

Spearhead April/May 1992

From the Rector, Christopher Frith

We talk freely about being not just a Church but a Church Family. We hold Family Services. Sometimes, people tell me there is a family "feel" about our Churches.

This is great - for a lot of people. There are, however, those for whom it is unhelpful. Some find that the very mention of "family" is painful. Some keep away because they assume you are only welcome if you attend with your family - Mum, Dad and children - a most unfortunate misunderstanding.

Despite this, I want to encourage the continued use of the family concept. For a start, it is so much needed in a world crying out for loving, meaningful relationships. The very people who find it painful are those who stand to gain most from it. So, we welcome into the family, as warmly as we can, the disadvantaged, single, lonely, divorced, widowed.....

Secondly, it is so true to God's character. He is our Father. The community of faith are all His children, and therefore brothers and sisters. His outgoing, welcoming love should be our greatest characteristic - the family likeness.

The more we become a real family, the more we shall find people wanting to join.

Christopher Frith

Inside Out –Christian Rock Band at St Thomas'

A Christian Rock Group came to St. Thomas' on February 2nd. The group called 'Inside-Out' consists of 5 members playing keyboard, guitar, bass guitar, drums and vocals. They attracted a large crowd, I was interested to see that there were non-Christians as well as Christians of all ages. We were doubtful about the music of the group but were pleasantly surprised when they performed their first number.

Listening to the music I realised that the songs related to the youth of today, especially the song about worshipping money and God: how it is only possible to worship one and not both. Since there were non-Christians present, the song that I thought was most relevant to the evening was called 'Empty' because it describes how someone's life is incomplete without the light of the Lord.

I think that Christian rock bands are a good way of getting the message of Jesus across to young people because it is their style of music and they are more likely to take notice of it. I know I did.

Matthew Travis.

On 2nd February played at St. Thomas' Church to CYFA and Pathfinders. Inside Out are a Christian Pop Group. They played a variety of different songs all with a Christian message. The songs were very good as they made you think about the way you live and were especially relevant to teenagers living in today's society.

Everybody thought it was great fun, especially when the lead singer came on with a motor bike helmet on, or with money pinned to his jumper.

Pathfinders and CYFA would like to see INSIDE-OUT again!

Kate and Sarah Dawson.

The Christian's Vote

"The Church must not get involved in politics." This is a controversial issue; but the individual Christian can and must be involved. What practical steps can a Christian take in discharging his political responsibilities?

First, we must acknowledge that the Christian's main duty to society is to pray for our nation, particularly for its leaders "that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in full observance of religion and high standards of morality."

Second, a Christian has a duty to employ all constitutional means at his disposal to influence both the appointment and the activities of those who hold political power. Kings in Old Testament times and Governors and Magistrates in New Testament times, were all warned about the consequences of injustice.

Third, we are called to be witness to the truth of the Gospel. Jesus says Christians are the salt of the earth and the light of the world - thus exercising a purifying and enlightening influence on our society.

Assess the Policies

No human government is perfect; and no political party can fulfil all the Christian's wishes. A choice has to be made between the parties - according to which party is likely to fulfil the proposals, the aims and the promises in the manifesto. In particular, the Christian will ask such questions as:

1. Which party is most likely to alleviate the suffering associated with poverty, malnutrition, ill health, old age, homelessness and unemployment?
2. Which party is most likely to improve the National Health Service, and to deal effectively with the problems of alcoholism, drug-addiction, smoking and Aids?
3. Which party is most likely to have a sound educational philosophy, teacher training and resources, and a moral and religious curriculum; and take a stand upon pornography in mass media?
4. Which party is most likely to reduce the problems of racial discrimination and class warfare, extremes of poverty and wealth, industrial strife, vandalism and violence, terrorism and crime, overcrowding and degrading conditions in prisons, and undue delays in the trial of remand prisoners?
5. Which party is most likely to preserve personal rights and freedoms; to remove abuses and injustices; to limit the invasions of privacy; to encourage open government and electoral reform?
6. Which party is most likely to take an initiative in the conservation of the world's beauty and resources; in the solution to the Third World's starvation and diseases; in the preservation of the world's stability and peace; and in the abandonment of the world's nuclear weapons?

