

Ploughshare June/July 1998 (scanned version from the original)

From the Rector

My mind is buzzing, the adrenalin is flowing and it will take a while to come down to earth. We've just finished the Consistory Court (Saturday 9th May, 10am to 1.15pm) and the decision is in the hands of Chancellor Bullimore. By the time this is read, it will be known whether we can go ahead with St Thomas' reordering.

I confess to having been cross about this Consistory Court. Why should the Victorian Society have such a say in the way in which our place of worship is ordered? Why do things take so long to be resolved? Why all the red tape? And frustration? And tedious meetings?

Having said all that, the Court has been a good experience, a landmark in St Thomas' history, a rare event, like Chesterfield appearing in the semi-finals of the FA Cup, that I will be able to tell my grandchildren about!

We have had to think through why we want to reorder St Thomas' on a much deeper level than before. The process has convinced me that our church building needs to be made appropriate as a centre of worship and mission for the 21st century. Our scheme is bold and imaginative, rooted in a biblical understanding of God and his dealings with us. I'm excited about its possibilities.

What if the decision goes against us? It doesn't bear thinking about, at the moment - but God will have something even better up His sleeve!

Christopher Frith

Face to face with Geoff Beresforde

Geoff Beresforde is the new Church Warden of St Thomas', taking over from Alan Sheldon. He and Glen were married at St Thomas' in 1968 but have only been Church members since 1991. They have two children and five grandchildren.

Where have you lived since you were married?

It was Cornwall at first. I was in the Royal Navy, but when I was on a Polaris submarine, Glen came back to Chesterfield and got a house in Hasland. I came out of the navy in 1973 and it took time to adjust to normal married life. I did loads of different jobs and couldn't really settle. We moved to Chatsworth Road in December 1991 and started coming to St Thomas'. We felt we fitted in straight away -although neither of us had been going to church for the previous five years.

Had you gone to Church before?

We used to go to Zion a bit, when our children went there. And I went quite a bit in the Navy. I had a friend called David who was always going on about his faith and I wished he'd shut up. Then when he did shut up, I started asking him questions! His witness to me probably played the biggest part in my coming to faith.

Your faith became real during a Christians for life /confirmation course didn't it?

Yes, that's right. We were both confirmed four years ago -and our group is still continuing as our Open House group. We've come along together well.

What does your faith mean to you?

It means support, you don't have to cope on your own. God has never failed us and has given us some amazing answers to prayer like healing some really sick people, providing for us when we've been a bit desperate and helping to find jobs both times I've been made redundant.

What is your Job now?

I'm a caravan service engineer. It's much better than being a bus driver, especially the regular hours.

How do you feel about becoming Church Warden?

I'm *really* looking forward to it - but I'm, going to be busy. I've got to learn all about it first - and then see if we can make things go better. It will be great getting to know more members of St Thomas'.

What are your hopes for St Thomas'?

That we can grow as a Church, grow in faith and become more caring. Recently, it hasn't seemed such a caring church as it was when we first joined -but it's getting better now.

New Deputy Warden at St Thomas'

Michael Mann, his wife Catherine and children Juliet and Rosemary have belonged to St Thomas' for about 10 years. Having been a sidesman for a number of years, he is now taking on this additional responsibility. He has a PhD and works as a thermal engineer with Rolls Royce in Derby.

A big thank you from Novimost International

Following Quest Club's appeal for people to sponsor Bosnian children for a week's Christian holiday this summer, I am delighted to report that a total of £1,710 has been sent to Novimost, which means we have been able to sponsor 57 children. Thank you so much to everyone who has contributed. I have received the following expression of gratitude from Novimost.

"Thank you so much for the gifts from members of St. Thomas Church Brampton, which were a great delight to receive. It is very encouraging to have your support and partnership in this project. Your help is vital to the success of this project, and without the generosity of people like you, few children would be able to attend the Camp this year. On behalf of the children you have sponsored, please accept our heartfelt thanks. You will receive a Project Report some time in the Autumn, following Camp Rio. In the meantime, we hope you will join us in praying that the children who attend will have their lives changed for good!"

