

Ploughshare February/March 2002

(This is a scanned version of the original magazine)

From the Rector

In the aftermath of foot and mouth, the scarcely credible atrocity of September 11th and the long drawn out devastation of Afghanistan ("smoking out" Osama Bin Laden) all eyes are on the Euro. Will the £ soon be a distant memory? It all adds to a feeling of insecurity and uncertainty as we enter 2002.

It is an opportune time to put our trust in the Lord - who is secure and trustworthy.

In our parish, we face a year of opportunity. We have our new Mission and Ministry Leadership Team. We are "Talking Money" We need to make decisions about developing St Thomas' buildings and replacing the portacabins. We are about to have a major and expensive refurbishment of the organ. And St Thomas' is preparing for a "vacancy", being without a Rector for a while - all distinct and tremendous opportunities.

In this context of opportunity as well as insecurity and uncertainty, **we have a new church motto:**

Commit yourselves to the Lord and serve Him only (1 Samuel 7:3)

It is a **challenge**, unlike previous mottos, which have tended to be an encouragement or an invitation. The prophet Samuel delivered it to God's people when they were at a low ebb.

It means a **clear - out**. Get rid of foreign gods, Samuel said. What or who has supplanted God as our number one affection? We may need to be radical.

It demands **commitment** - an unfashionable characteristic, the very opposite of the "laid back religion" prevalent in the churches. I am a West Ham supporter (football that is!) but I'm far from committed. It costs me no money and very little time and I'm useless to them. Commitment to Jesus Christ does cost us plenty, and we do want to be useful to Him. It is what Christianity is all about - and it's exhilarating.

It calls for a **clear-cut determination to serve (or worship) the Lord**. In our homes and families, our jobs and our communities we need to do our utmost to please Him and further his mission.

Let's go for it - and make 2002 the best year of our lives so far.

Christopher Frith

A look back to last year's [2001] motto

Jesus said "Follow Me" Luke 9:59

For almost twenty years I had longed to serve in the Falkland Islands. If any body had asked me before that time, "where are the Falklands?" I would have probably said, off the coast of Scotland, but the Argentine invasion of 1982 changed all that. Squadron Leader, Padre Ken Wilson and I were locked in a Christian embrace in the middle of the departure lounge at Mount Pleasant Airport. To onlookers it could have been father and son, but to us we were brothers, kindred spirits. He knew the pain that I was going through, both physically and mentally for I was leaving the Island with a suspected slipped disk in my lower spine, after serving only three months of a six months engagement.

The people that I had come to know and love on the Island meant so much to me, but now it was time to leave. I felt gutted, and cheated out of something, but a voice inside said, " Follow Me Well done... you have achieved what you came to do, now multiply that love a thousand times and share it with others, in my name ".

By Chris McHale who had to return early from a short-term catering contract in the Falkland Islands with the Army.

LENT 2002 "Being a Blessing"

What have you got planned for Lent 2002? Alongside giving up chocolates why not consider giving up your Wednesday evenings to come along to St Thomas' Church at 7.30pm for time with God.

During this year, the 75th anniversary of the Diocese of Derby, the Bishop has asked us to take time out to focus on issues of faith and spiritual renewal. This series of studies, which have been prepared by Canon Barrie Gauge, offer us just this opportunity.

Barrie Gauge writes, " We live in interesting times, when old certainties are called into question, when "man" is increasingly "the measure of all things" and also when we see that search for religious experience in no way diminished. The question is how can we as Christians be better equipped to speak into this world? And how can our belief be better expressed in *how* we are, in *who* we are, and in *whose* we are?"

Each week we will meet at St Thomas' Church and focus on one aspect of the theme of "Being a Blessing"

February 13th	- Ash Wednesday, Holy Communion, and an introduction to Being a Blessing
February 20th	- everyone matters to God
February 27th	- God's desire that all should be blessed
March 6th	- Belonging - Church as community
March 13th	- Belief begets behaviour

To round off the series we are all invited to hear Bishop Jonathan speak at a teaching session at 7.30pm on Tuesday the 19th March at St Mary's Church (the crooked spire).

So the Rector's leaving- making the most of a vacancy

Have you heard the news? It's spreading quite quickly now across the parish since the publication of Mustard Seed just before Christmas. Christopher and Pam Frith are set to move some time in the summer of 2002. Christopher is to be vicar of Alvaston in southeast Derby.

"It will be quite a wrench leaving Chesterfield," he says, "but Pam and I feel that God is calling us to Alvaston".

We are sorry that Christopher and Pam will soon be moving on. They have both come to mean so much to so many of us, and we have benefited enormously from their ministry and time amongst us. So, is it a case of?

"Rectors" come and vicars go but life goes on", or

"thank goodness we won't have to suffer those cricket jokes in his sermons for much longer" or is it

"we'll never get anyone who is as good with people"?

Are you already wondering how long the Parish will be without a Rector? Or how the PCC is going to function? Or who will take weddings and funerals?

