

PLOUGHSHARE

February/March 2009

Volume 17, No 2



St Thomas' Brampton St Peter's, Holymoorside

Share the love of Jesus

*We aim to become more like Jesus every day
as we respond to His love for us and
as we share the good news of Him with others*



**A look back at what
happened this
Christmas
See inside**



60p per copy (£3 per year)

Monthly Pattern of Sunday Services

There is a variety of services each Sunday in both our churches. Details are set out below. Please note that changes may occasionally occur at short notice. For the latest up to date information please check the weekly notice sheet or www.st-thomas-brampton.org

St Thomas'

Sermon themes and readings are available in Church or at www.st-thomas-brampton.org/services.html

Podcasts of the sermons and readings are available at www.st-thomas-brampton.org/podcast_index.html

9am A fairly traditional service of Holy Communion every Sunday using 'Common Worship' and with a choir and organ.

11am A more informal service than 9am usually with a music group. There are children's groups (3 to 10 plus years old) and a crèche.

1 st Sunday	All Age Worship
2 nd Sunday	Holy Communion
3 rd , 4 th (and 5 th) Sunday	Morning Worship

6pm A fairly informal service usually with a music group.

1 st , 2 nd , 3 rd (and 5 th) Sunday	Evening Worship
4 th Sunday	Holy Communion

4.30pm 'energize -1' for 10-14 year olds

8pm 'energize -2' for 14-18 year olds

See page 13 for more about St Thomas' Worship and Teaching programme up to the end of March

St Peter's

9.30am A fairly traditional service of Holy Communion every Sunday using 'Common Worship' and 'Mission Praise' accompanied by the organ. There is Sunday Club (3 years old to school year 9) and a crèche.

6pm A fairly traditional service of Evening Prayer using the '1662 Service' and 'Mission Praise' accompanied by the organ.

(Note: the evening service on the 4th Sunday of the month is held at Holymoorside Methodist Church.)

Next edition:	April/May 2009
Publication date:	5 April
Closing date for articles:	8 March



From the Rector

As I write this letter we are about to begin a new sermon series at St Thomas' entitled '*Resolved*'. (See page 13.) The idea of the series is to help us 'shake out' our spiritual life as we set some New Year 'spiritual' resolutions. What are we doing that helps grow and develop that side of us? Have we got a little jaded in the prayers we use or the services we attend? Do we take for granted that a new day dawns and forget to start the day with thanksgiving on our lips?

Here's a challenge: I would like to encourage you to work out how much time you spend sorting out the house, or your wardrobe, or the Christmas decorations or what ever earthly start you make to January, and then suggest you set aside a similar length of time for a look at some spiritual reflection.

When undergoing training for authorised ministry such as Reader or the Ordained ministry the words '*spiritual reflection*' become part of your breathing pattern. Nothing can be studied, prepared or undertaken without that element of things being considered to the point that one feels that *if you have to 'spiritually reflect' one more time* you will have a few choice words to share with your tutors!

But if so much weight is placed on spiritual reflection in 'formal' ministry surely we all should be encouraged to do the same. After all when you read the Gospel records of Christ just such an activity frames all of his recorded life and ministry. Often verses start with something like '*Now during those days he went onto the mountain to pray*' (Luke 6:12), or '*He withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself*' (Matthew 14:13b).

His ministry is rooted in spiritual care of himself in the presence of his Father, and his words to us are one long spiritual reflection on life and how God calls us to live. So surely, as we start our new year of 2009, one of the most useful things we can do is to resolve to find a way that aids us to refresh and develop our own spiritual lives. Listen to our new sermon series on-line. Better still, make the effort to come to church in person, read a book, visit a different service, take a course (like ALPHA), join a small group or book a retreat. All these will encourage our soul into a healthy shape.

So I wish you all a very happy and healthy New Year, in every sense of the word.