We have been asked to pray for

- Mike Robinson, the Camp Rio director, as he is currently finalising details of what the 2,000 young campers will be offered over the coming summer.
- Over 35 people have currently been accepted for a place on the teams going from Britain to assist the ministry. Please pray for all team members as they prepare over the coming weeks.
- The sponsor-a-child appeal is going well. Praise God for his provision and the generosity of his people.
- Please continue to pray for the provision of for 180 people! We need to find them urgently! Let us know if you know where they are!
- Over 80% of the children will be non Christians when they arrive at camp, making this probably the largest evangelistic event amongst Bosnian people this century. Please pray that many of these children will find Christ at camp, and will return home as changed people, having been introduced to the healing, hope and reconciliation that Christ can bring.

Thank you for your support. It is still not too late to sponsor a child. £30 covers food and accommodation for one child for one week.

Barbara Goodacre

New Link Mission Partners

Paul and Ruth Lapworth have wanted to return to Africa since before they were married. Their opportunity has come sooner than expected. They are due to fly out to Rwanda on 19 June, if their work permits are sorted out in time. They will be serving with Christian Outreach, a Christian relief and development organisation.

We are to adopt them as Mission partners and aim to support them in prayer as best we can. They hope to be with us in St Thomas on Sunday 7th June and their farewell will be in Reading, their home town, the following Sunday. If you would like to receive their regular newsletter, please contact the Church Office or mention it to Ruth's parents, Pam and Christopher Frith.

A full leaflet is available from St Thomas' Church Office. We are asked to pray:

- That Paul & Ruth will get everything packed up and sorted out in time.
- That they will find tenants for their house and sell their car.
- That replacement leaders will be found for the youth group they have been involved in at church.
- For good health and safety.
- That they will settle in quickly and form good relationships with the team in Rwanda

News from the Lines family, our Link Mission Partners in Paraguay

The Lines family have been back in Asuncion since early March, and from reading the newspapers things have been very difficult in Paraguay. The economy is in trouble and weather wise the country has been hit by tornadoes and other violent storms.

On top of this the family have been coping with illness again, this time it is Zoe who has been very poorly. With all these things in mind please pray for them as this is our only way to help them continue to do God's work in South America.

Richard and Dorothy Banks

Pete and Julia Wilkinson

Pete's ministry in the parish has been outstanding in many ways. His great priority is preaching and teaching. We have been blessed enormously by that. His concern has been to explain what the Bible actually says, to illustrate it, to attempt to apply it - and to keep it simple as well. St John's, Tunbridge Wells are fortunate to have a gifted preacher joining them.

Pete always does things with the minimum of fuss. He is one of those rare people who do not complain. The only thing which appeared to upset him was if one of us (himself included) preached or taught badly. His visits and his conducting of funerals and weddings have been greatly appreciated. The 909 congregation have gained from his hard work and constant teaching. The staff team have enjoyed his humble contributions and most of all have appreciated his ability to explain difficult Bible passages. The CYFA group have developed greatly under his careful leadership and Julia's fantastic cakes.

Julia's tremendous gift of hospitality will be remembered for years to come, as will her befriending of some of the younger wives and perceptive Bible study with them.

We really will miss Pete and Jules as well as Ellie and Barney, their gorgeous children. We thank God for them and commend them to Him as they go forward to an exciting opportunity.

Christopher Frith

The Consistory Court

Impressions written as it took place, by Keith Morgan

If anyone watched Kavannah QC on television a few weeks ago, they would have seen the televised mysteries of a Consistory Court, into which was drawn the subject of marital infidelity. Although the setting was not as grand as an Oxford College, nor the subject as sensational, the court at St. Thomas' on May 9th to determine the rightfulness in Ecclesiastical law of the reordering for the church was indeed very unusual.

St Thomas' Church sits very well in May sunshine on Chatsworth Road. May 9th was no different. In bright sunshine, thirty to forty congregational members took their places for what was to become a significant moment in the history of this church. The congregation were instructed by the Chancellor not to shout, boo or clap.

The solicitors, architects and supporters of the development sat on the north side of church, those opposed, the Victorian Society and Chesterfield Borough Council representatives, on the south.

Judge Bullimore, the Chancellor, and James Battie, the registrar, occupied the centre below the chancel arch, where, ironically, we are expecting to be allowed to place the Holy Table.