Assess the Candidate

The Christian voter, like any other elector, must make an assessment of the political candidates contesting the election. It may mean considering such questions as:

1. Do I vote for the candidate because of his qualities irrespective of the party to which he belongs; or do I vote for him because of his party allegiance irrespective of his personal views?
2. Do I want a candidate who will always submit to his party line; or do I want an independently minded candidate who will act as his convictions or conscience dictate?
3. Do I want a candidate who represents the centre of the party; or do I want a candidate who is on one or other of the extreme wings of his party?
4. Do I vote for candidate who has little hope of winning the election, because he is the candidate and party of my choice; or do I vote for the next best candidate because he has more chance of being elected; or do I vote for an unsuitable candidate simply to keep out an even less suitable candidate?

All this can make voting a difficult, demanding and sometimes disappointing task. No wonder some Christians vote with their feet! Nevertheless, Christians should vote.

John Brown (retired clergyman and member of St. Thomas' congregation).

Church Teas

Have you been to the "Church Tea" yet? I have. When we arrived at the meeting room, we were handed a very nice cup of tea.

Whilst children played in a group on the floor with games and puzzles, we stood chatting to people as they arrived.

After a while, it was time to eat. We had sandwiches and cakes. Pam (Frith) was kept very busy refilling our empty tea cups. Good job she had a very large tea-pot. All the time people were talking and laughing and getting to know each other. More tea and cakes, then Christopher said it would be nice if we all, in turn, told everyone where we had been born and the sort of things that we particularly liked. It was all very informal and great fun.

Soon it was time for the evening service so our tea party had to come to an end. I wouldn't have missed it, as now I feel I have made new friends in our large Church Family. When you are asked for tea, don't hesitate, you will have a very enjoyable time I'm sure.

Margaret Stoppard.

Our Next Curate –Sheila Pite

In September, we are to be joined by the Revd. Sheila Pite. She will bring an exciting new dimension to the Ministry Team. She hopes to be present at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting on April 6, which will be the first opportunity to meet her.

Shortly before then, the sad time of farewell to Jonathan, Juliet and Thomas Jee will come. They hope to be able to announce soon where they will be going next.

Sheila writes:

Dear Friends

Trying to sum up 32 years in around 300 words is difficult but I'll attempt to give you some ideas about myself. I was ordained deacon on July 3rd 1988 in Derby Cathedral (3 months before Jonathan) and have worked since then at St. Augustine's in the multi-cultural, inner city area of Derby. I've enjoyed mixing with people of all ages and backgrounds.

Before Derby I lived in Stepney Green and went to a small church in Bethnal Green, while working in the civil service at West Ruislip. Yes I commuted for 3 years across London. From my involvement in that church I offered for ordination and trained at Oak Hill College, North London, (another 3 years).

However, I'm not a Londoner and grew up in Worcester, where my parents still live in the house we moved to just before my 5th birthday. When I left school I went to West Kenya for a year as a volunteer teacher with CMS. Then I was at Durham University where I studied geography. John Cook and I were contemporaries at St. John's College, leaving in 1982.

I like travelling and spent 16 weeks in East Africa in 1987, 5 weeks in India December 1990 - January 1991 and 7 wet days in Israel this January on a pilgrimage. My sister and her family now live in Malaysia and I'm hoping to visit them as my holiday before starting in Chesterfield.

Other likes include classical music (singing, playing the flute) reading novels, swimming, walking in the countryside, cycling round town, tea (weak) and most food. I call myself a low meat eater and I don't drink coffee and dislike cucumber and celery. Now isn't that just what you wanted to know about your future curate?

It's going to be quite a change for me to become part of a large church fellowship but I'm looking forward to the move and to joining you all in September.

See you then

Yours

Sheila Pite

The Apostles –who were they?

Jesus chose twelve men as his apostles, to learn from him and continue his work. Who were they? In this issue we look at two of Jesus' closest friends.

James and John

James and his younger brother John were the sons of Zebedee, a Galilean fisherman. It is often thought that Salome, the sister of Mary the mother of Jesus, was their mother (Mk. 16:1; Mt. 27:56; Jn. 19:25). If this is correct, James and John were cousins of Jesus. They had a thriving fishing business, in partnership with Simon and Andrew, in Capernaum (Mk. 1:20).

John has often been identified with the unnamed disciple of John the Baptist, who with Andrew was introduced to Jesus as 'the Lamb of God' (Jn. 1:35-37). Andrew brought his brother Simon to Jesus, and perhaps John subsequently brought his own brother James.