Matt Barnes, Rector

From the Editor

This month's magazine is very much focused on people. Betty Frost tells us how God has been at work in her life, we have a tribute to Eric Fogg, an obituary of the late Bishop Jonathan and an update on the McClean family. We also find out what happened in our churches at Christmas and there is a film and a book review. Finally on the back cover we see some of the skills that our church members have as they displayed their work at last summer's Holymoorside Arts Festival.

In the last edition I wrote that Dawn Edingborough was moving to London. In fact at the time she was not moving. Apologies for any embarrassment.

What's Been Happening at St Peter's and in Holymoorside?



The Blessing of the Marriage of Andrew and Kerry Gore

Andrew's and Kerry's wedding was blessed on 13 December 2008 by the Rev Audrey. The ceremony took place in the presence of family and friends at the Bull's Head in Holymoorside. The prayers were led by Anne Knyhynyakyj.

Christmas at St Peter's

Our theme for the five Christmas windows this year was 'Gifts'. We had three windows in red, gold and silver representing the gifts from the wise men –gold, frankincense and myrrh.

The children's window had a small Christmas tree decorated with a number of toys representing the love we give to our little ones who we shower with gifts.

The giving and receiving window represented our personal giving to the charities we support –Christian Aid, The Children's Society, USPG, Children in Need and the homeless. At Christmas time it is so important to remember those families in so much need in our world.



Frankincense Window



Children's Window



Giving Window



At the Christingle Service

The last window was the nativity scene with the most precious gift God gives to each one of us afresh each year –His beloved Son.

We have much to be thankful for.

The Tuesday Group decorated the church with the nativity scene under the altar and the two Christmas trees looked stunning.

I know that many of our visitors to St Peter's enjoyed our services. My sincere thanks go to Audrey and Hannah Broderick for their skills and the time they gave making up the windows and everyone else who worked so hard throughout the Christmas season.

Rev Audrey

Betty Frost -God in my Life

Betty, together with husband David and their four children Dylan, Lucas, Alex and Zoe have been members of St Thomas' for a number of years. Betty writes a bit about herself and how she has seen God working in her life.



I was born and brought up in a Catholic family of four girls in the south of France. My Dad was quite strict, including in matters of faith, and we had to attend church every Sunday until we left home for university. Being an obedient little girl I didn't mind in my younger years and I also enjoyed Sunday school.

During my teenage years though, when he insisted I go to the student chaplaincy, I struggled a bit more - yet years later (but not that many) I came to thank him for that.

The chaplaincy was a place where we discussed all sorts of issues freely and we sometimes had weekends at a local monastery where I first discovered the value of silence. One year, when I was about sixteen, a trip to Taizé was organised. On entering that tent, on the first night, I was bowled over by the feeling of peace and the prayerful meditative singing. Over the years, I was to return there in search of that same spirit. Something had opened within me.

A few months later, one of my sisters invited me to a youth summer camp where at first I felt at odds with the charismatic worshipping style. One night, however, having been told about Baptism in the Spirit, I decided to ask for prayer. Nothing was ever the same after that. Up until then I had believed in God, but suddenly Jesus became a real person and that affected every aspect of my life as if everything had a new, deeper meaning. More than twenty years later, I still live off that moment.

I went back to school all fired up and came crashing down a few months later. Taizé rescued me as I joined the 15,000 young people in Barcelona for Taizé's annual European meeting; one of the most joyful experiences of my life. I was ready to talk about my faith to anybody after that!

Taizé was my first experience of ecumenism. I also loved the international dimension: prayers and songs translated into several languages. That strong feeling of being one while so diverse felt like a taste of heaven. I suppose all

these things were a good preparation for meeting David (my future husband!)

I had started an English degree without a great deal of conviction (then, any degree would do to train as a teacher). I met David at the Catholic chaplaincy in Toulouse, a lively friendly place. Although we were at the same university the odds of meeting him among the 10,000 students were not very high. Believe it or not, our first conversation was about the merits of Anglicanism versus Catholicism. After that, the emphasis shifted a bit.



