

Ploughshare October/November 1999

(Scanned version from the original)

From the Rector

The only government in the world planning anything to mark the millennium is ours, or so I gather. "The nation is putting on its party frock," I heard someone say the other day, "but it's not sure whose party it is."

We entirely approve of the party - but want to tell everyone whose birthday it is. The nationwide Millennium ALPHA initiative was launched recently with a street party in Covent Garden. Organisers handed out "Millennium Survival Kits", each one containing a party hat, balloon, party popper, sachet of Alka Selzer, corkscrew and an invitation to an Alpha course. ALPHA appropriately is an opportunity to explore the meaning of life - being based on Jesus Christ.

"But we are a multi-faith society," many say. "We mustn't offend the other religions." Various responses to that spring to mind. For a start, only 7% of the population of the UK are estimated to be adherents of other faiths. Secondly, many such people are amazed that Christians are so bashful. A Sikh, speaking on Thought of the Day said, "the Millennium doesn't make me want to look at Ferris wheels. I want to hear about Christianity." A Rabbi involved in Millennium celebration planning, said, "We have our Festivals. Why can't you?" The Bishop of Maidstone, the Rt Revd Gavin Reid who has been heavily involved in planning on a national level says that he suspects that leaders of most other faith communities want Christianity to be stronger in our nation.

In no way are they objecting to Millennium celebrations being centred on Jesus Christ.

The nationwide Millennium theme is "A New Start" - especially for the world's poor, at home and with God - and we encourage everyone to take this really seriously. We need to pray that, in God's grace, there will be a New Start for our country, our town, our churches - and ourselves.

Christopher Frith

St John's Marches On

Many readers will have heard that plans are underway for St John's to become an independent parish. Things like this can take a long time to materialise but we hope that by this time next year there will be what is known as a "Group Ministry" with a firm commitment by two parishes to work together. They will be St John's, Walton (with Andy Broom as Vicar, living we trust in a Vicarage provided by the Diocese) and St Thomas' Brampton with St Peter's Holymoorside.

It has been PCC policy, for twelve years or so, to encourage the development of St John's, especially because Walton has been such a "growth area". Two milestones on the way have been the appointment of a Curate to be responsible for St John's and the building of the Church Centre. Both of these have been wonderfully blessed. The daughter has been growing up and is now ready, not only for independence, but also the responsibility that goes with it. I can't speak too highly of the contributions of Andy Broom, St John's Wardens and the DCC.

Judith Henderson to Retire –Quite Soon

We have all known, that this would happen one day - but Judith has never seemed to be the retiring sort! She has not enjoyed good health and very much deserves to lay down her responsibilities.

The wonderful St Peter's extension project - in full swing during August, September and at least some of October - has been largely her vision. The growth of St Peter's under Judith's careful, loving, dynamic leadership has been great to see. The real tribute to this will be the way in which the growth continues, as I am confident it will.

Because buying and selling of houses is involved, to say nothing of the completion of the extension project after dry rot has been discovered, it isn't possible to announce the date of her farewell yet.

Bill Galloway is Now Admitted and Licensed as a Reader

I write straight after returning from a moving service at the Crooked Spire. It was hot the weather in the first half of September has been incredible - it was crowded, and it was really encouraging. Twenty-six new Readers were admitted and three who have moved from other Dioceses were licensed.

A good number of St Thomas' folk were present to support Bill who has already proved himself to be such a valued teacher, preacher and worship leader in our parish, to say nothing of his massive contribution in organising all the Alpha courses in our parish in the last three years. Bishop Jonathan encouraged all the Readers, new and established ones, to see themselves as teachers and prophets. "The Church of England is a teaching church," he said. "Do seek to add at least a pinch of prophecy to your teaching. Remember the Holy Spirit as well as the Word. Remember the heart as well as the mind."

We appreciate Bill and all our Readers. May they - and the clergy too be our teachers and prophets.

Christopher Frith

Who is My Neighbour?

"Love your neighbour as you love yourself". These are the words of Jesus when asked by a teacher of the law what did he need to do to receive eternal life (Luke 10: 25). "Who is my neighbour?" he asked, and this question led into the famous parable of the Good Samaritan. But is the concept of neighbourliness just an ideal?

I worked in the same office in London for nine years. Most mornings I walked down the same streets meeting the same people at the same time of day, yet in that time only three people regularly bothered to say good morning as I passed. It seemed impossible to make eye contact with most, even at that early hour - they did not want to know anything outside of their routine. I wondered how they would behave if they met the man set upon by thieves?

Who is my neighbour? Obviously for many people it is not the person they meet in the street. Jesus brought the teacher of the law to a point where he answered his own question - "The one who was kind to him", meaning the Samaritan who took care of the man attacked by robbers. "You go and do the same", Jesus replied.