After their call by Jesus to leave their father and their fishing (Mk. 1:19-20), James and John were nicknamed by him Boanerges, 'Sons of thunder' (Mk. 3:17). They were high spirited Galileans, whose zeal was sometimes misdirected (Lk. 9:49). This aspect of their character is shown in their outburst after a Samaritan village had refused Jesus entrance (Lk. 9:54). They failed to grasp the true nature of Jesus' Kingship and, encouraged by their mother (Mt. 20:22), asked to sit in places of special privilege when Jesus entered his kingdom (Mk. 10:37).

On three important occasions, during his ministry Peter, James and John accompanied Jesus when the other disciples did not -at the raising of Jairus' daughter (Mk. 5:37), at the transfiguration (Mk. 9:2), and in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mk. 14:33). According to Luke, Peter and John were the two disciples sent by Jesus to make preparations for the Passover meal (Lk. 22:8).

Although the sons of Zebedee are referred to in John's Gospel (Jn. 21:2), John is not mentioned by name. He is almost certainly the disciple whom Jesus loved', who was close to Jesus at the last supper (Jn. 13:23); who was entrusted with the care of Jesus' mother at the time of his death (Jn. 19:26-27); who ran with Peter to the tomb on the first Easter morning (Jn. 20:2,8); and who was present when the risen Christ revealed himself to seven of his disciples by the sea of Tiberius (Jn. 21).

According to the early chapters of Acts, Peter and John had to bear the brunt of Jewish hostility to the early Christian Church (Acts 4:13; 5:33,40). Both men showed a boldness of speech and action which astounded the Jewish authorities (Acts 4:13). John continued for some years to play a leading part in the church at Jerusalem and was described as a pillar of the church when Paul visited the city some fourteen years after his conversion (Gal. 2:9)

James was 'put to death with the sword' on the orders of Herod Agrippa I, about AD 44 (Acts 12:2).

We do not know when John left Jerusalem, nor where he went to. There is some evidence from second century, non-Biblical, writers that he spent some time in Ephesus. According to Irenaeus, it was at Ephesus that John preached the Gospel and confuted heretics, living into the reign of the Emperor Trajan (AD 98-117). Jerome also repeats the tradition that John stayed in Ephesus to extreme old age, and records that when John had to be carried to the Christian meetings, he would repeat again and again, 'Little children, love one another'.

The view that John wrote the fourth Gospel, the three letters that bear his name, and the Book of Revelation goes back to Justin Martyr (AD 140), and is supported by Irenaeus and others. He was presumably at Ephesus when he was banished to the Isle of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus' (Rev. 1:9)

John was the only one of the twelve Apostles to die naturally, of old age.

Keith Chappell.

St John's Church Centre –Update

The traveller was lost and asked the way of a passerby. "If I was going there, I wouldn't start from here." Came the reply.

Where would you start? A day of prayer on 8th May 1988 seemed a good place. The parish came to a common mind that a priority was to extend our premises at Walton.

A design was drawn up and planning permission sought in July 1989, and rejected. The design was changed, the building moved, the car park extended, more land purchased, landscaping added and finally in April '91 permission was granted.

What about money? Not a bazaar, raffle or appeal was in sight. There were prayer evenings, teaching on giving and Gift Day, 15th October 1989. Over £100,000 pledged or given on one day seemed like confirmation that the plans were on the right track.

The car park is now being built and we have received tenders for constructing the building. These are still being considered by the Architect and building committee. But, on 26 March the D.C.C. will meet to make some important decisions - in principle.

The Church Centre is a major commitment for the whole parish. If it is to be completed a lot more sacrificial giving will be required. Many may question if it is the right use of our resources. Could money be better spent on the poor, hungry and destitute?

If we are really giving sacrificially, individually and as a Church, money will be available for these and a building and many other purposes besides. Already 100 of the Church Centre fund has been given to projects in Lima, Holmewood and Derby. 'The building is intended for the extension of God's Kingdom in our locality. If that is its' purpose and it is required, it will be built.

'To go right back to where we started - a day of prayer. Before we proceed further we meet on 28th March to receive assurance that this major step forward for our Parish, and commitment for our members, is indeed God's will.

The path so far has not been smooth or easy - nor perhaps we expect it. The challenge is not a building but the buildings of a family of God. That challenge continues and is for each of us.

Alan Wilson.

Partnership in the Gospel, Garry Bestwick from SAMS

On 26 January 1992, Canon Garry Beswick, then SAMS area secretary, threw out to us a fresh challenge in our missionary support work, particularly for our link missionaries Andrew and Mandy Lines, now out in Paraguay.