David

We got married two years later and, after some time in France when I qualified as a primary teacher, we went to study in Bangor, to become language teachers. Anglesey is a wonderful place, but we struggled spiritually as we never really found a church where we felt comfortable.

In 1994, we went to Nigeria to work for VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas), a charity working in the developing world, for two years. This was a steep learning curve and we had many health problems along the way, but it was an extremely enriching experience. The day to day problems with food, water supply and electricity taught us not to take things for granted and to be grateful when we had something. Being driven along the dangerous roads in derelict and sometimes very fast taxis definitely strengthened our trust in God! All that paring down helped force us to generally relinquish control and depend on Him more.

Once more, we struggled to find a church (although there were very many)! It was either a three hour service with lots of shouting (including a one hour sermon!) or a Catholic service in Yoruba, the local language. But our faith was nourished by seeing the way people lived simple lives with the bare essentials and yet were so happy and close to God. Muslims or Christians, their sense of God was very strong and often when I would thank somebody for their help, they would reply: "Thank God." In Africa, we also learnt what hospitality truly means.

We returned to the UK changed forever and leaving some very dear friends behind. We lived near Buxton in a small village where Dylan and Lucas were born. However I felt quite isolated and David had a long commute to Chesterfield. It was another period of spiritual dryness as we attended a church that was very set in its ways and where there were no young families. Still, we went because of God, even when we didn't feel like it. We decided to move and having bought a house in Brampton, gave St Thomas' a visit. It was love at first sight! At last, a lively church, where we were made welcome, with lots of children and people across the whole age range, and good sermons!

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After Alex was born I realised, upon stumbling upon an article, that I was suffering from post-natal depression. This was a harrowing but, in hindsight, valuable experience as having been down there made me more empathic to any sort of suffering. In the summer we did a retreat for families in Belgium that really helped us. The year after, having been moved by the selfless love and dedication of the volunteers looking after the children, we decided to become helpers. At the end of the week I left feeling a bit cheated and not as blessed as the previous year. However God's blessings actually unfolded throughout the following year; first through the birth of Zoe, then through his constant providence at a time when we were often struggling financially. Regularly, when we needed something, somebody (not always from church, because the Spirit flows freely!) would turn up and offer it without having been told anything. It still happens now, and we really feel God is looking after us. Although He promises this in His Word, it never ceases to amaze me.



L to R Lucas, Zoe, Dylan and Alex

During the second retreat, we had quite a lot of questions regarding our future and someone prayed that we would find a group of people to support us. We had already thought of joining a house group and the following September, we did. Since then, we have felt even more part of the St Thomas' family, discovering real fellowship and support through prayer. This group, and the *Mothers' Prayers Group* I belong to, gave me the strength to have the fourth child I was wanting but I dreaded another period of post-natal depression.

Visiting the nursing homes once a month with other members of St Thomas' also nourishes me spiritually and reminds me that God truly reveals himself when we are poor and vulnerable. Some of the people can only communicate with their eyes, and yet they say a lot. I am always moved by that experience and seeing how they suddenly seem transfigured upon seeing Zoe.

Matt recently asked us if we would consider becoming leaders of our house group. Although we didn't feel up to the task (especially having to take over from the Wheelers!) we have accepted, trusting in the grace of God that is, as you know, amazing! Please pray for us at the start of this new chapter of our life.

Betty Frost

Betty de merci pour votre patience quand je pratique mon français sur vous!
-Editor

Eric Fogg



Eric at last year's
Remembrance
Service

As was mentioned in the last edition of Ploughshare, the beginning of December 2008 saw the departure of one of our regular worshippers, Eric Fogg to pastures new. Allan Kitchen has written a short tribute to Eric.

Having reached the stately age of eighty seven years Eric Fogg has decided to move to be nearer to his daughter and grandchildren who live in Bristol. He has now gone to live in Chipping Sodbury. This is a beautiful part of the country and within easy reach of his family in Bristol.