What a different world it would be if we all followed this advice. Perhaps we could start by talking to one another again, face to face, even if it is only long enough to say "hello". At least we would then recognise our neighbours when we see them.

Terry Warburton

News from Rwanda

It was good to have Paul and Ruth Lapworth at St Thomas' one Sunday in August. Obviously, many members were on holiday, so we reproduce some excerpts from their last letter.

End of Phase 1

The first phase of the community development programme in Mugesera finished at the end of May. Since then we've spent a lot of time looking back over the first 19 months of the programme with our staff and members of the community in Mugesera and trying to evaluate what has gone well and what could be improved on in future.

On the whole, it has been very encouraging to look back at what has been achieved in a relatively short time. Here are a few of the highlights:

- 800 families and 4090 school pupils now have better access to clean water.
- Almost 100 groups have received small sums of credit which have enabled them to start small projects to generate more income for their families.
- 4 new primary schools have been built with the participation of the community. Attendance at these schools has increased by 24% as a result.

- Parent-teacher committees at 9 schools have embarked on income generating projects to raise funds for their schools.
- 35 youth groups, 23 cultural groups and 24 literacy groups have received assistance and are becoming increasingly active.

Moving on to Phase 2

Phase 2 is basically a continuation of the on-going work. We will continue to work on extending the piped water network, training and supporting farmers' associations and community seed banks, supporting women's groups, youth groups, cultural groups, literacy groups- any type of group really! The future of the credit programme is very uncertain at the moment as no-one wants to fund it.

Operating on half-funding has meant that we've had to cut costs quite a lot, which has involved making some redundancies - not a pleasant experience. We're encouraged, however, that the reduced team we have now are really committed to the work and seem more united than before.

Drama in Kibungo

On the first working day we were away, Zachery our Administrator was returning from the bank with over £5000 when the car was allegedly held-up at gunpoint and ordered to drive several miles where the bandits made off with the money.

This sort of thing is virtually unheard of in Kibungo, and the story doesn't seem to make sense in many ways. Zachery and the driver, David, were taken in for questioning by the police and 3 weeks later they are still being held as suspects and there has been no official report. As always in Rwanda, the truth seems to be particularly elusive and we're bracing ourselves for what could become a long and messy court case.

Paul and Ruth Lapworth

Traidcraft Open House

Traidcraft is 21 years old and celebrating! The hard work of *Traidcraft* and its supporters has brought the whole concept of fair trade into the public consciousness, and put fair traded products on supermarket shelves, in the House of Commons and on the desks of European Commissioners!

Traidcraft is a Christian business fighting poverty through trade by paying producers in the developing world a guaranteed premium above the market price for their goods.

In 21 years of fair trading *Traidcraft* has provided 21 million days of fairly paid labour for poor workers in the developing world. This year you can join us to provide another 2 million days of fair paid labour - 2 million days when it is worth getting up to work, 2 million days where hope can triumph over poverty.

Every time you buy fair traded goods from us or from your supermarket you can make a real difference to the world:

Give workers the dignity and self respect which comes from receiving a fair wage instead of charity. Turn huts made of mud into homes made of brick. Enable employers to provide health care for their workers. Help families to provide education for their children.

We hope you will call in at our *Traidcraft Open House* and see some of the products in the current catalogue. On sale or for order will be a wide selection of

- Christmas Cards & Gift Wrap
- Crafts & Gifts
- Clothes & Accessories
- Jewellery
- Stationery & Cards
- Foods & Snacks
- Teas & Coffees

Refreshments will be available and you will be able to see the latest promotional video and literature and place orders for other items in the catalogue.

A great chance to shop for Christmas (and for every day) and help to spread Christian justice and love across the world.

See you there!

Alison and Stephen Woodgate

Here is a Man

Here is a man who was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. Few people knew and nothing changed. He worked in a carpenter's shop until he was thirty and then for three years he was an itinerant preacher. He had no credentials but himself. While still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against him. His friends - the twelve men who had learned so much from him and had promised him their enduring loyalty - ran away and left him.

He went through the mockery of a trial; he was nailed upon a cross between two thieves; when he was dead he was taken down and laid in a borrowed grave, through the pity of a friend. Yet it can be said that all the armies that ever marched, all the parliaments that ever sat and all the kings that ever reigned put together have not affected the life of humans upon this earth as has this one solitary life.

Because Jesus died on a cross as Saviour and was raised to a new sort of life on Easter Day everything is changed and millions of people know about it, sharing in that Risen Life. The question is, do you? This is what we Christians celebrate and believe in every Sunday.