The PCC, the Mission and Ministry Leadership Team and the Wardens are already considering the answers to these and many other questions. You will be pleased to know that we are not the first Parish (nor will we be the last!) to face a vacancy, and so we can count on:

- Almighty God - through all of the changes we will continue to pray for God's guidance and ask for His will to be done here in Brampton and Holymoorside
- well established procedures to set out the meetings and consultation which need to take place and all the steps we need to follow to ensure the pattern of services, policies and general running of the church are maintained
- help, support and guidance from our Patron, (Bishop Jonathan), the Archdeacon (David Garnett) and the Rural Dean (Tom Johnson) - we know these people well already and it is reassuring to know they will be helping us over the coming months
- the continuing support and prayers of the Church family.

Let us pray that the time ahead will be an opportunity for us to develop our own service and commitment to God - how wonderful that we have been led to the verse from 1 Samuel as this year's motto - "Commit yourselves to the Lord and serve Him only".

Please join us in praying for:

- Christopher and Pam as they also seek God's will over the coming months as they begin the process of carefully pulling up the roots they have put down over the last 17 years
- the PCC as it takes important decisions
- the Leadership Team as they move into overseeing the general running of church activities
- pray that God will prepare us, and the person of His choice, for the future ministry in this parish.

By Pam Brimelow, Church Warden

Introducing St Thomas' Church Mission and Ministry Team Leaders:

The six teams being led by this formidable group of people are:

Worship and Teaching	Christopher Frith
Children and Young people	Karen Herrick
Evangelism and Nurture	David Sanderson
Caring and Sharing	David Holden
Finance and Fabric	Graham Brown
Communication & Co-ordination	Karen Riley

The Mission & Ministry Team Leaders will enable, encourage and facilitate their Mission & Ministry Team's ministry and liaise and meet with the members of their team on a regular basis. The Mission & Ministry Team Leaders will represent and communicate the needs and situation of their Mission & Ministry Team and the activities of the Groups within their team, to the Leadership Team, the PCC and the whole Church.

Ploughshare readers will be introduced to each leader and team during the course of the coming year. In the meantime, there are leaflets which explain the introduction of the Mission and Ministry Teams in more detail - available from the church office.

Touchstone 2002.

Our mission is 'to help unemployed and other disadvantaged people return to work, gain recognised skills and play a full part in society: while at the same time improving the environment, economic and social fabric of society'.

These have always been our aims, ever since we started nine years ago, but wow, how things have changed! Looking back, it almost seems laughable that we should set out on such a foolhardy enterprise, with no experience, no idea of what skills we needed, sharing a portacabin at St. Thomas' and with an allotment to work on.

However, the Bishop of Derby's Church Urban Fund had sufficient faith in us to finance a manager for one year. Although this provided 'the priming for the pump' we had a long, hard and often bumpy trail to blaze during those intervening years. We now have a professional organisation with ten dedicated staff and an annual turnover of £500,000! I hasten to add that much of this money is used to pay a full wage to our previously unemployed ILM trainees, who receive training and support whilst employed by us for up to twelve months on community projects.

Our success rate is phenomenal; a great encouragement and a very humbling experience for all those involved. We have helped individuals to recover their self-esteem, take pride in their achievements, gain new qualifications and compete successfully for often quite challenging appointments.

"I've always felt valued for myself at Touchstone," was the response of one severely disabled ILM recruit on gaining his first permanent job as a supervisor.

The furniture recycling team are finding it difficult to keep up with demand, so if you have any usable furniture, cookers, washers or household equipment to dispose of, please ring 554932. They will arrange collection and see that it is delivered free to families previously homeless, or on benefits.

Due to building development we shall soon have to leave our Hipper Street premises that have served us so well. As yet we have not been able to find anywhere else suitable. Please continue with your prayers for us, we could not possibly have achieved all this on our own!

Adrian Marsden-Jones

Introducing Robin and Eileen Balch

An interview by Julie Lomas

Julie: Robin, you know this part of the world quite well, having been in Sheffield before -can you tell us what you did there?

Robin: Early on in our ministry we moved to Sheffield (it was 1970) and I was the senior curate at Lodge Moor for about five years. During that time our two daughters, Katherine and Jenny were born and we had a very happy time living and working in that area.

Julie: But you didn't stay in Sheffield - where did you go next?

Robin: In 1976 we moved south to a parish in S E London and served God and the people of the Parish in the district of Erith for 17 years - not dissimilar to the situation Christopher and Pam have found themselves in!

Our eldest daughter, Katherine, came to Sheffield to study medicine, followed two years later by Jenny, who is a chip off the old block and trained in chemistry like her father. Since the late 80s then, we have been travelling up and down the M1 to Sheffield.

We reached a point where we knew we needed to move on, and spent a while looking around, considering different ideas, until out of the blue we received a phone call from the Bishop of Lewis asking us to consider something quite different - could we go to Sussex to minister in the Fairlight area, a country area of mainly retired people, there were 5 buildings and 3 different parishes. It was very hard work to start with but we saw the Lord bless the work as children's work grew, building were reordered, we ran Alpha courses, people were added to the church.

