

Ploughshare October/November 1993 (Scanned version from the original)

From the Rector

Back in March, the PCC debated whether to hold two main services on Sunday mornings at St Thomas'. It has been preceded by much consultation and prayer. The debate was remarkable, not least because nearly everyone spoke. The voting was even more remarkable: 12 for, 12 against and 13 abstentions.

The dust has settled now but the issue is still live. Put simply there seem to be four main problems:

- **GROWTH** : after steady numerical growth for a number of years the morning congregation seems to have remained at an average of about 250 for two years or so. New people keep coming, but numbers don't go up. I call it the plug-hole syndrome : the tap is on but the bath doesn't get any fuller.
- **VARIETY** : we have a wide range of services and styles of music. It is rare to find a wider variety anywhere and it is a rich mixture which I, for one, greatly appreciate. However, the evident effect is that a considerable proportion of our members don't come to worship every Sunday, but pick and choose what suits them. The biggest reason for lack of numerical growth is that more people are coming less frequently - not that many have stopped coming altogether.
- **SIZE** : when you arrive it seems that there are a lot of people in church and it is no longer possible to know everyone. The incentive to invite others isn't great for we're comfortably full. In addition, if you don't feel like coming, it's easy to think that no one will notice if you are missing. The time has not arrived when we are forced to split the congregation. There is room for more and there are many larger congregations around the country. However, St Thomas' is what I call a "relationship church". The family feel is a vital ingredient and if people find it hard to feel a sense of belonging - and many seem to, now - something needs to be done.
- **UNITY** : there has been concern that starting a new congregation (or dividing an existing one) would stop us being a united church. Any desire for church unity is always healthy but our current unity could be a bit of a delusion. We already have distinct, but overlapping, Sam, 10.30am and 6.30pm congregations and the 10.30am one varies considerably according to what service it is.

Only God knows the answer. So there is to be a renewed emphasis on prayer - each Thursday at 9.30pm for half an hour in the Meeting Room. In addition we are trying to find churches in other places which have faced and tackled similar problems, to try to learn from their experience.

It may be that the answer will be to discontinue the 10.30am service and hold two instead - say, at 9.15 and 11 am - one with a traditional feel, with the organ and robed choir, the other having a more contemporary feel with Sowers or New Wine.

We shall see.

Christopher Frith

Responding to a Need –Brian Porter Seconded to Holy Trinity

Holy Trinity, Chesterfield are experiencing a prolonged vacancy and there have been difficulties over the appointment of a new Rector mostly stemming from the unsuitability of the Rectory. The Bishop has asked me if we would consider seconding a member of our staff, from September to December this year, to Holy Trinity.

Our Staff Team and Standing Committee have unanimously agreed that we should respond positively. After much prayer, thought and discussion it has been agreed to release Brian Porter on temporary secondment to Holy Trinity, from Sunday 26th September for the rest of the year.

It will be possible to "staff" all services in this parish, largely through the constant and generous help of Geoffrey Wilbourne. For the period of Brian's absence, Sheila Pite will become much more involved in the life and worship of St John's.

The Bishop has expressed his gratitude to us, stressing that we must remember that God is no one's debtor. He can be trusted to provide all we need, as we seek to help a Church in great need of encouragement and support. I am confident that all our members will agree that we have made the right decision, especially as God has blessed us so richly.

Please pray for Brian and Barbara, as Brian bravely launches out in response to an exciting challenge, and for our brothers and sisters at Holy Trinity.

Christopher Frith

A Breakfast Prayer

English Version:

Lord, grant that we may not be like porridge: stiff, stodgy and hard to stir, but like cornflakes: crisp, fresh and ready to serve.

Scottish Version:

Lord, grant that we may not be like cornflakes: lightweight, brittle and cold, but like porridge: warm, comforting and full of goodness.

In and Out of Africa - Kate Dawson's visit to Zimbabwe

St Thomas' teenager Kate Dawson (18) has gone to be a volunteer with Scripture Union Zimbabwe, and set off as this issue of Ploughshare went to press on Sept 10th.

She will live with a S.U. worker's family in the 2nd largest city, Bulawayo, a reasonably affluent and industrial city by African standards - though she will see more poverty and need than we are used to in the U.K. She hopes to be involved with S.U. groups in schools and possibly colleges, to help at 'relationship seminars' with sixth formers, which teach on boy-girl and family relationships, especially from the Aids standpoint. She will also help to run S.U. Camps for children from urban schools, this possibly being their first 'holiday' and as one former camper put it, their first introduction to 'this Jesus person', and also to work in the office and S.U. bookshop. There may hopefully be a chance to travel a little too - she looks like being busy!