Eric had been a frequent visitor to his family for a number of years. Many of us have had the privilege of driving Eric to the railway station as he 'let the train take the strain' for his journey south.

Eric has been a faithful member of St Thomas' for many years and has been active as a worshipper and supporter of many church activities along with reading at morning services.

I know that he is well respected in the church and he always has a welcoming smile.

I have been privileged to get to know Eric better following the loss of my wife Jillian. He took me under his arm and I was pleased to be able to help Eric after the loss of his wife Connie.

My knowledge of Eric goes back many years. As a boy of sixteen I started work at the Bryan Donkin Company and often used to see Eric walking towards town in the mornings. He was always immaculately dressed with his white mac neatly folded over his arm. "Who is that man?" I asked, and was told he was employed at the Tube Works.

I also used to see Eric on the Brampton Workers Special Bus. Chesterfield Transport ran buses for those employed at Bryan Donkin and Chesterfield Tube and we often caught the same bus.

At this time I think it is fair to say that I 'knew of' Eric rather than knowing him. He always stood out in the crowd, sprightly and well dressed. **/continued**

In 1963 I married Jillian and we went to live in Wingerworth and so my trips on the Brampton Bus ceased. I still saw Eric from my office window arriving at, or leaving work. He was always the same; immaculate and sprightly. In 1969 I went to work for British Rail in Derby and my sightings of Eric ceased.

My next meeting with Eric was at St Thomas' in the late 1980s. He and his wife Connie were serving tea and coffee after the evening service. I recognised Eric and was impressed by his and Connie's caring.

After the loss of both of our wives Eric and I became close friends and we both went regularly to Rendezvous at St Thomas'. Following my talk on genealogy at the Summer Rendezvous I set about helping Eric discover his ancestry. He is a true Derbyshire thoroughbred and his links go back to Edensor and Bakewell.

Eric attended Holy Communion at St Thomas' on the Sunday before his departure and everyone present joined in prayer to bless him in his new home.

I know that I speak for everybody at St Thomas' when I say we wish him well and hope that he continues to be that sprightly person that we have all come to love and respect.

God bless you Eric.

Allan Kitchen

(If you would like to keep in touch with Eric please ask Allan or the Church Office for his contact details.)

A Look Back at Christmas at St Thomas'

It was another busy Christmas at St Thomas' this year. Actually our preparations began with a sermon series in Advent entitled '*Behold the Coming of the King*'. Also during Advent we were encouraged to read two books – '*The Meaning is in the Waiting*' and '*The Shack*'. (See the previous edition of Ploughshare for details.)

On the first Saturday in December a Christmas Market and Craft Activity afternoon was held. There were quality gifts for all ages, free gift wrapping, homemade jewellery and cards and a cake and honey stall. Refreshments and mince pies were served. All proceeds went to the Development Fund.

Sunday afternoon on 14 December was our Christingle Service. The church was full with regulars from St Thomas' and many visitors from the local schools and community. We all learnt what the meaning of Christingle was before we received and lit our own Christingle.

The Youth Ball was held on Friday 19 December. Some eighty young people, dressed in all their finery, sat down to a four course meal in the church; cooked, served and washed up by their parents and other adults. Afterwards there was dancing to a band called 'The Gentlemen'.

Our Nativity service was held in the morning of Sunday 21 December and in the evening there was the service of Nine Lessons and Carols. A full church enjoyed singing traditional carols and listening to the Bible readings leading up to Jesus' birth. Matt, our Rector preached on the theme of '*The Value of Waiting*'.

The Family Carol Service was held on Christmas Eve. Chris Phillips helped us compose a '*2009 Christmas Card*' and Matt asked us '*Who was Jesus and why was He so Special?*'

At Midnight Communion Matt preached on '*Why are we here Tonight?*'

Our Family Communion Service on Christmas Morning was a celebration of Jesus' birth. With the children we looked at '*Who Jesus Was*' and Matt preached on '*Christmas Being Full of Surprises*'. We blew up balloons as we said the prayers and the service finished with party poppers and chocolate!