The parties both for and against the development were very well prepared. Karen Riley, solicitor, called Nicholas Rank as her first witness. He represented Buttress, Fuller, Alsop, Williams, the church architects.

The Chancellor's sense of humour showed in little asides. The old font outside the west door of the church was being discussed, and it was pointed out that a faculty had been obtained to put it there. "It wasn't approved by me" said the Chancellor, as nowadays banishment of fonts to churchyards is frowned upon.

Mr Rank stated that architecturally the building is of lowest grade listing and that internal modifications had been ongoing since the dedication of the church some one hundred and seventy years ago. The use of space for worship needs to be maximised, and he argued that the internal furniture is neither unique nor of outstanding character in need of preservation for posterity. The only structures left from the original architect are the shell (the walls) and the tower. All internal decoration and/or furniture is of a modified kind.

It was made clear that the reredos, oak panelling and mosaic floor would not be removed, although the floor would be covered, possibly by wooden block flooring. The internal fittings are not coherent or unique and removing the choirstalls, it was argued, would not detract from a coherent whole.

Amid the seriousness of the court, there were little points of humour usually prompted unintentionally by the Chancellor. The architects were warned, when the ceiling was commented upon, "keep your hands off that!", to the amusement of the assembled congregation. This humour continued when the Chancellor introduced a softly spoken lady, Margaret Goodall, from the Victorian Society, to speak against the proposal.

Chancellor: "Can you hear at the back?"

Voices from the back: "No, not really"

Chancellor: "That's your fault then! You Anglicans always move to the back".

There followed a very orderly, polite questioning from the Victorian Society, where it did transpire that the choirstalls were installed in 1891. Mr Rank, while appreciating the heritage issue, did point out that it could be constricting and that this building is still being used for the purposes for which it was originally instigated 170 years ago. This has only been possible, he argued, because the building has changed within to accommodate the changing needs of congregations.

The questions from Miss Goodall were apt and searching, one question asked for architectural 'symmetry' considerations to be taken into account if the re-ordering went ahead in the Nave but not the Chancel. It was made very clear to the court that reordering one without the other would be inconsistent.

The second witness for the development side was the Chair of the Development Committee, Robin Dawson. The evidence from Mr Dawson focused more on the needs of the church, rather than architecture. From this it emerged that the Diocesan Advisory Committee although concerned about the position of the Font and the Holy Table, decided not to object to the removal of the choirstalls as although seemingly, they were not readily adaptable to modern forms of worship. The D.A.C. suggested that extraneous furniture should be removed.

The third witness for the re-ordering proposals was Christopher Frith. His evidence, as Rector, focused on the varied nature of services over a month and the different kinds of services provided every Sunday. It was very reassuring that

the Chancellor demanded considerable detail from the Rector on these points. It was impossible to miss the diverse nature of the monthly calendar or the different kinds of worship within a Sunday in this testimony. Karen Riley drew out well the present use of the church for important community events such as Holiday Clubs, Agape and Youth Groups and the proposal to extend such events if redevelopment goes ahead. She also focused on the Chancel and the need for flexibility there.

Once all witness accounts had been heard the opponents to the development began their summing up procedure. Much of this information had been laid out in written testimony, but during this delivery, Miss Goodall referred to precedent and legal practice, which, she argued, supported the case of the Victorian Society.

Miss Goodall was "cross-examined" by Mrs Riley very effectively, and the point well drawn out here was that in the listing of the building in 1968, the ceiling and oriel window were included but not the choirstalls and Chancel seating.

Mr Staniforth, C.B.C., then gave his evidence against the development. It should be pointed out here that the C.B.C. objection, on the officer's advice was only carried by a majority of one at a C.B.C. planning committee. Again Mrs Riley cross-examined effectively. The council case did not hold up very well; it was demonstrated by Mrs Riley that the report to committee represented mainly one viewpoint, that the committee made its decision without visiting the Church and the implication was very strong that a decision was made "in the dark".

At 12.45pm it was agreed to continue to the end of the case rather than to adjourn the court for lunch.

