

Ploughshare October/November 1994

(Scanned version from the original)

From the Rector

With October comes the long-awaited new congregation at St Thomas'. We prayed long and hard that God would show us how it should happen. Now, we seek His blessing.

The new service will be at 9.09 am! This is perhaps bizarre, almost certainly unique and without question both memorable and convenient (sandwiched between the existing 8 am service and the 10.30 am one which will start a bit later at 10.45 am.)

It's a time of new opportunities - to learn, to serve, to live lives of love (our 1994 motto) and to grow individually and together. We look to God. We sow. We water. He alone can bring growth.

The Church of England has hit the headlines again. The Bishop of Cirencester has been brave enough to relieve one of his clergy of his responsibilities - after a year in which to sort out his thinking - because he said he did not believe in God.

In some quarters there has been an outcry but the Bishop's action seems fair enough to me. It is true that wrestling with doubt is an integral part of Christian living. However, speaking for myself, if my doubt were to cause me to declare "God is just a human creation," I would not be able to say the Creed without my tongue being firmly in my cheek. Nor would I feel able to continue with integrity acting as a Minister of the Gospel.

Those who say they hold a humanist view of God say that if God is a meaningful concept at all, He is "in us" but certainly not "out there." Orthodox biblical doctrine agrees that God is "in us" by His spirit. But it also affirms that He, the Creator, is "high over all." We don't have to choose one view or the other. He is both imminent and transcendent (to use the technical words), both part of his creation and distinct from it.

This is the God of faith, the God of the Bible. The God of Jesus. A mystery beyond human comprehension. But, an optional belief for a Christian, let alone a Christian minister? It cannot be.

Christopher Frith

A Journey in Faith to Romania –August 1994

It was 5.10a.m. on Friday 12th August 1994. Part of our team prepared to journey approximately 2,300 miles to convey medical supplies, equipment, food, baby supplies, toiletries, blankets, clothing and shoes overland to Constanta, bordering the Black Sea. My husband Les, nephew Ian and John Deville set off in our Royal Blue seven and a half tonne Ford Cargo lorry full to capacity - not an inch to spare, including the blood testing unit and spin dryer urgently requested by the leper community at Tichilesti, - a true answer to prayer!

As I waved them goodbye and prayed that our Lord would be with them, I recalled how all this work had started and the wonderful blessings we had received from God to make this journey possible. We prayed that He would lead us throughout this journey, especially to the poor and sick, and we would have the right supplies to meet those needs.

The response to this trip was overwhelming and I want to personally thank everyone for their support, prayers and encouragement which made this journey possible. You see when we truly turn completely to our Lord Jesus Christ and say "Lord I want you to be in full control of my life - I submit completely - let Your will be done and allow the Holy Spirit to move in," we really begin to experience incredible things. God's love for us works in and through us making us whole again. My life completely changed from the moment I gave myself fully to our Lord and the healing power has been incredible.

The work for Romania began about two and a half years ago shortly after my daughter Julie died. It was and is a great blessing and I can't thank God enough for being there when I needed him the most. He has given me the privilege of actually serving Him and visiting the country with my family to see first-hand what conditions are really like and where the most urgent needs are.

My son Matthew and myself flew out early the next morning with Mirela and Richard who had kindly arranged with their family and friends to accommodate us during our visit, and help us to get the supplies to where they were really needed.

We arrived at Constanti airport at approximately 2.30pm Romanian time and were welcomed by Mirela's mum - Lilley and younger sister Valley who had kindly arranged transport to take us to their friends where we were staying for the next two weeks.

Corenl and Rodica have five children - Julia 16 - Eleonora 13, Andrei 11 - Teofil who is 9 and Anndrea 3. They are a very kind, hospitable Christian family, full of love and compassion in the Lord's work, who live in a very small but homely second-floor apartment on the outskirts of Constanta.

Plans were made for us to visit Basarabi church the next day where Mirela's family attend. During the service there was an opportunity for anyone to share their testimony - No-one in the congregation volunteered to speak - so I offered to share my experience of how I came to the Lord and how He had delivered me. Mirela kindly offered to translate. After the service an elderly lady shared with Mirela's mum Lilley how my testimony had strengthened and encouraged her and thanked me very warmly. It was a great encouragement for me and was a wonderful opportunity for everyone to get to know this Pamela who had arrived from England, and why the Lord had sent me to Romania. The Lord's timing is always 'spot on', all the glory to Him! I was then introduced to the pastor's family and we were invited to stay for refreshments -this church had kindly agreed to receive our vehicle and supplies, helping in their distribution -especially to the leper community at Tichilesti. The Romanians are very encouraged by the fact that with our help they can now turn and help others - especially the lepers.

We also planned to support and help Aids victim children, an orthopaedic hospital, and an orphanage plus many poor families in the area.