Kate will have spent her first week in Harare, the capital, with S.U. Zimbabwe's National Director Tobias Nyatsambo and his family to help her acclimatise prior to being based in Bulawayo. By now she should be becoming more familiar with the two local languages (though English is widely used in this former British Colony), the culture and customs, the food. and begun to feel at home in a local church fellowship.

Kate's many interests include, meeting people, travel, reading, athletics and music - apparently there is quite a good 'pop' scene in Zimbabwe! And being a keen swimmer and a Chesterfield Athletic Club member she hopes to join a local athletic club.

Looking ahead a little she plans to spend Christmas in Harare with friends of her parents, Robin and Brenda, whom she last met when two years old and in Africa with dad's work! Kate's younger sister Sarah was even born in the continent so the family have close links with, and a great love of Africa.

A former pupil of St Helena and Brookfield schools, where she was in the first mixed 6th form, Kate is taking a year out from her maths, physics and chemistry studies before her 'physical sciences' course begins at University College London in October 1994. She trusts that her time in Zimbabwe will be a useful and enriching experience, where she will enjoy happy relationships with the children and families she meets, and that she manages to keep in touch with her many friends back at home (she plans to send periodical news of her exploits).

She is very excited about this opportunity to reach out to others with the love of Jesus, and hopes to learn from Him through her own experiences. Please remember Kate in your prayers and look out for news of her during the coming months.

Alan Sheldon

Link Missionaries –Andy and Mandy Lines

Domestic and physical problems affected the Lines family recently and tended to take the gloss from Mandy's recent return from her visit to the U.K. with the children. Happily the domestic problem was resolved, thanks mainly to the help of a former SAMS missionary.

Andrew has slipped a disc whilst playing squash and so has been working from his bed or sofa, but in spite of this, the courses are within sight of the final exams. The family are now attending the cathedral, and the great news on this is that Alex has settled into the Sunday School there, so in spite of the set backs they feel uplifted by our prayers which they know have been answered.

Richard & Dorothy Banks

Buses, Bugs & Bibles in Burkina –Ruth Frith

All of a sudden I realised the bus had come to a standstill and there was a big argument going on amongst my fellow passengers. Was it another police check-point? Had one of the goats fallen off the roof? No - on enquiry I found out that the bus had no windscreen and that some of the passengers felt this was dangerous and it should be repaired before carrying on, Needless to say, we carried on without it, and fortunately it didn't rain!

Just one of the "interesting" experiences I had during the six weeks I spent in Burkina Faso, W Africa this summer. I went to work as a Guest Helper with the Wycliffe Bible Translators. The main task I was given was to type up a reading book in the Lyele language using the very same computer programme I had learnt to use the previous week when standing in for Julia in the church office! Reassuring to realise that God had prepared me for this particular job.

Illiteracy in Burkina is estimated to be as high as 90%. Wycliffe are currently working on translations in 12 of the 60 languages in the country, but have realised that this is a pointless exercise if no-one is able to read the finished product. So literacy work goes hand in hand with bible translation and is actively encouraged by the Burkinabe government.

I was based at the Wycliffe centre in the capital, Onagadougou (Wag-adoo-goo!). I was also given several opportunities to travel to stay with various missionaries out in their villages and experience more 'real life' situations. This meant adapting to life without running water and electricity in some cases, and a toilet being a 6" hole in a hut at the bottom of the neighbour's garden.

The staple food of most Burkinabe is "to", a solid porridge made from millet or maize flour mixed with boiling water and eaten with a variety of sauces. I was amused to discover that in many of the bible translations, Jesus is not referred to as the "bread of life" but as the "to of life" - an example of the many cultural aspects which have to be taken into consideration when translating the bible.

I found that my time in Burkina really opened up the bible in a whole new way. I realised how much we take it for granted having God's word so readily available in our own language.

Thank you to all those who made it possible for me to by giving support both financially and in prayer. I was very aware of the Lord's presence at all times, particularly with all the 'dodgy' means of transport, and in keeping me in good health the whole time. Please continue to pray for the task of bible translation 300 million people are still without the Scriptures.

Ruth Frith

Summer Club 1993 –Special Branch!

I was a "pastoral leader" of the Silver Stars (age 9 - 10) group, which meant that, even though I was 21, I was allowed to join in the activities with them. We went to Westfield School each day, apart from the "altogether" bits in church.

The first day was called "**The Special One**". It was all about Jesus. We made some pictures and a commentary for them, of his life story, and acted a kind of drama together to represent his death and resurrection.

The second day was called "**The Special Gift**" and was about God's special gift to his church, the Holy Spirit. We made kites to remind us how he is like the wind, and decorated them with different fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. We also played parachute games which were fun!

On the third day we looked at "**The Specialists**". Ordinary Christians who are serving God. Most of the ones we looked at were quite famous. Our group watched a video about Corrie Ten Boom and we acted out hiding Jews from the Nazis. Then we heard about Brother Andrew who smuggled bibles into Communist countries. We did a treasure hunt and found about 10 bibles in secret compartments of a car!