The Archdeacon was invited to speak in summing up, and explained how his views had been continually changing. He did, indeed, come down on the side of the church redevelopment, and Mrs Riley thanked him for that. Revd John Drackley, for the D.A.C., represented the committee as sympathetic to the needs of the church, but having some reservations from the conservation point of view. On balance, they were prepared to go along with the development.

The proposers and opponents of the development gave their summings up, which were skilled on both parts, yet I observed a wry smile pass between Mr Rank and Miss Goodall while Mrs Riley summed up on behalf of the church. It was as if the Victorian Society had accepted defeat and as I close this article as an informed account of what happened at the first Consistory Court in St Thomas', I do indeed see, shining through the windows on the south side of the church, glorious sunshine!

At the time of going to press we are still awaiting the Chancellor's written decision on the matter before the Consistory Court.

Keith Morgan

From Our New Curate, Petra Owen

I can hardly believe that my two years at St John's College are coming to an end and a new beginning is about to happen. With any change in our lives there is loss and gain and so on a recent visit to St Thomas' I was thankful to be reminded of the words *"God who has called you ... is faithful."*

Amongst all the thoughts and feelings of excitement and nervousness those words are a source of strength and encouragement.

I am looking forward to getting to know everyone, sharing our lives together and working as one for the sake and love of the Lord our God and His people.

Yours in Christ

Petra Owen

Petra is to be ordained in Derby Cathedral on Sunday 28 June at 10.45am.

Identifying People with Pastoral Gifts

There are people in every church who are gifted in caring for people. St Thomas' has such people who are already available and are "there" caring but there are probably a lot more who are waiting to be called into this kind of ministry.

God calls us to care for His people. He calls to us as He did to Isaiah "*Comfort, comfort my people*" (Isa 40:1). God does not want people in our churches to lament as the Psalmist did in Psalm 142:4 "*There is none who takes notice of me ... no man cares for me*".

How many people in our churches today cry this because the professional clergy are the only ones pastoring. People are neglected because we are not pastoring God's way, which is equipping Lay people He has called to tend his flock.

At St Thomas, church from November last year to January we ran a pilot study course "**Learning to care**", the few who attended have indicated that they found the course extremely useful and that it has helped them to identify people with needs and to come alongside and pastor them in a caring and Christian way.

The course is designed by Waverly Christian Centre and provides for six weeks study using a comprehensive work book accompanied with a video training programme. The video presentations are by Selwyn Hughes and Trevor Partridge. Course members are required to have their own study book as it is an integral part of the course and is used on almost a daily basis. Each session has four elements:

- Video Presentation
- Group Discussion
- Personal Assignments
- Group Review

The course is built around three concepts that are central to Christian caring: -**Caring by Encouragement, Caring by Exhortation, Caring by Enlightenment**. The course objectives are:

1. That we become more caring people
2. That we will be drawn into a closer relationship with the Lord.
3. That our Biblical grasp and understanding of Christian caring will grow.
4. That we will develop a closer relationship with members of our church.
5. That we will develop new skills and insights to enable us to be more effective people

Our call is to try to live as Jesus lived: caring, helping, accepting, healing, comforting, assuring. If we have been given the gift of mercy (the ability to feel genuine empathy and compassion for people) and are able to translate those feelings into helpful relationships and cheerfully done deeds, then we should use these gifts as disciples of Christ in our world today.

Roger Freestone

When One Twin Suffers...The Other Twin Feels The Pain

Chesterfield and Tsumeb in Namibia signed a 'twinning' agreement in November 1993. The affinity was mining. Chesterfield and the area around has experienced the trauma of the closing of the coal mines.

Now Tsumeb, whose existence has depended on a productive copper mine and smelter, is experiencing the shock of the complete closure of all mining and its associated activity.

The owners and operators, TCL (Tsumeb Corp. Ltd) part of the Gold Fields Namibia Group, has gone into liquidation. Work at the mines in four areas, including Tsumeb, has stopped. 2,000 employees will be affected. There is little hope of reopening.

TCL has lost about £50 million two years as a result of: the fall in world copper prices, the effect of a six-week strike in 1996 and the damage done at that time to the plant and equipment.

Now we in Chesterfield can share the burden. Many in Tsumeb will be unemployed. There is the danger of violence and the looting of the TCL property. The churches will feel the loss and its effect on their members. The municipality will need wisdom to deal with the situation.