You can listen to recordings from our Advent and Christmas Services at:
www.st-thomas-brampton.org/podcasts2008.html

and see pictures over the page and more at:
www.st-thomas-brampton.org/gallery.html

Christmas at St Thomas'



Nativity Service



Making our 2009 Christmas Card at the Family Carol Service



Matt, our Rector, leads us in singing 'Happy Birthday' Jesus -and Josh Simons



Christmas Day Family Service

Opposite: The Youth Ball



Bishop Jonathan Bailey

1940-2008

Jonathan Bailey was born in 1940 in Liverpool where he was brought up and went to school. He then spent five years in Cambridge, first at Trinity College and then doing his ordination training at Ridley Hall. As part of his ordination training he spent a year as a labourer in a steel mill.



He served a curacy in St Helens. His experience in industry then led him to become an Industrial Missioner in the Diocese of Liverpool. Three years later, he became the Warden of Marrick Priory, a residential youth centre that focused on Christian education and outdoor activities.

In 1976 he became vicar of Wetherby. Included in his ministry was a hospital chaplaincy and one to the local borstal where he established an ecumenical chaplaincy.

He moved on to be Archdeacon of Southend, a post that he held from 1982-92. In 1992 he became the Suffragan Bishop of Dunwich in the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich.

His stay in Suffolk was brief, and in 1995 he became Bishop of Derby. He made an immediate impact and will be remembered for his *'Bishop on a Mission'* tour when he visited supermarkets, pubs, a theme park and nightclubs across Derbyshire including the Zanzibar Nightclub in Chesterfield. He helped to establish the Derby multifaith centre and was a governor of Derby University, which awarded him an honorary doctorate.

Bishop Jonathan was known as a pastoral and caring bishop who remembered people's names and mixed with all ages and faiths.

On the national scene he was for three years the chairman of the Churches Main Committee, which acts as a liaison group between all the churches and government departments. During his time in Derby, he was also Clerk to the Closet, a role that involves advising the Queen about the appointment of her Honorary Chaplains. For this work he was appointed a KCVO (Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order). He was a member of the House of

Lords from 1999 to 2005.

He retired to Gloucestershire in 2005, where he was an assistant bishop. He also served on the Gloucester Police Authority.

Bishop Jonathan married Susan Bennett-Jones in 1965. She was ordained in 1994, making him the first diocesan bishop to have a wife who was a priest. She worked in the Derby diocese, both in parishes and as chaplain of the Derby Diocesan Retreat house. He is survived by Susan and their three sons.

Bishop Jonathan was a keen bee keeper –at one time he owned over 60,000 bees.

Bishop Jonathan's funeral was on Monday, 22 December in Gloucester Cathedral. A memorial service is to be held in Derby Cathedral in 2009.

St Thomas' Worship and Teaching Programme January, February and March 2009

At 9am we are engaging with the lectionary readings this year giving us a range and variety of Scripture that will constantly challenge and inspire us as the richness of readings guides us through the liturgical year.

At 11am we have two major sermon series this quarter. The first, to help us into the New Year, is a series on being 'resolved'. We all make New Year's resolutions; hopefully this series will strengthen the spiritual promises we make.

Following on from this we are into Lent and a series examining Jesus and thinking afresh as to how his life transforms our own.

At 6pm we have begun the year by unpacking the book of Daniel. Filled with strong images we learn through Daniel's example how to stand out for God in a hostile world.

Our Lent series guides us through Richard Foster's spiritual classic 'Celebration of Discipline'.