I think most of the bona-fide 9-10 year olds enjoyed it as much as I did. Some were already regulars at St Thomas': others didn't know about Sunday Club which happens all year round! It was good to see some of the new friends I'd made, who were Silver Stars at the September Family Service, **Summer Club Revisited**. I hope and pray that they will .be specialists for life, living for the Special One through the power of his Special Gift.

Jonty Frith

Summer Club at the Sharp End!

We were all very excited at the start of summer club. Then Jim came and introduced us to the theme, **Special Branch**.

He taught us the theme song 'Cast your burdens onto Jesus' or burgers as someone in our house says. I was in silver stars. Our pastoral leader was Jonty. We went to Westfield School for our group activities. My favourite activities were kites, first aid and a session on Paul's journey to Damascus. At the end of each day we all met back together again in church and had another session of worship. We looked at what other groups had made. I enjoyed it all.

Thomas Green

Blaithwaite 1993

What a Venture!

At 10am on Sat. 31st July, a small unit of CYFA met in the church car park, ready to set off for the lakes, for the holiday of the year.

After getting settled into our luxury accommodation, a crime was committed. Everybody from then on kept close to their teddy bears, as a Bear Napper was at large; but after some brilliant detective work by the members of Blaithwaite, the crime was solved and the local villain "Baby Face" was soon arrested.

The week soon passed by after this Cluedo welcoming event and contained many interesting, fun and energetic activities such as: the Krypton Factor, small courts (which consists of anything from tiddly winks to netball shooting) canoeing, mountain biking.

A typical day at Blaithwaite is very tiring but great fun. The rising trumpet sounds at 7.45 am, which gives us 45 minutes to get washed, dressed and down to breakfast. This may sound reasonable, but when there are seven girls in one room it gets a bit hectic. The days are filled from morning to night with events and activities. We have two focus meetings, which are basically short church services and this year based on the book of Luke.

In between these we have 'pick 'n' mix', which isn't a 10p candy mix, but a choice of topics to study from the Bible which are also related to young people, such as: Whom can I trust? Is the Bible really reliable? Who am I and does it matter? Image and self esteem. We also have workshops in Drama, Aerobics, (which for some reason consisted mainly of males), Art and Craft, Photography, Music, Computing, Egg Racing and Juggling.

In the afternoon we are let loose outside the boundaries of Blaithwaite house. We all head off to different parts of the Lake District to canoe, sail, orienteering, beach comb, horse ride, play golf, rock climb, cycle etc.

By 9pm everybody is in Ellrigg (the dining room) with a mug of hot chocolate and feeling the effects of the busy day at Blaithwaite. Everyone manages to drag themselves to bed and by 10.45pm lights are out and snoring begins! Well, that's what the leaders hoped for, but it wasn't always the case!

My favourite day was Thursday 5th August because as everybody knows its Christmas day, well it is at Blaithwaite. Nobody, apart from the leaders, knew about this until we were all awoken by the sound of carols blaring out of the trumpet. Santa came at breakfast, we had a scrummy Christmas dinner and listened to a very amusing speech by Queen Elizabeth II. All of this was to get the message across that we should celebrate everyday like Christmas Day.

Blaithwaite contains such a brilliant atmosphere. It's a great place to make friends and learn about yourself and life as a Christian. If I have the chance I will be going back next year for the 5th time - it's Brilliant!

Linzi Balderson

Blaithwaite –A leaders Eye-View

Many friends told me I was mad to go to Blaithwaite again this year after being exhausted by last year. But each year the hard work and heart ache is worthwhile, and I am reminded again that we if we are faithful to the Gospel, and share the Good News, God works through it and touches and changes lives.

I am also reminded that we cannot be effective in what we try to do through our own strength: Part of the joy of Blaithwaite - besides the sheer bliss of spending 8 days with 120 people - is having to rely completely on God because of the sheer exhaustion, and thus seeing God at work in our weakness, as well as being restored and built up in your own faith in the process.

Rosie Welch

A Field of Dreams Greenbelt 1993

Where else could you share communion with 20,000 other Christians, listen to a Radio 4 Thought for the Day speaker talk for more than an hour, worship with moving Celtic chants and take in a heavy metal band?

You could also enjoy a wonderful candle-lit classical concert in a redundant church, watch an acclaimed Edinburgh fringe drama, camp out in beautiful, rolling parkland opposite a country house and get to grips with issues as diverse as raves in the nave, Green Christianity, the Holy Spirit and the future of the Arts and finding God in motherhood.

This was Greenbelt, four days of celebrating God's desire to be involved in every single aspect of our lives, with this year's theme - **Field of Dreams**.