Let our churches in Chesterfield pray for our twin town of Tsumeb. Let us pray that the Peace and Power of God will work there for the good of the people and the calming of the situation.

St. Thomas' has a link Church in Tsumeb, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Nomtsoub Township. The pastor is Immanuel Hamunjela, who is to retire at the end of the year. In the present situation all the churches will need care and prayer. Our real need is for a group in St Thomas' to take responsibility for maintaining the link with the pastor and congregation in Tsumeb. Please consider this as you seek your sphere of service for His Church.

Horace Totterdell Church Links Group Chesterfield Tsumeb Assoc.

Joyce Crowther

Joyce died at the end of January this year.

We at St. Thomas knew Joyce Crowther for that all too short a time - her retirement. She had been a teacher and her love of knowledge and her joy in the sharing of it qualified her well for her career. Throughout her adult life this meditative Christian brought these same qualities to her approach to faith, not for her the easy path of quiet acceptance rather one of searching into the heart of faith and deep into her own heart for its response.

Joyce had three centres to her life; family, faith and friends. Her loyalty- to all three was the joy of her life and an inspiration to all who came into contact with her. Her faith did not lead her to easy paths but to helping to found the bereavement visiting group seeking to meet the needs of those in their darkest hours. Her contribution as a long standing member of the P.C.C. and its worship group was valued by all who served with her. I miss her leadership of the Monday breakfast meditation. The carefully chosen readings beautifully read often bringing new and deeper understanding just by being read so well.

Her homemade wholemeal toasted bread and homemade marmalade was a treat!.

It was near the end of her life that I saw most clearly the part faith played in Joyce's life. Visiting her in hospital she told me how, after a brush with death a little earlier when she had a pulmonary embolism, she had felt disappointed that after so much devoted effort to preserve her life she was gravely impaired and dependent.

But then in a sleepless hospital night she had realised the true purpose of the extra time she had been given. She felt an enormous wave of love sweeping over her from family and friends. She knew the source and was determined to devote her remaining time to obeying the first rule of love - the receiving of it.

She spoke of her fear of impending death and of the coward she felt; but who can be a coward who when acknowledging their fear, turn their face steadfastly toward it. I saw Joyce only once more in her home surrounded by that love of which we had spoken, feeling privileged to be sharing in it. Joyce spent her last week in Ashgate Hospice where her family and friends who saw her there tell me how loved and cared for she felt. I add my grateful thanks to that organisation and its staff for the care and love shown to Joyce and all committed to their care. Those of us who knew Joyce are the richer for the knowing; the poorer for her passing. Rest in peace sister in Christ.

John Lenthall

Hope for Eastern Europe Urgent Appeal

Pam Gratton writes...

Our grateful thanks to all those who supported our February Mission which was a great success. Our next mission is planned for August 1998. This will be mainly to support Dr Nicolae's orthopaedic hospital and the Paediatric department of the General Hospital in Constanta on the borders of the Black Sea. Both are in urgent need of medical supplies and equipment. We will also be visiting the leper community in Tichilesti. We would be delighted if you feel led to help with any of the following.

Medical First Aid items:

- crepe or cotton bandages, cotton wool, triangular bandages, safety pins, antiseptic cream or liquid, non stick dressings, pain relief, scissors, plasters etc.

Orthopaedic equipment and supplies;

- surgical instruments, autoclave, white sheets and pillow cases, antibiotics, anti-inflammatories.

Dried Food:

- peas, lentils, beans, spaghetti, pasta, rice, sugar, coffee, flour, cooking oil, baby milk and food, and any other dried foods e.g. soups.

Toiletries:

- soap, shampoo, deodorants, toothpaste, brushes, sponges etc.

Other items:

- small kitchen utensils, good quality boots and shoes, newly knitted clothes, shawls, blankets, socks and slippers, children's educational activity materials such as colouring pencils, drawing books, rulers and pencil sharpeners.

Baby supplies:

- terry nappies, pants, vests, creams.

Financing for Romanian Bibles and Christian Literature plus "The Family Shelter House" for the homeless street children in Bucharest.

Let us remember the words of our Lord Jesus : *"It is more blessed to give than to receive"*

Pamela Gratton