Please continue to pray for Romania and the support work - remember the words of our Lord Jesus, "*It is more blessed to give than to receive.*"

God Bless You All

Pamela Gratton

(This story will be continued in the next edition of Ploughshare.)

Gerald and Jan Beckett

Welcome to **Canon Gerald Beckett and Jan**, his wife. They are from Sydney Diocese, where Gerald is Rector of the parish of Dural.

Brian and Barbara Porter are on exchange with Gerald and Jan. We trust they are enjoying the experience of life and ministry in Australia. They will be back with us for Christmas. In the meantime, we expect to gain a great deal from having Gerald and Jan among us.

David Brooks-New Licensed Reader

Congratulations to **David Brooks**, who has just been licensed as a Reader in Derby Cathedral. He has been training for 3 years, somehow fitting it in alongside his medical and family responsibilities.

David is much appreciated already in our churches, especially for his dramatic contributions and thought provoking, incisive preaching.

His main ministry will be alongside Sheila Pite in the 9.09 service and in the leadership team of CYFA (the youth fellowship). Please pray for him and Pep, Hannah and Rosalind.

What Does It Mean?

Kath Steer continues investigating what lies behind well-known Bible concepts.

"The King's Daughter" of Psalm 45:10-14

Next to Psalm 23 I believe this to be one of the most loved Psalms - Psalm 45! Known to be a Psalm which refers to the 'Messiah' because of its many descriptions of Jesus which are quoted in the New Testament, it is a song about a wedding which actually took place, possibly that of Solomon. In this article we look particularly at one very much misunderstood verse - ,verse 13 "The king's daughter is all glorious **within**: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought to the king in raiment of needlework".

We must first of all consider an eastern custom concerning the bride. I quote from an ordinary women's magazine issued in 1977 about a recent Arabian wedding:

"For the ceremony the 15 year-old bride was dressed in traditional Arab costume, which was covered with a black veil".

Having learned of this custom when in my teens, I quite naturally was thrilled to find this description in modern times.

The custom was (or is) that the bride has adorned herself with a beautiful gown which she has possibly made herself; in most cases it would have a great deal of beautiful embroidery on it. I saw such a gown as this during an exhibition by L. T. Pearson. In Psalm 45 the gown was worn by a Princess. and the embroidery was wrought gold - the most clever of all needlework, but what of the mystery 'within'? Simply that on the wedding day, the bride puts a huge black veil over the whole garment. One such veil is described in Ruth 3: 15. The eastern veils are large! At the appropriate moment the bridegroom would step forward to remove that dark veil and would be amazed at the beauty **within**. Thus, we have the description, "The king's daughter is **all glorious within**" - where 'within' means '**under the veil**'.

Knowing that this Psalm refers to the Lord Jesus as regards description, most certainly the reference in verses 13 and 14 refer to his bride - his Church. The Apostle Paul when writing to the Church at Rome, explains that there will come a day of unveiling: "For the earnest expectation of the creation waits for the manifestation of the sons of God" the people who in his previous statement Paul names 'us'. (Romans 8:18 -19)

We pause at this point to ask a question 'What does this mean to me as a member of the Church of Christ (Hebrews 12 : 23)? Jude tells us that we shall be presented faultless! Paul explains that Christ's bride will have neither spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing. John saw in his vision Christ's bride adorned in white linen. Paul describes the needlework as "gold, silver and precious stones" - those things which we as his beloved have done for his glory alone. John describes the white robed throng (Revelation:7-9).

So - what does this mean to us? The white robe was given to us at conversion though as yet unseen - veiled. The needlework is our service for the bridegroom - The Lord Jesus Christ - most often unseen except by him. We serve by love as declared by John the Apostle, and as Paul states "The Day shall declare it".

In the meantime as we await the great unveiling when the Lord will descend from those Ivory Palaces (Psalm 45 : 8), and when he shall present His Church to the world - "let us labour for the Master from the dawn till setting sun" lest that day should find us unprepared and we will sadly say "**I wish I had offered him more**".

Summer Club through the Eyes of a Pastoral Leader

Two years ago I was fairly new to St Thomas' and certainly new to the whole concept of Summer Club. Having been encouraged to go along to the final session in 1992, I now feel as much a part of Summer Club as the children.

'Blessed be the name of the Lord'. The theme song, the volume of children, the sheer buzz and excitement that filled the church on that day, all helped provide such a wonderful feeling within me. A feeling that I can't really put into words, but one that I know was shared with others on that day.

Two years later, there I was again, not visiting this time, but one of many resident pastoral leaders. I was a Blue Brick, and had 18 little blue bricks to keep me company. Being Pastoral Leader of the first time was a very enjoyable experience, and I have been left with many fond memories of my 3 - 4 year olds. The nicest of all was seeing 18 little faces again on the 2nd and 3rd days.

