

## Ploughshare June/July 1993 (Scanned version from the original)

### From the Rector

I have received several comments recently encouraging me to make our church life and worship more youth orientated. There is a growing awareness that a generation is arriving which knows next to nothing about Jesus and has little respect for and patience with the established church and its traditional services.

Visitors to our churches often remark how nice it is to see young people there. Compared with many other churches, we are youth orientated. But only a minority of our youth groups, CYFA and Pathfinders, attends our services regularly - even Youth Services - and there is a general feeling that they (the services) are out of touch. The blanket condemnation is the word "boring"!

It's a serious situation. We have the same responsibility as the Psalmist felt centuries ago, when he prayed, "*Even when I am old and grey, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare your power to the next generation*" (Psalm 71:18). I believe we should veer towards youth and we should be more contemporary. One of my favourite descriptions of our Lord is "**Jesus our contemporary**".

One problem among many, however, is the way that the less traditional we become in our worship, the more our valued older members feel alienated, insecure, even unwanted.

Thus far, we have held together an incredible variety in our services, at St Thomas' in particular. Many have expressed the desire to keep this apparent unity. However, I wonder how long it can go on, if we are to be faithful to our calling to reach out to our whole parish and welcome all sorts in - **young people in particular**.

Do pray with me that God will show us His way forward. It is an urgent matter, especially if we are not to miss out on the "coming generation".

**Christopher Frith**

### Book Review

#### **"How to rescue the earth without worshipping nature: A Christian's call to save creation"**

Tony Campolo, Word Books £4.25, 1992

In a fast, racy style Tony Campolo urges Christians to take on board the issues of environmentalists and realise that the bible teaches us to care for God's creation. The situation is urgent concerning pollution, depletion of resources and cruelty to animals. He discusses the approach of different Christian thinkers to creation, as well as noting the changing attitude in the scientific community towards the natural world.

The second half of the book is more practical and challenging. Issues of simple lifestyle and commitment to social justice as part of Christian discipleship are raised. An individual can make a difference, so will you think about your use of the car, about saving water, about recycling materials or caring for animals? Also you can pray - for forgiveness in our destruction of the environment, for God to act and for Christians to understand their responsibility to care for God's creation.

The book is useful if only for the final two chapters. Here Tony Campolo gives clear warnings to keep out of the New Age movement, by recognising the differences from Christianity. He concludes with "*The Heart of the Matter: Environmentalism as the fruit of the Spirit*" where he uses Galatians 5:22-23 to describe a way of life - spirituality with creation-care.

The book is aimed at American evangelicals but it has a clear message for us in Chesterfield. Are we willing to listen and to change?

**Sheila Pite.**

## Christians and Sustainable Living

Many of us in Britain lead a very affluent lifestyle. Even those of us who feel we are not particularly well off lead a life of luxury compared to many people in the 'Third World'. We live in comfortable homes with plenty of food and generally have many possessions. Our materialistic society encourages us to buy more goods and to seek greater wealth, indeed, advertisements tell us that happiness comes from the goods we buy.

However, our level of consumption is having a costly effect on the planet and on the 'Third World'. Christians need to take seriously their God given call to care for the earth and to adopt a lifestyle that is less damaging to the earth and all its inhabitants.

**Christian Ecology Link ([www.christian-ecology.org.uk](http://www.christian-ecology.org.uk))** aims:

- 1. To alert the Church to the unsustainability of our current lifestyles.
- 2. To encourage Christians as stewards of God's creation to adopt a more sustainable lifestyle.
- 3. To encourage the Christian community to work for change in economic and social structures which will promote sustainable living locally and globally.

The present lifestyle of the industrialised nations cannot be equated with our Christian faith. Jesus warns us against materialism for a "*man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions*" (Luke 12:15). The writer to Timothy recommends a simpler lifestyle, arguing that those who desire to be rich fall into temptation (1 Timothy 6:6-10 - compare Luke 18:18-30).