More details can be found in the leaflet at the back of St Thomas' or at [www.st-thomas-brampton.org/services st thomas.html](http://www.st-thomas-brampton.org/services_st_thomas.html)

If you want to listen to the teaching again or want to catch up you can listen at [www.st-thomas-brampton.org/podcast index.html](http://www.st-thomas-brampton.org/podcast_index.html)

Diary Dates

Parish Events –all at St Thomas'			
Sunday 22 February		Friday 6 March	
6pm	Confirmation Service	10.30am	Women's World Day of Prayer Service
Sunday 29 March			
9am	Joint Parish Service		

St Thomas'	
Thursday 5 February	
1pm	Rendezvous
Saturday 7 February	
8am	Men's Breakfast
Sunday 15 February	
OMF Mission Sunday	
Ash Wednesday 25 February	
7.45pm	Holy Communion
Thursday 26 February	
2pm	Communion & Cuppa
Friday 27 February	
7.30pm	Furnace
Wednesday 4 March	
Lent Course Starts in Church	
Thursday 5 March	
1pm	Rendezvous
Saturday 7 March	
8am	Men's Breakfast
Thursday 26 March	
2pm	Communion & Cuppa
Friday 27 March	
7.30pm	Furnace
Thursday 2 April	
1pm	Rendezvous

St Thomas' (continued)	
Maunday Thursday 9 April	
7.30pm	Agape
Good Friday 10 April	
10am	Children's Easter Crafts
11am	All Age Service
2pm	An Hour at the Cross
Easter Sunday 12 April	
10.30am	All Age Communion
6pm	Songs of Praise
Note:	
Wednesdays 4, 11, 18, 25 March and April 1	
Lent Course in Church	

St Peter's and Holymoorside	
Saturday 7 February	
7.30pm	Old Tyme Music Hall
Saturday 21 February	
10am	Vestry Open Day
Ash Wednesday 25 February	
7.30pm	Holy Communion
Saturday 7 March	
3pm	Tea Dance
Saturday 14 March	
Spring Coffee Morning	
Barn Dance	
Easter programme to be confirmed	

Please check the notice sheet or website to confirm dates, times and venues and for more information about Holy week and Easter services.

Book Review

In Advent 2008 Matt, our Rector, suggested we read two books: **'The Meaning is in the Waiting: The Spirit of Advent'** and **'The Shack'**. Millie Guthrie reviewed the former in the last edition of Ploughshare. Now Millie reviews **'The Shack'**.

The Shack

by William P. Young

The much discussed novel 'The Shack' is my text for dissection this month. Apparently the author William P Young tried many publishing houses and no one was willing to print it -so he did it himself!

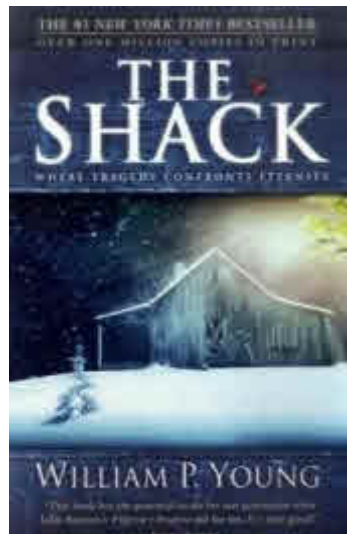
Whilst struggling through the first chapter I could see why. Until I become immersed in the message of the text the overtly simplistic, sentimental American style made my teeth ache and I did wonder if I could bear to read on. The text is a work of fiction and some considerable suspension of belief is called for.

Without revealing too much, the main protagonist is Mack and it is his encounter with the living, breathing God taking human form that drives the text.

On a family camping trip in Oregon Mack and his relationship with God are changed by the abduction and tragic murder of his youngest daughter. He enters a period he calls 'The Great Sadness'. God cannot reach him. He blames himself and God for the death of his daughter; he becomes isolated from God's love and can find no peace.

He wallows in despair and guilt for four years until salvation arrives in the very place where his daughter was murdered: The Shack. He is invited back by 'Papa' AKA God.

This is where the text moves from a memoir into magical realism with the Trinity appearing in an interesting way. Large theological debates develop with God attempting to answer Mack's questions and show him that love and forgiveness still exist for him.



/continued

I won't reveal the end as it does become an interesting, challenging read. Just be prepared to read it as an extended metaphor and you will not be disappointed.