Although I have a 4 year old of my own, I am still amazed at the amount of information children can absorb at that young age. I do believe that most, if not all, will have gone home having learnt that God gave us some rules called the 'Ten Commandments', and that we need to keep these rules if we want God to be happy. Just as we keep our parents happy by listening to their rules!

The blue bricks learnt about 'Honouring their Fathers and Mothers'. In their own language, we tried to encourage them to help, love and respect their parents. We went on to learn about Jonah and what happened to him when he didn't listen to God. What we tried to do for three days, was to make it fun. We painted beautiful pictures; we flapped fish; we played pass the parcel; we played in sand; we sang songs; we were policemen; we made houses; we drove cars; we swam round church; and did so much more; having a wonderful time learning about God and the Ten Commandments. And if we couldn't count to 18 before Summer Club, we certainly can now. I can't think how many times we counted them in and out of the portacabin and the loos!

Besides the responsibility, I think my biggest problem as pastoral leader to such a young group was having to explain each day at 10.30 am when Jim let us go - that 'No it was not lunch time quite yet!'

When we all met for the first and final sessions of the day, yet again the theme song raised over 200 pairs of hands and nearly the roof.

The children are Summer Club! The sheer volume of excitement is the reward! - And no-one deserves this reward more than Jim Crawley and his committee. Without all their hard work, Summer Club would not be possible.

If you've never been, why not go along in 1995, for the final half hour session on the last day. To coin a phrase 'Listen with your Ears'. Listen to the buzz, the chat, the excitement, the joy, the enthusiasm, the shouting, the singing, the quiet prayer time - see for yourselves how children can enjoy learning about God, and how St Thomas' teaches them. I'll be there next year - will you?

Jane Simmonds

Who's Who at St Thomas' Parish –Jane Caley

Jane, you are a musician. When did you start learning?

I started piano lessons at the age of 7 and progressed from there. I learned the clarinet at college - the Royal Academy of Music. And I've had more recent, spasmodic lessons on the viola too.

Do you enjoy using your musical skills in worship?

I am delighted to be able to do so to bring glory to God and to encourage and support others in praise. It always seems to make such a difference if congregations have a strong, reliable lead; they then feel comfortable to express themselves, as was the case in the Holymoorside Gala service when the folk in the marquee really lifted their voices in traditional praise.

Have you been doing this for many years?

No, I was 40 when I came to a real faith in Jesus. When that happened, I found myself involved in a church music group straight away!

Was this different from your precious musical experience?

It brought me tremendous release. I learned to forget about all the black dots and God gave me an ability, and freedom to improvise - both vocally and on the keyboard. You see. I was a very shy "good" little girl at school - boring, too, and absolute pain probably! So it was my nature always to follow and read the music and only that. But. I find that improvisation is appreciated. The St Peter's congregation are positive and encouraging about how my skills, which are really gifts from God, lift their worship.

You are a music tutor? Who and what do you teach?

I've given lessons to people aged between 6 and 70! So I'll teach anyone who is interested. I very much enjoy teaching adults, either as a refresher course or for those bold enough to start. I teach piano, keyboard skills, singing theory, aural from beginning right through to advanced grades.

Blaithwaite 1994

Blaithwaite, for those of you who have managed to avoid various members of CYFA enthusing about it, is a Christian Centre in the Lake District which for one week a year is taken over by CYFA members and leaders from all over the country. We all get together for seven days of worship, teaching, mayhem, washing up and watery cocoa.

This was my third year at Blaithwaite, all of which have been equally fun and mad. The reason I love going so much is because I always make new friends and pick up exactly where I left off the year before with old ones. I find it incredibly refreshing to be taken out of my normal church environment and being with people whose opinions and perspective on God may differ from my own. This makes me question my own views and presents challenges which help to strengthen and deepen my faith, kicking any complacency and staleness out of me.

Then of course there is the sailing, climbing, waterfights, wide games, various other assorted activities. This included a fun if somewhat water-logged day out to Grasmere, and generally just having a good time with good friends. All in all, Blaithwaite is always an excellent week which anyone with an opportunity to go, would be mad to miss.

Becky Morgan

Gaines 1994

At 4.30pm we arrived at Gaines, which is situated on the border of Hereford and Worcester. We were welcomed to "The Gaines" by the manager, Richard Proctor. After settling in to our dormitories and meeting old friends we went downstairs for our first three course meal.

The week consisted of outings, activities, quiet times and evening celebrations. For our two outings we went to Dudley Canal Museum then the zoo and castle on Tuesday, and Symonds Yat Maze and Butterfly Centre on Thursday. At Dudley Canal Museum we went on an underground canal trip, going through old mines and tunnels. In the afternoon we went to the zoo and castle in Dudley. To get to the top of the hill on which the two are situated, there was the option of climbing the hill or for the less energetic, a ride on the chairlift or the train. After a fun packed afternoon we headed back to Gaines for our evening meal.

