of that congregation. Great potential exists at St John's and we want to urge you to use your new facility to the full and reach out to the many young families on your doorstep. As I said to St John's on our last Sunday, "Our spirits have been refreshed and we have you in our hearts".

Of course great potential also exists throughout the parish. To have some 20 odd people prepared for the next "Christians for life" course is a barometer of that potential. Seize the opportunities that God is giving you and do it together. The work of the kingdom is a team effort so work together to extend that kingdom. As you share the Gospel with others, encourage one another and live as salt and light in the world - praise God for Touchstone.

With so much potential and so many opportunities the ever present danger is that individuals will "fall through the cracks". Your ministry team, led by Christopher, works hard at trying to minimize these losses but they cannot do it alone. I am aware that many members of the parish work hard at caring for individuals who come to you for ministry. Could I particularly urge you to participate in whatever programme is put in place to make the parish more effective in this area.

I conclude saying thank you from the bottom of our hearts for the privilege of sharing with you for the past 3 months and for the opportunity of ministering the Word of God amongst you.

Gerald Beckett

Roger Freestone, our New Co-ordinator

When Philip Herrick announced his resignation, the post of Church Co-ordinator was advertised internally. Five excellent candidates were interviewed, some interested in a part-time appointment, some full-time. **Roger Freestone** has been appointed on a full-time basis.

Since 1989 Roger has been a manager with Senior Engineering, previously he was with Coalite. He is a member of the British Institute of Management and he is a magistrate. His task will be to build on the administrative foundation set in place by Philip Herrick, with an emphasis on motivating church members to make spiritual growth and service a major priority.

"I am thrilled at the prospect," sat Roger. "I am aware that it is not going to be easy but I believe God has called me to serve Him in this way and will respond to our prayers." Roger starts his ministry on 31 January.

Who's Who in the Parish: The Fletcher Family

Ray and Marie, you joined St. John's in summer 1993. Can you say why?

We were invited by some friends, and our children, Natalie and Charlotte loved it from the first moment. They found lots of school friends and I, Marie, knew people from the Focus group.

Shortly after that Ray was made redundant. Has the St. John's family helped?

Yes, a great deal. We have a strong feeling of support, and in practical terms people have given us baskets of fruit or groceries and offered us lunch on Sundays. We think it has been a learning experience for many people.

What are some of the difficulties with a prolonged time of unemployment?

We face some frustration with filling in all the forms and trying to keep within the system. It is hard to find extras for the children to go to Brownies, swimming and have music lessons. We cannot plan ahead or think about holidays. We have to live from day to day but it is absolutely remarkable how we have been provided for and we're not in debt. We want to give thanks to God for that.

Many in the parish recognize you Ray as the gardener with the allotment with Touchstone - what is your involvement there?

Back in June 1993 I was concerned for unemployed people and joined the original committee before I myself joined the ranks of the unemployed. I've learnt much from being involved with Touchstone and have enjoyed working on the allotment, but in these next few months I need to concentrate on searching for a job and so have withdrawn for a time. Marie is still involved with fund raising activities for Touchstone.

What have you learnt through this time and what are your feelings for the future?

We've learnt to keep things in perspective, and to be thankful for all that we have. We've learnt to trust that God is guiding us through this difficult time for a purpose. From years in manufacturing, I, (Ray), have found in these past 16 months as I've tried lots of new things that I have gained confidence through various training courses. It hasn't always been easy but I can look at 1995 with hope though it is quite unknown. We are excited but apprehensive.

Book Reviews

Facing the storm

By Eddie Askew £2.25 published by The Leprosy Mission International

I wish I had listened to my friend Caroline when she recommended Eddie Askew's books on prayer and meditation. Having just read "Facing the Storm" (the 5th book in a series of six) I now realise just what I've been missing!!

At £2.25 (as are all the books) this book is further enhanced by author's own water colour paintings throughout.

I could really relate to the prayer based on Hebrews 12 v - 2 on page 47 concerning rushing around in a panic and going round in circles!! it concludes with, *"Help me to differentiate the urgent from the important. To hear, behind the*

clamorous voice of now, your gentle voice that offers me, so quietly, the joy of knowing why I'm here, and who stands close".

I can wholeheartedly recommend any of Eddie Askews books to anyone wanting to walk along pathways of thought and insight into a deeper understanding of life in Christ.

Tales from The Ark

by Avril Rowlands £3.50 Lion Publishing

Thomas and I loved this book of "what might have happened on board the Ark". Nearly every chapter is centred on an animal or insect, my personal favourite being "The Spiders Tale" where Noah is afraid of the two spiders who have taken up residence in his cabin (I could sympathise with him there!!)

Poor Noah has problems with some of the animals wanting to eat each other, a leaking Ark, a power struggle between the lion and the tiger, and a food shortage, just to name a few!

