

## **Ploughshare June/July 1994**

(Scanned version from the original)

### **From the Curate –Sheila Pite**

Dear Friends,

On Sunday 5 June the collect for Pentecost 2 is this:

*Almighty and Everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of the Church is governed and sanctified: hear our prayer which we offer for all your faithful people: that everyone in their vocation and ministry may serve you in holiness and truth to the glory of your name; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.'*

It is thus an opportunity to consider the whole subject of vocations. In Roman Catholic lectionary Vocations Sunday is observed in the Easter Season and on 22 April, during Vocations Awareness week, I spent a day with Year 10 (14 - 15 year olds) students from St. Mary's R.C. School exploring Christian vocation and lifestyle. Coupling these events with the ordination services for women deacons to the priesthood within the Church of England at this time, it seemed appropriate to write about vocation and ministry.

What is your understanding of these terms? How do you follow God's call in your own life? After the day with St Mary's pupils, where I had tried to alter their perceptions both of clergy and single people, I thought again about my own assumptions about people's work or ministry or domestic arrangements. Do I recognise the difficulties people have in different situations or the opportunities to live out God's call for each of us, to be witnesses wherever we are?

Witnesses - showing that we are Christians - by our lives, our words and actions, by our love for one another, John 13:35. The Church of England Advisory Board of Ministry expresses this in the opening paragraphs of a booklet about Professional Ministry, under the heading 'Our Common Calling'.

*"God is calling people everywhere to live in unity with him and with one another. Jesus responded fully to God's call and, one with God himself, he worked to reconcile humanity to God. Men and women who are called to be followers of Jesus continue that work today, trying to bring a broken and fallen world into unity with God."*

This is the basis for all Christian ministry, which come from the Holy Spirit equipping people with different gifts for differing circumstances, but *"all Christians are being called to use their own gifts in exercising a ministry of reconciliation in one way or another."*

That is the challenge for each of us as we seek to discern the ministry to which God is calling us. May God guide you.

**Sheila R. Pite**

### **Link Missionaries –Andy and Mandy Lines**

The latest news from Andrew and Mandy is very encouraging. The whole family is fit and well at the time of writing and even though their workload had increased it is now better planned, and Mandy is involved with Andrew in one of the courses.

Family life has settled into a pattern, and Alex and Zoe are beginning to play well together.

The date of their leave has now been confirmed and we look forward to meeting them at some time between November 1994 and April 1995.

**Richard and Dorothy Banks**

# The Ordination of Women Priests

A time for humility, sensitivity and reconciliation by the Rt. Revd. Peter Dawes, Bishop of Derby

The Ordination of Women to the Priesthood in Derby Diocese on 14th and 15th May will, in one sense, mark the end of one stage of a process of deliberation and decision-making that has gone on for some years. However, the words "in one sense" indicate that there is still another last stage which both those in favour as well as those against have stressed, namely that a decision of this nature is fully confirmed only if and when it is more widely accepted both within the Church of England and in due time is endorsed by others.

Nevertheless, for all practical purposes, the decision has been taken and women have been, and in the Derby Diocese will be, canonically ordained to the priesthood. I want now to ask how we face the future.

## Legal Provision

We must recognise that parishes, and sometimes families, are divided on this issue. Many of us will be rejoicing with the women being ordained but there are others who are not convinced that Synod has taken the right step. They have had legal provisions made for them whereby a PCC can refuse to have a woman ministering in the parish or can refuse to have a woman in any way in charge of the parish. In addition, a request can be made to me, as Diocesan Bishop, for the services of a Provincial Episcopal Visitor ("the flying bishop").

Some bishops have issued further guidelines for their own dioceses. I do not intend to do so because I think that, firstly, where there are problems these must usually be resolved locally, and it may be that perfectly amicable solutions may be found in quite different ways in different areas. Secondly, it is because I also believe that, while the law, regulations and guidelines have their place in this situation, they cannot be adequate to guide the life of the Church of Christ.

## The mind of Christ

As your Bishop, I want, therefore, to urge that everyone, whether clergy or laity, seeks in all these things to have the mind of Christ. I am writing this just before Holy Week. Can we all seek the humility that leads to the Cross, by way of service to each other in the spirit of Him who washed the disciples' feet? Can we each esteem others better than ourselves? Can we care for those whose consciences in this matter are "weaker" than ours and couple it with a great sensitivity for those who differ from us on this decision?

I hope and pray that the way in which we lead our lives in parishes and deaneries - in this as well as in other disagreements within the Church may reflect something of the spirit of that reconciliation which, above all, Christ came to bring.