Reviewed by Millie Guthrie

I have read 'The Shack' and found it challenging with some thought provoking concepts about God. If anyone else who has read it would like to express their opinion or thoughts in print please send them to me. –Editor.

Thai Ties



St Thomas' has Mission Partners in various parts of the world including OMF International.

Thailand has been in the news a lot recently. There was the occupation of Bangkok airport by protestors demanding government changes. Then there was the devastating fire in a night-club at New Year.

St Thomas' church has had more personal links with Thailand over the last two and a half years with our link mission partners Johnny and Ann McClean and their children Matthew, Bethan and Joshua.

Johnny and Ann have been in Thailand for around ten years with OMF International (Overseas Mission Fellowship), a Christian mission organisation working throughout South East Asia.

The family visited us in Chesterfield in May 2006 and we had a wonderful weekend, including a Thai Tea Party with lots of games and quizzes to introduce us to Thai culture, as well as the family taking part in and leading and preaching at our Sunday services and activities. They returned to the universities of central Thailand, where they work with students, introducing the students to the Christian message, sharing and showing them God's love in action, and encouraging Thai Christian students and churches.

A lot of their work has been in the training of student workers and leaders, in the university cities of Lopburi, Nakhon Sawan and Phitsanalok. However more recently they have been leading 'Trained2serve' courses and conferences across Thailand, and liaising with other Christian organisations.

The McClean family currently live in Nakhon Sawan but over the years have moved several times between the university cities. Their home has also

served as office, refuge, training school and youth centre.

As a 'Youth House' they offered their home and hospitality, welcoming students interested in Christianity, new and mature Christians and those just wanting to improve their English. The family all speak Thai, and the children attend Thai school as well as having home schooling in English. As well as working with teams of local students, Johnny and Ann work with other OMF partners and many visiting short-term partners from many parts of the world (including a link church in Nottingham).



The family at St Thomas' in 2006

Recent events have included a Christmas camp with over 90 students attending, six two-hour sessions on the meaning of Christmas in the local technical college, each attended by 60-80 students, acquiring a new Youth House building. (The family have some of their home to themselves.) Matthew (7) has started Thai junior school, Bethan (5) is trying to decide if she is Irish or Thai at kindergarten and Joshua (nearly 3) sounds like he is getting into everything.

At the time of writing **we are looking forward to a visit from a local OMF representative, Chris Thomas.** He is currently based in Doncaster, but has worked in Thailand and Singapore. He hopes to be with us on **Sunday 15th February**, and we look forward to strengthening St Thomas' links with OMF, and to hearing about, and being challenged by, the work of OMF and the call to sharing the gospel message.

When the McCleans visited us, many were challenged by Johnny and Ann as they described sharing the Christian message in such a different culture, with all the issues of Buddhist beliefs: what are the essentials of our faith and how do we communicate them –which are actually the same issues we all face every day.

Finally if anyone would like information on short-term mission trips (especially for students/ gap years) it is available from the OMF website: www.omf.org.uk or contact me.

Rosie Welch (link contact for OMF at St Thomas')

You can find out more about the McClean family and the Thai Tea Party at www.st-thomas-brampton.org/ms.html#omf

The Good Stuff Review –Number 2

Last June Pete Cooney wrote his first 'Good Stuff' review. Pete's intention is to do occasional reviews of films or books or anything else that builds us up, rather than drags us down. "Hopefully, some of my choices will be surprising, even controversial. I intend to avoid the explicitly Christian since the intention is to share the good stuff out there that is less obvious."