A very funny book which would appeal to any one aged 3 to 103!!

Pauline Latimer

Operation Christmas Child

Having supported Operation Christmas Child for over a year now, some of you are probably wondering what goes on between January and October. Most of January is taken up with the continuing distribution of shoeboxes. The 'Big Plane' took approx. 100,000 presents to Bosnia in December. Others have, and will be taken by road until all have found someone to cherish the contents; but more importantly the love sent with them.

Operation Christmas Child was set up in October 1990. We were all disturbed by the pictures shown then, of Romanian orphanages. Dave Cooke, could not just sit back and ignore the situation. He got three Christian friends together one evening, and OCC evolved. One of their main objectives, other than helping those poor children, was to spread the love of the First Christmas Child wherever they went. The response those gentlemen had, to their appeal overwhelmed them, and it still does to this day. The one lorry they had hoped to take, became 6. There is an excellent booklet available telling of the early days of OCC. But who would have thought that four and a half years later they would also be helping children in Bosnia, Croatia, Rwanda and now Russia. Dave Cooke, OCC's founder (whom some of you met at Harvest Fields), spoke in parliament before Christmas, to promote the work that they do, and is having discussions with American links for further sponsorship.

They have already touched on Russia. The Anatov 124 will fly out at the end of January with shoeboxes and other essential aid. Convoys travel monthly with essential aid throughout the year! Please don't think of them as only sending shoeboxes at Christmas. That is just an extra special treat for the children. It also provides a tremendous opportunity for our children to learn about, and experience the love of God. It makes our children realise how wonderful it can be to give the only reward being the smiles on the videos, or on Newsround. Those rewards can bring tears to your eyes and you never forget the expressions you see on those little faces.

Some of you may have read the article at Easter. Last year's Easter egg convoy, was the first aid to have reached East Mostar in two years. The sights they saw on that visit should not be forgotten. Children and adults alike eat leaves to survive. We try to help, and sympathise, but can we even try to imagine doing the same? I find it very difficult, and so do most of us I would think. This December for the second time, OCC visited East Mostar. Other organizations do not go. OCC's dedicated volunteers risk their lives, on the front lines, for the benefit of others. They and their partners at home have strong faith, and believe that the work must be done. The innocent victims of East Mostar don't deserve to be forgotten!

In addition to the monthly aid convoys, OCC have a number of major projects planned, many of them already begun.

1) For 3 years Dave Cooke's sister Rachael, educated staff and cared for children with Aids in Constanta, Romania. Her work is done, and she has moved on, but OCC have not. A hospice is to be built for these children, who have been abandoned by their parents.

2) The addition of a further 220 children onto the child sponsorship scheme. 9,15 a month keeps a child with their family, rather than being sent to an orphanage.

3) Runaway Bay, a sanctuary in Croatia, away from the war zone, this island will provide a respite, for children aged 8 - 16.

More details on the above projects, and OCC in general can be obtained from Jane Simmonds. Quite a lot of videos and literature are available on the work of OCC. There are 2 excellent OCC official videos; a recording of last. year's Songs of Praise (the whole programme being devoted to the organization); a home made video on the 1994 Big Plane send off; and various news and newsround reports. Do ask Jane to borrow them.

Locally, at Easter, we are hoping to send a lorry to Croatia from Chesterfield, naturally under the banner of Operation Christmas Child. If we are fortunate to get a lorry for this purpose, the trip will still cost £2,500. Easter Eggs, food and medical supplies will be the main items on this trip, so any donations will be most gratefully received. There will be more details on the trip nearer the time.

All in all, through the obvious success of the organisation, the first objective - that of helping children, who may have become victims of war or distress, has been achieved. The second objective, that of educating our children, is well on the way. The shoebox appeal is such a good way of doing this. Children can see where their money or possessions are going.

They know instantly that they will bring a great deal of joy to the one child who received their box. Sorting through the boxes, it is plain to see many treasured possessions are put into the shoeboxes. It is very humbling to think that our children are capable of packing such lovely gifts for 'friends' they don't even know. It is also very important for them to realise that they, as individuals, can make a difference to someone's life. However small the gesture, the thought, and the love behind it will mean so much to that child in Bosnia; or Croatia; or Rwanda; or Somalia; or Russia; or wherever OCC go next!

Wouldn't it be nice to think that our children would be the Dave Cooke of the future. So many things have evolved from that first meeting with friends. All due to our First Christmas Child.

I hope many of you will have found the information of value. Thanks must be added, for the support given by so many of you. What I try to do in Chesterfield, on behalf of OCC, would not be possible without the practical help and support of so many parish members.

Some of you will now appreciate the reason OCC added **All Year Round** to their name.!

Jane Simmonds

To endorse the work of OCC see James 2:14-17