He based that challenge by reference to St. Paul's letter to the Phillipians, beginning with St. Paul's opening comments "I thank you and I pray with joy for your partnership in the Gospel. No church shared with me except you Phillipians in the matter of giving and receiving". He explained that it created a bond between Paul and the Phillipian church but Paul was in prison about 900 miles away, as the crow flies, in Rome. In those days a very long way away. But Paul still said I thank you for your partnership in the Gospel. "Your giving to me, your receiving from me".

In bringing us to 1992, Garry reminded us that 6000 miles away, as the crow flies, are Andrew and Mandy Lines and baby Alexander. They are in the country of Paraguay in the heart of South America and they have a number of "Phillipian" churches including St. Thomas', Brampton and he hoped they can say "we thank you for your partnership in the Gospel for your giving to us and your receiving from us".

Garry believes that there are four aspects to this partnership which come out in Phillipians. The first one, the most important is partnership in prayer

Partnership in Prayer

"In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy" wrote St. Paul, and there is Paul praying regularly for the Phillipian congregation. We can be assured, he said, that Andrew and Mandy Lines will pray for us. He hoped they pray with joy. As they see the church magazine and other information they hear something of our prayer needs.

But St. Paul also hoped and believed the Phillipians would pray for him. As the supporting parish we need to be in touch with the Lines' prayer needs, and Garry mentioned several:

- 1) Language - they have to master and learn Spanish as spoken in Paraguay. Pray especially for Mandy because as a housewife in South America and caring for Alexander she has less time to study than Andrew. Pray too they will have a sense of humour and learn the right words for the right occasion at the right time. A crucial prayer need.
- 2) Their local church, rife with tensions - There they are trying to minister and to bring something of Christ's love to it. Pray their witness and contribution may help their church become more united and may help the Paraguian Christians to see 'one in Christ', not split in Christ.
- 3) Ministry of bible teaching which Andrew will be taking later this year. A crucial task because missionaries have to decrease, and national leaders must increase. But they must increase by knowing what they believe, who they believe and why they believe. And Andrew's job is to take the Word of God and teach pastors and potential leaders from it so they can grow and in turn teach others. He will do it in Spanish!

First and foremost, partnership in prayer. Paul prayed for them, they for him. Andrew and Mandy Lines pray for us. We must pray for them. the second area of partnership is what he called practical

Practical

Now the Phillipians prayed for Paul and they were also very practical. They sent Epaphroditus to Rome to get some news of him. We need not send a messenger in person but we can send and hear news through letter writing, and we are asked to be practical by telling them something of England they will not hear. There are many things they will not hear about and some trivial things to us can transform a mundane letter into something very interesting. We can tell them something of Britain that means a lot to them. And don't forget Christmas and birthdays, particularly for little Alexander. They also have their own needs - magazines and articles to keep them informed are vital - church magazines, ladies monthly magazines, hobbies and interests are particularly appreciated.

In a more direct sense pounds and pence.

Pounds and Pence

Paul writes "Even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need". Epaphroditus went to take a gift to Paul, because the Phillipians realised he had to be supported. This too is the ministry of a supporting church.

Do you realise that if 25 people gave SAMS £6 per month, the equivalent of a daily tabloid newspaper, it would raise nearly 2,000 a year? In compiling this resume I am convinced that of our number we must surely be able to rise to this aspect of the work.

And finally pupil.

Pupil

There is much we can learn in humility and we can learn from Christians in South America. The Phillipians learnt an awful lot from Paul. Garry said he believed there were vital lessons that can be taught to us over and over again. And he was certain that when Andrew and Mandy come back in 2 years time and they share with us about their work, there will be some things where we will be pupils and we will be learning from them.

We should pray with Paul with great joy for our partnership in the gospel through prayer, practical concerns, pounds and pence, and being a pupil. There are many aspects to this fresh challenge and we should respond according to our ability. If you are interested why not speak to a member of the clergy, or Richard or Dorothy Banks as to the many practical ways we can help in this work.

Link Missionaries, Andy and Mandy Lines

As we look forward to the beginning of summer, Andrew, Mandy and Alex are looking forward to the end of it in Asuncion and cooler days ahead. These will be welcome as they have such a busy time ahead. Andrew will be engrossed in his work with C.A.L.F.B., training locals to become Church leaders in and around Asuncion, and Andy is still continuing language study with an active two year old to look after.

They have been overwhelmed with all the letters from St. Thomas' for which they send grateful thanks. Let us continue writing to them and keep them ever in our prayers.