Our second outing was to Symonds Yat Maze and Butterfly Centre. We took part in several games which took place in and around the maze.

At the beginning of the week we were divided into four coloured teams and during the week there was the opportunity to score points for your team during wide games. There were many organised activities during the week including canoeing, football, mountain biking, fencing, swimming, aerobics, crafts and go-carts. There was also a tennis tournament on Wimbledon quality grass courts.

Every morning after breakfast each dormitory group shared a quiet time where a small portion of Mark's gospel was studied. These were enjoyable, interesting and useful. They were also a good opportunity to get to know the people in our dormitory.

The theme of the evening celebrations was "jelly and rock" and was based on the story of Simon Peter. We were visited by people from all over the world during one evening, who shared with us their experiences of being a Christian in their respective countries. They were in this country with C.M.S. (Church Missionary Society). The evening celebrations included sketches, well known songs, prayers, readings and a talk which was led by a different leader each evening.

Every evening after the celebrations, the leaders entertained the Pathfinders with sketches, songs and making themselves look stupid. On Thursday the roles were reversed and the Pathfinders entertained the leaders, which generally consisted of the leaders getting covered in squinty cream.

At the end of the week nobody wanted to leave Gaines and their new friends. The last morning was spent taking photos and swapping addresses. This year was our second visit to Gaines and there will hopefully be a third.

Jonathan Cooper and Philip Goodacre

Greenbelt 1994

Do you know

What? A Christian festival with a strong cultural bias; or a cultural festival with a strong Christian bias.

2. Where? Deene Park, Northamptonshire

3. When? August Bank Holiday.

4. How long? Four days.

5. Who? All ages, multi-denominational, multi national.

6. Why? To have fun, to learn about our faith, to participate in seminars, to worship, to listen to music, to see the performing arts, to meet people, or any of these.

This was our first experience of Greenbelt and we didn't really know what to expect. Six families from Chesterfield went *enmasse* to corner a part of Deene Park and setup an encampment. The chosen spot was on the edge of the designated site with a view across some water to a country house and a beautiful, small, if redundant church.

A five minute walk away from the relative tranquillity of our encampment, a tent city had been set up, complete with a cardboard cathedral, a "main street", various stages, shops, stalls, cafes and telephones. In the tents, the church, the village hall and at the stages there were events to satisfy all, regardless of age or interest.

Seminars ranged from how to work for a fairer world, to the problems of being a Christian parent and even dating guidelines for singles. Worship took many different forms - matins, or compline with the Franciscans, singing and dancing with a group from Sudan or Wild Goose worship, which as its name suggest was a bit wild.

Music of many different styles took place at most times of the day and through into the night. Performing arts included *The Hypochondriac* by Moliere, some very witty plays by Australian performing companies and an intense passion play. There was also an exhibition, fashion show, jewellery and batik workshops - the list is endless.

There were seventeen children in our group, ageing from 1 to 15 years. Although there were group activities organised for children at particular times, our lot preferred to play around the encampment and they seemed to have a good time.

The highlight for me was the Passion play, performed mainly in a derelict farmyard under the night sky. It was a moving production that brought to life the experiences and emotions of Jesus and his followers during the last days of his life and his resurrection on the third day.

The highlight for others was the Sunday morning communion at the 'Mainstage' - an outdoor stage in a huge field.

Fifty percussionists, fifty singers and fifty dancers (all Greenbelt participants) helped to make the service a special one, as did a multi-denominational congregation celebrating communion together. John Bell preached a simple but powerful sermon - the essence of which is something that is often forgotten: God created us all as individuals and these differences should be a cause for celebration not division - a call for unity, love and tolerance.

Since returning from Greenbelt. I have noted two descriptions of it in the national media: a 'Christian festival', and a 'cultural festival'. It was both. If you wanted one without the other you could have it, but if you want both together you'll have an extremely enriching experience.

Alice Lawrence

A Year in Uganda -Jonty Frith

Jonty Frith is in Kampala. He has a year to gain experience before he training for ordination at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, in September 1995.

He is assisting a CMS mission partner, Steve Coulson, who works in Namirembe Cathedral and its five Luganda speaking daughter churches in 'slum areas' of the city. He is living with a Ugandan evangelist, his wife and their three young children.

An estimated 70% of the Kampalan people are HIV+ and everyone is losing loved ones to AIDS. There are vast needs and many opportunities to show God's love.

A comment at a fellowship meeting Jonty attended was translated for him: "This *muzungu* (white man) looks a bit funny but we think he'll be OK.