We six Greens, together with our Curate, Sheila and 14 Catholic friends gloried in the Bank Holiday sunshine at Deene Park, Northamptonshire. The quagmire and gales of last year's event were thankfully a distant memory!

"Greenbelt," writes festival chairman Martin Wroe, "is an unashamedly Christian festival, and for 20 years it has tried to follow a dreamer who disturbed the comfortable and comforted the disturbed. Expect us to make room for the people and ideas that don't fit, the places who are ignored, the people whose dreams are all nightmares, the holy wisdom pretending to be madness."

Like the storms of '92, Greenbelt can sometimes shake you to the roots. Many in our group felt particularly challenged by an American speaker, Tom Sine, who urged the Church to wake up to the fact that the world is not going to carry on in the same way it has for the past 20 years. We as Christians need to be preparing now for the sweeping cultural and social changes beginning to take place, rather than responding years after they have happened.

Heavy stuff, yes - but Greenbelt offers much scope for relaxation and recreation too, through its commitment to Christian arts, music, theatre and cinema. And every age is catered for, from crèche through toddlers and younger children to wacky teenage events. It was great to see Carleton, Piers and Chris Amner there, too.

Next year is the 21st Greenbelt and a very special festival is guaranteed. We're certainly going again - there are big discounts for booking before the end of November. If you're interested ask us all about it!

Roger Green

Church Cricket Match 1993

Rumoured to be the finest event in the church calendar, it kicked off at 6.30pm on 27th July in Somersall Park. A number of fancy dress establishments reportedly stocked out of white trousers and jerseys as a remarkable proportion of participants from both teams sought to deceive their opponents into thinking they could actually play.

The Curate's XI which, due to injury, did not contain a curate, won the toss and elected to bat first. The Rector, who did captain the Rector's XI set a fielding formation as if he was Nigel Short constructing a Sicilian defense in the deciding world championship title match.

At first it worked. One followed another as the Curate's XI, each more modest than his predecessor, made contributions to the scoreline worthy of the widow's mite award for extravagance; significantly assisted by the guile of Neil Turner from the ocky who tempted 3 strikers to slice into the rough for only 16 runs.

The rector's jaw was then subjected to a series of stiff left jabs in the form of a stonking partnership between Jim Cowley (54 not out) and Steve Lawrence (38 without whites) which proved decisive. His only consolation was that, in following our Lord's motto of "doing unto others", he delivered Steve one of his infamous 'Chesterfields' (known more readily as 'sitters' outside MCC circles) and watched with evident thanksgiving as the ball was prevented from clearing the perimeter hedge forever by one of his back four (similarly whiteless). But by then the damage was done.

As the final first half whistle blew the Curate's XI were on 113 for 6 and the Rector's XI retired hurt to the dug-out. Most of the latter were appealing to the light, but the Rector made muffled references to the prophet Isaiah --- "they that walk in darkness" and sportingly replaced his gum shield.

In the end the only light anybody saw was Carleton Badger (42) who steadily amassed enough runs to make the score look less like a European shoe size. Philip Herrick (acting curate) coxed a well disciplined crew and restricted the opposition's boat to 98 for 7.

The evening was fittingly concluded with the award of the Charlie Brassington Memorial Trophy to the player making the most significant contribution to the game. This was presented by Claire Brassington to the blushing Carleton Badger for his runs, his wicket, and 2 catches.

Urgent Appeal for Romania

David Fox and his wife Beryl are planning another trip to Romania in the Autumn and are appealing for medical supplies, toiletries, food (tinned and packet), toys, baby equipment and clothing, plus donations of money towards medical supplies and fuel costs.

The last trip in May was their first journey with medical supplies and food. It proved to be a great success. David and his team were led to a different part of Romania by the Lord, to a Christian hospital, medical centre, orphanage, old peoples home and many needy homes. The warmth, hospitality, faith and love from the very poor people

overwhelmed and touched the hearts and minds of David and his team. He first realized the urgent need for medical supplies on his previous trip during the Christmas period, when they delivered toys, food and clothing for the children. On his return he shared with Les and Pam Gratton his experiences of that journey and the previous trips he had undertaken. They gave the work to the Lord in prayer, and remarkable things began to happen. St Thomas' Church began to support David and Beryl.

They were invited to St Thomas' Church in May when David gave his testimony concerning his trips and how he was first led by the Lord to work for Romania. The evening proved to be a memorable one, and David's testimony touched the hearts and minds of all those present. The congregation responded very generously with medical supplies, food and donations. The fund for this appeal from St Thomas' Church realized a total of £575 and many supplies were given. Les and his son Mark, God willing, will be joining the team as co-drivers on the next trip. Donations and link workers for this appeal are urgently needed.

Pamela Gratton