The Bible often speaks of God's concern for the poor - Jesus tells us that he has come to preach good news to the poor and bring liberty to the oppressed. If the Church is not working for justice, then it is in opposition to the will of God.

Christians, then, should seek to live a simpler life so that others may simply live and that the earth might endure. There is much that we can do as individuals, for instance:

- reduce our energy consumption by insulating our homes, using low energy appliances and travelling by public transport.
- recycle as much waste as possible and buy recycled goods.
- question our expenditure and resist the materialism of our society.
- adopt a diet that is less dependent on meat and processed foods.

**Sheila Pite**

## A Prayer for Someone

I said a prayer for you today and know God must have heard,  
I felt the answer in my heart although He spoke no word!  
I didn't ask for wealth or fame (I knew he wouldn't mind) –  
I asked him to send treasures of a far more lasting kind!  
I asked that he'd be near you at the start of each new day  
To grant you health and blessings and your friends to share your way!  
I asked for happiness for you in all things great and small –  
But it was for His loving care that I prayed the most of all

**Bernard Moakes**

"Received when in hospital", May 1993

# The Apostles -Who Were They?

## Judas Iscariot

Who were the twelve men Jesus chose to be his closest friends and companions? What happened to them after the Pentecost?

Judas, the only one of 'the twelve' who did not live to see Jesus' Resurrection.

In the lists of the apostles Judas is always placed last, and usually with a description such as 'who betrayed him' (Mt. 10:4; Mk 3:19), or 'who became a traitor' (Lk 6:16; Jn 18:5). The fact that he was the treasurer of the group (Jn 12:6; 13:29) and may even have been reclining near Jesus at the Last Supper (Jn 13:21-26) suggest that he was an important member of the group.

Various explanations have been offered for the name 'Iscariot' but the most acceptable is 'man from Kerioth', since his father was called Simon Iscariot (Jn 6:71; 13:2,26). Kerioth may have been in Moab (Jeremiah 48:24,41; Amos 2:2), about 70 miles roughly east of Mt. Hermon, or it could have been Kerioth-Hezron (Joshua 15:25), which was twelve miles south of Hebron. At any rate Judas was the only apostle who was not a Galilean.

Judas criticised Mary when she anointed the feet of Jesus with precious ointment (Jn 12:3-6). He saw nothing of the beautiful deed which Jesus praised (Mk 14:6) but only a way of increasing the apostolic funds, and thereby his own pocket, claiming that it could have been given to the poor. John says that Judas pilfered the money entrusted to him (Jn 6:6).

Immediately following this incident he went to the chief priests and agreed to betray Jesus (Mt 26:14-16; Mk 14:10-11; Lk 22:3-6). The opportunity to do so came on the evening of the Last Supper and this fact is perpetuated in the Eucharistic Prayer: *'in the night that he was betrayed'*, and dates from the time of St Paul (1 Cor. 11:23). Jesus made a final appeal to Judas, which he rejected and went out into the night (Jn 13:18-30).

The prearranged plan was carried through. The secret Judas betrayed was obviously the meeting place in Gethsemane later that night, and there Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss, a sign of friendship (Mt 26:47-50). Scripture records his subsequent remorse and suicide (Mt 27:3-10; Acts 1:18-19). The apostles' stark verdict on Judas was that he had gone where he belonged (Acts 1:25).

Why did Judas betray Jesus for such a paltry sum? What led him to that treachery? Love of money; jealousy of the other disciples; fear of the inevitable outcome of the Master's ministry which made him try to save his own skin; an enthusiastic attempt to force Jesus to declare himself the Messiah; a bitter, revengeful spirit when his worldly hopes were crushed - all these have been suggested.

Whatever the reasons for his betrayal, Jesus, at the beginning, viewed Judas as a potential follower and disciple. This is the only explanation that does justice to our Lord's character and his repeated appeals to Judas. We can also say that the Lord's fore-knowledge of Judas does not imply fore-ordination that Judas had no option but to be the betrayer. If it had Jesus would not have made repeated appeals to him.