**Peter Derby**

## News from Quest Club

Our **Quest** open afternoon was held at the end of March. In addition to meeting the parents and friends of the **Quest** children, the afternoon had a very special focus. The children were raising money for a young Croatian couple, Nikola and Sandra who are the only Christian youth workers in Bosnia. We had an excellent response to our request for books, toys and games for our bring and buy, and also a delicious array of cakes. The children had already been filling Smartie tubes with money. The total amount raised for Nikola and Sandra was £210. Well done and many thanks to everyone for their generosity.

During the Easter holiday a group from St Thomas' went to Spring Harvest at Pwllheli. Two very special visitors one day were a Croatian pastor and his wife; who are encouraging Nikola and Sandra in their work in Mostar. Three of our **Quest Club** members, Gemma and Ian Hoare and Simon Calow were able to present the cheque for £210 to the Croatian pastor. The money has gone to the Novimost project which has been set up to help Sandra and Nikola as they share the love and the good news of Jesus with the war stricken inhabitants of Mostar. It is amazing to hear how the Lord has already united in Christ Serbs, Croatians and Moslems.

**Barbara Goodacre**

## The Shaftesbury Society

**Few people equate the statue of Eros in London's Piccadilly with one of the greatest Christian social reformers of our time.**

Yet the winged statue commemorates the life and work of the Seventh Earl of Shaftesbury - a man whose faith compelled him to help exploited workers and homeless children in Victorian Britain. The Shaftesbury Society follows very much in his footsteps and this year celebrates 150 years of Christian care in action.

The Shaftesbury Society believes the time has come again for Christians to help the growing number of people in need in 1990s Britain. Welfare provision is stretched to breaking point and, worse still, natural caring networks are disappearing as family and community lifestyle comes under pressure.

The organisation has a wealth of experience to share with churches. It runs over 50 church-related community projects providing vital services such as day centres for elderly people, playgroups and support for families under stress.

Shaftesbury is also a leading provider of care and education services to people with a learning disability, older people and young homeless people. It has over 100 centres across the country.

It has been said that all that is needed for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing. Let us hope that good people will pray and act in a way that will start to change the face of our society.

## Spring Harvest 1994

This Easter, three brave, but willing women from St Thomas' were dragged off to keep watch over five CYFA members at Spring Harvest in Pwllheli. We realised the long 6 hour journey was not in vain when we finally reached Wales. The accommodation at Butlins was nothing to write home about but the daily meetings and worship were well worth every penny we'd paid.

The week began well with the first evening meeting. We were surprised at how many people there were in just the 14 - 16 age group. The venue was packed with young people like ourselves. The worship was very lively and even the half-hour long sermons were interesting! The evening meetings finished at 10pm but were followed by many 'after-hours' activities, catering for all ages. When our curfew of midnight came, we dragged ourselves back to the chalets very reluctantly for a good night's sleep.

Every day was much the same with meetings in the mornings and evenings, leaving the afternoons free to sample the Butlins' activities. There were also many seminars in the afternoons but we left those for the 'older' Spring Harvesters and visited the fair or water splash instead!

The holiday was greatly enjoyed by all of us. The spiritual benefits were enormous and it gave us a chance to meet new Christian friends. We now look forward to Spring Harvest 1995!

**Heather Naylor, Jenny Travis, Sarah Dawson, Sarah Frith, Rebecca Tyler**

## 1994: Year of the Family

**Rob Parsons, Director of CARE** for the Family, describes a father who wishes he could turn the clock back when his children 'fly the nest'. This is taken from his book "**Caring against all odds**".

1. I would love my wife more in front of my children.
2. I would laugh more with my children - at our mistakes and our joys.
3. I would listen more, even to the smallest child.

4. I would be more honest about my own weaknesses, never pretending perfection.
5. I would pray differently for my family - instead of focusing on their shortcomings, I'd focus on mine.
6. I would do more things together with my children.
7. I would encourage them more and bestow more praise.
8. I would pay more attention to little things, like deeds and words of thoughtfulness.
9. I would share God more intimately with my family. Every ordinary thing that happened in every ordinary way I would use to direct them to God.

## **Valued by Jesus**

- I. You shall love your children. They are not to be kept in cold storage for the church of tomorrow. They have not been sent by the devil to distract you, but by God to enrich you.
- II. You shall endeavour to form particular friendships with one or two children who are beyond your own blood family circle...as important for your own spiritual development as it is for the children's.
- III. You shall encourage your children to worship with your congregation and value their presence...you shall be open to the possibility that God can speak through their smiles their questions, their embraces, their wriggling and their responses.
- IV. You shall extend to your children a warm, personal and appropriate welcome when they come to worship.
- V. You shall allow children to participate in the leadership of worship as frequently as practicable. However, you shall not make an undue fuss over their participation.
- VI. You shall not allow your children regularly to run riot in worship by word, deed and spirit. Encourage in the children a calm and reverent frame of mind and appropriate movements.
- VII. You shall make much of the festivals of the Christian year and other special occasions.
- VIII. You shall not expect children to be more enthusiastic about your congregation's worship than you are. Rather, you shall encourage your children...and refrain from making them feel guilty when, for a while they tune out.
- IX. You shall not place undue emphasis on peer groupings and the nuclear family within the life of your congregation. Rather, you shall teach your children to think of their congregation as the extended family of Jesus.
- X. You shall countenance neither organisation nor attitude which makes it difficult for children regularly to worship with their congregation.