Julie: you say that 1999 was a significant year for you - what happened?

Robin: In 1999 two things happened on the same day which changed a lot of things - firstly, our first grandchild was born at lam on at 23.8.99, and later that day her great -grandmother (Eileen's mother) passed away. The sale of her house enabled us to think about moving closer to the family, and so we looked at returning to Sheffield.

But God had other plans! He brought us instead to Chesterfield, where we stumbled upon St Thomas' (although we had heard of it, and knew of the Friths but had not met them before), and bumped into Christopher - and so began a process which took nearly two years of "unpicking" ourselves from Sussex, buying a property and then finally moving into Whitecotes Park in November 2001.

Julie: Eileen, having experienced so much over the years, how do you find God speaks to you?

Eileen: in a variety of ways - certainly through His word as I read the Bible, but also as I walk along and am contemplating something, or through my conscience. Often God speaks to me through other people, and there have been a few occasions during my life when I have been aware of something at a specific moment of need.

Julie: We had fun with my next question - I asked you both to imagine you were on a desert island, and your Bible had been torn apart in a storm, but three books remained intact - one from the Old Testament, a Gospel and a New Testament book - which would you want and why?

Eileen: For me, I would want the Psalms, because they are poetry and I love poetry. My Gospel choice would be John's gospel, because I think I can remember a lot from the other three, but Johns would give me a lot to think about, especially the "I am" sayings. And I would love to have Paul's letter to the Philippians - it is so personal, loving and encouraging.

Robin: Well, I too would want the Psalms, and John's gospel (no we didn't collaborate on this answer!) and I would love to have the letter to the Romans as for me it captures the heart of the gospel.

Julie: How do you spend you "free" time?

Robin: I have lots of interests, music (I play keyboard and accordion), sport (one of my son - in - laws is very interested as well) and I paint, mostly oils but I am also exploring watercolours.

Eileen: I am currently involved in getting the house how we want it; I am making the most of now being just half an hour from my two granddaughters (Rebekah - 2 and a half, and Abigail, - 4 months), and I enjoy poetry.

Julie: My final question - how are you (and Henry the cat!) settling in, and what do you think God wants now?

Eileen: It has been hard moving again - it doesn't get any easier! But I am getting to grips with where things are, who to contact, and enjoy exploring the area. As for next steps - I am a Lay Reader, and enjoy that ministry, and you may well see me in that role here, but I am taking things very slowly for at least our first six months to settle in, and work out what is right.

Robin: I love the house; it is great being nearer the family, and lovely to have found fellowship in the churches in the area. I feel God has brought us here for a purpose and I am happy to do whatever I can to support His mission. As for Henry the cat - he is just fine - he is a very large cat, with a very large personality and he has made himself quite at home!

Julie: thank you both for answering all these questions - we are so pleased you have moved here and look forward to getting to know you both much better.

TALKING MONEY

Christian Disciples learning together about giving

As many of you will be aware, St Thomas' and St Peter's are following a Derby Diocese project, "Talking Money", which considers Christian giving. The costs of running our churches, along with all other costs in our lives, continue to rise and are increasingly being borne locally by committed members.

But Talking Money is not about 'balancing -- the books'. It is about something far more important. Intrigued? Here are a few points to consider:

- Mission costs money, because mission takes place in the real world where money is the normal means of exchange
- Our churches have been given a mission by God - to make disciples - that needs to be resourced with vision, people, buildings and money,
- This mission is God's work. We believe God's work is to be paid for by God's people
- We believe we ought to talk about money and about our responsibilities in this area as part of the church of God
- The Christian giving we are talking about is not "fundraising" - it is giving by God's people, i.e. releasing a meaningful and proportionate part of what we have (our income) to be used by God's people for God's work.

God has already given all the "money" necessary to resource His mission in this place - it is in our hands (and pockets)

We want to make every effort to become more effective as a Church in bringing God's love in Christ to the people of our parish - what does the level of your giving say about your commitment to that work?

During February there will be an opportunity to explore this subject at our Sunday services as we look at the following areas:

- Giving to say "Thank You"
- First to the Lord

- God's word about giving

During this time you will also hear about Promise Sunday. On 24th February we will be invited to pledge our giving for the next year. You will be asked to sign a card saying that over the next year you will try to give an amount per week or month. Please remember:

- Only you, God and the Treasurer will know your amount.
- It is not a legal contract! If circumstances change then you can change your commitment (that includes increasing it as well!)
- If you pay income tax, you should give via Gift Aid - it costs you nothing, but for every £1 you give the Chancellor will give St Thomas' an extra 28p. Please tick the Gift Aid box on Promise Sunday.

It is the fervent hope of the PCC that all who read this article, will think and pray about this matter and come to the service on 24th February ready to honour God.

The beginning of thanking is thinking think about what God has done for you: think seriously about your giving - and in doing so let God begin the work of releasing you to serve Him.

Let your attitude be gratitude!

Graham Brown