In this edition of the magazine Pete reviews the film:

Sophie Scholl – The Last Days

(2005 PG certificate)

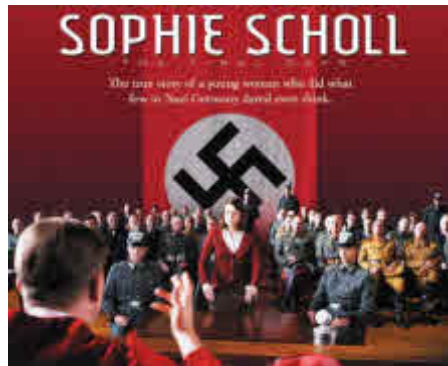
Directed by Marc Rothemund. German with English subtitles

Let's be honest – the Nazis and the Holocaust are awkward subjects for Christians. The greatest crime against humanity in recent history, arguably, in all of history, was perpetrated by a nation that nominally called itself Christian. In the decades immediately after the Second World War it was commonly thought that the crimes were committed by a minority of Nazi fanatics and conscripted soldiers "reluctantly following orders".

However, research published in recent years has suggested most ordinary Germans were well aware of the barbarity of the Nazi regime. To quote the historian Daniel Goldhagen, many thousands became Hitler's 'willing executioners'.

It is against the background of this violent, racist and evil society that the story of Sophie Scholl and the White Rose Movement of Munich University is so remarkable. The chilling truth is that examples of resistance by German Christians to the Nazi regime are not easy to find in the history of the period – but one shining example is Sophie Scholl and her brother Hans. The film is based on the last days of Sophie's life and the script draws upon the records kept by the German authorities only made available in 1990 with the collapse of the East German regime.

The plot is simple. Sophie (*Julia Jentsch*) and her brother are caught red-handed distributing anti-Nazi leaflets at Munich University in February 1943. It is a bad time to be critical of the regime – news of large-scale atrocities committed on the eastern front and the catastrophic defeat of the



German army at Stalingrad are filtering back to the general population. After Sophie's arrest, a senior Gestapo officer, Robert Mohr (*Alexander Held*), interrogates her over a period of three days.

It is these series of interrogations, based on actual Gestapo records, which make up the heart of the film. Mohr is clearly an intelligent and astute policeman, and his forensic questioning of Sophie soon breaks down her initial claims of innocence. As Sophie comes to terms with the fact that the evidence gathered against her means she is doomed, she engages Mohr in a debate on the whole basis of Hitler's National Socialism. It is intelligent, moving, and inspirational as this young defenceless girl fearlessly exposes the lies and inhumanity that sustain the regime. It is great cinema as the committed Gestapo officer vents his anger and frustration at what he sees as Sophie's misguided opposition to the regime, whilst Sophie's replies slowly, but surely, begin to undermine his whole belief in the National Socialist system.

The film moves on to a show trial presided over by the Nazi regime's most senior judge, the notorious Roland Friesler. The public gallery is packed out with senior military officers and party officials murmuring approval as Friesler bullies and rants against Sophie and her co-defendants (again based on actual court records). However, the onlookers grow more and more uncomfortable as Sophie and Hans defend themselves with dignity and courage, and defend truth itself, against Friesler's hate filled onslaughts. You can feel the chill spread through the courtroom as Sophie turns to them and says: "You will soon be standing where we stand now".

The sentence passed by the court is no surprise and the final section of the film is the short time Sophie spends in custody awaiting execution. Have a box of tissues ready.

In light of the tragic ending you might wonder why I find this film uplifting and encouraging to my faith? Well, I suppose like all stories of martyrdom it inspires courage and perseverance. I won't spoil the plot, but Sophie has a chance to save herself from the death penalty by betraying other members of the Movement – Mohr is desperate that she does so, but Sophie remains steadfast to her beliefs. In the midst of the darkness and evil of the regime, Sophie is a shining light of truth and goodness that even the most hardened Nazis are impotent to contradict – their only answer is violence.

I felt the real tragedy of the film is the question: why weren't there more Sophie Scholl's in Germany in the 1930s and 40s? And the hard question for us in 21st Century is: can we have the same insight and courage as Sophie to recognise and oppose our own culture and society when it perpetrates brutality and evil in our name?

Peter Cooney

Holymoorside Arts Festival

The festival was held last August and several members of our churches exhibited their work.