## What Does it Mean?

**Kath Steer continues her series investigating what lies behind well-known Bible concepts**

### The Burden Bearer

There are two verse in the Psalms which we often read but most certainly do not understand, not knowing eastern customs of Bible times.

**1. "My iniquities are gone over my head: as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me" (Psalm 38:4)**

**2. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee" (Psalm 55:22)**

We see that the first reference concerns 'sin' - but - "gone over my head"? I quote from L. T. Pearson, "Passing down the street we notice that everything is carried by camel, donkey or professional burden-bearers. Holding a long rope wherewith to fasten the burden he shouts ATAL! Soon somebody will engage him to carry a load for them. Very deftly the rope is passed around several packages and with a peculiar grunt and swing, up goes the great burden. These men are capable of bearing tremendous weights."

But how does he put that burden down without hurting his back? The two texts above give us the answer, and I quote again. "When a burden-bearer comes to relieve himself of his load, he will bend over so that the burden will fall over his head to the ground, and he is freed." The second method is: "Let us follow our burden-bearer: see, he is wanting a rest and so beckons to a friend who then stands back to back, and as the 'Atal' straightens himself the weight of his burden falls on his friend, who then becomes the 'burden-sharer'." The burden-bearer has literally cast, or rolled his burden on to his friend. What lessons are here?

Before giving the spiritual aspect of these verses, we must assure ourselves that 'burden-bearers' or Atals were indeed a part of the Bible scene. We read that Soloman had 70,000 of them! (1 Kings 5:15).

Nehemiah complains that "The strength of the burden-bearers is decayed" (Nehemiah 4:10 & 17). Isaiah writes "They stoop, they bow down together, but - they could not deliver the burden" (Isaiah 46:2). I think we can understand this last verse a little better now as we consider the burden-sharer.

I quote again: "One day, years ago, a Man came along taking the part of a burden-bearer. He stood and cried "Come unto Me all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I WILL GIVE YOU REST" (Matthew 11:28). In Isaiah we read "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all": yes, our sins were too heavy for us to bear, so the great burden-bearer came. He carried His cross, and died as He carried our burden. "He bore the curse of sin for mankind". All we have to do now is to let our burden of sin literally 'roll over our head' for, being too heavy for us, He has put it all behind His back "Never to be remembered against us any more". Halleluiah!

Freed from sin and walking upright, we see a friend burdened by troubles: Paul advises "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2). Peter also counsels for those bearing their burdens alone "Casting all your care (burdens) upon Him for HE cares for you.

The Lord Jesus spoke of some who would not relieve others of their burdens, burdens too grievous to be borne - read Matthew 23:4 - let us not make the same error, but learn to help others when they are distressed.

## A Great Prayer

**With thanks to Ray Hearn for reminding us of this great prayer:**

Christ be with me, Christ within me  
Christ behind me, Christ before me  
Christ beside me, Christ to win me  
Christ to comfort and restore me  
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,  
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger  
Christ in hearts of all that love me,  
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger

**Adapted from St Patrick's breastplate**

## **BBC Radio Sheffield Church Magazine of the Year Award**

Ploughshare has been presented with the above award for 1994. Thanks to all our contributors for helping us achieve this success.

### **Millions are on the March, June 25<sup>th</sup> 1994**

**March for Jesus** on 25th June is expected to be a truly global event, spanning more than 100 nations and uniting over 10 million Christians in coordinated prayer. Christian leaders in Ghana, Burundi, Guinea, Latvia, Mexico, and Togo, among others, have confirmed interest in holding a March for Jesus, and excitement is growing in places as far apart as Fiji and Sierra Leone, the Philippines and Argentina.

On every continent there will be events ranging from quiet prayer walks to huge praise marches. The largest will be in South America and Asia, with both Sao Paulo and Seoul expecting to draw one million. Each nation will be twinned with another to focus their prayers. Britain and Ireland will see marches in London, Cardiff, Edinburgh and Drogheda.

*"1994 could be a wonderful turning point for the UK, with the three major evangelism projects; JIM, Minus to Plus and On Fire, following on from the special national prayer days sponsored by Prayer for Revival in February. March for Jesus in June will be a real prayer opportunity for British Christians to celebrate all that has happened and pray for continuing fruit."* explains Graham Kendrick, gospel songwriter and one of the founders of March for Jesus.