Judas was never really Christ's man. His highest title for Jesus was 'Rabbi', which means 'Teacher' (Mt 26:25), and he seems to have never really grasped who Jesus was. He fell from apostleship but, as far as we can tell, never had a genuine, warm relationship with Jesus.

'The Twelve', as they were often called, were ordinary men, with ordinary gifts and abilities. Eleven of them were totally committed to their Lord. God the Holy Spirit took those men, transformed them, and used them to spread his Kingdom throughout the then-known world. So strong was their faith and devotion that ten died, and one went into exile, rather than renounce their allegiance to Christ as Saviour and Lord. Our God has not changed! He still takes ordinary men, and women, doing ordinary jobs, who are fully committed to Him, and uses them in the work of His Kingdom.

## Link Missionaries –Andy and Mandy Lines

Andrew, Mandy, Alex and Zoe are part of our wider church family, and seeing and hearing them on tape at our Mission week-end makes us realise that they are an ordinary family doing an extraordinary job in a far off country, facing the usual kinds of problems. Prayers for their health would be appreciated as they have had several minor ailments recently, but on the plus side Andrew's work is going well, Mandy has resumed language classes, Alex has settled down at school, and Zoe is thriving in spite of her nocturnal existence.

**Richard & Dorothy Banks**

### Letter to the Editor

*The writer, identified to the Editor, has asked to remain anonymous.*

#### **Inhibition: or an individual's choice?**

Is it just me, or are there occasions when other people feel uncomfortable about how some of our services are conducted?

At a recent service I was not sure if I had arrived in church or at a toddlers play group, as plastic shakers and tins full of beans were handed round, with the encouraging suggestion that we all "Join In!"

I appreciate that some of the congregation are happy with the singing, dancing and arm waving that accompany this form of praise, and I am pleased for them for I have no wish to disrupt their worship. However, I have never been comfortable with this type of praise, and I do not particularly wish to "Join In!" Consequently, I am tired of being told how **'inhibited'** I am when I refuse.

I am not inhibited, and I am sure there are many people who prefer to be self contained and reserved, who are at ease with themselves and their own responses to praising the Lord.

I would like to relax when I come to church but this is becoming increasingly difficult to do without being pressured to participate or be labelled **'inhibited'** by those who prefer to be more extrovert.

I do not wish to have to be selective about the services I attend for fear of having a plastic shaker thrust into my hand, or to feel uncomfortable because I am not 'joining in' with the crowd. Please can we remember that we are all individuals, and should be treated as such.

After all, isn't that how the Lord sees us?

#### **Comments from the Rector**

It happened to me several weeks ago. I was handed a shaker and your correspondent could hardly be less adept at shaking in time than I am.

Fortunately no-one called me **inhibited** and I don't recall ever hearing anyone described that way as a result of not joining in during a church service. Everyone always has the right not to join if they wish - and certainly, the clergy and readers in this parish respect that.

Unlike your correspondent, I can describe myself as inhibited; I know I am, but that's the way God has made me, and I gladly accept that. Yes, we are **all different, all individuals**, the Lord does see us as such and judgmental labelling of each other, as described in the letter above, is not right.

However, I have to say that for every complaint I receive about more "extrovert" liveliness I must receive two objections about how "dreary" our hymns often are. You can't begin to please everyone! Incidentally, the occasion when I was given a shaker was a midweek evening Praise and Prayer, when the theme was Psalm 150. I really couldn't complain, seeing the Psalmist's encouragement to praise the Lord:

*"Praise him with tambourine and dancing...praise him with resounding cymbals ...,"*

I have a hunch that God enjoys uninhibited praise - even if it doesn't come naturally to me! Whether we worship noisily or quietly, waving our arms or standing to attention, it's our hearts that matter. We seek to show God that we love Him.

**Christopher Frith**