

Spearhead February/March 1990

From the Rector, Christopher Frith

"My life is far too frantic", I complained to the Annual Church Meeting last April. The June/July 1989 issue of Spearhead contained a centre spread illustration of "A-stretched-Rector" and it caused many expressions of love, support and help.

"I ask for understanding as I seek to alter the way in which I operate" I wrote in Spearhead. "My aim is to carve out space uncluttered time in which to pray, to reflect and to seek out God's will for us... My intention is to appoint leaders who will be responsible for overseeing different departments of church life..."

Seven months later, I have to report that progress has been made but it has been slow and much too small. Of course, it is not just my ministry that is affected but the life of the whole church.

We are seeking help. In the August/September 1989 edition of Spearhead, we featured the work of an organisation called **Administry**. It stated its aim *"to revolutionise the place of good organisation in effective front-line church work"*. That's what we need! The PCC have invested not a small sum in enlisting Administry to spend a day in the parish giving us a consultation. By the time you read this, it will have taken place and we will be awaiting their report, both eagerly and nervously. (See the report in the June/July 1990 edition.)

The eagerness will be because of a longing to see things improve, so that we can more readily encourage the spreading of the Kingdom of God. The nervousness will be because we will doubtless need to change - and change is usually painful.

We'll keep you posted. In the meantime, the vital thing is to "Walk humbly with our God".

Christopher Frith

Trees Please

How important are trees for you? Do you care about trees? Can you tell if a tree is healthy or sick?

It is estimated that 15 million trees were felled by the hurricane in October 1987. More than half Britain's trees are affected by acid rain. Half the ancient woodlands present in 1945 have been destroyed, replanted with conifers, or cleared for cereal production, roads and building development. Further afield, tropical rainforests are disappearing at an alarming rate.

Here are some reasons why trees are vital for us:

- They improve the appearance of the landscape.
- They provide a natural habitat for animals, birds, and insects.
- They prevent erosion of the topsoil.
- They help to recycle carbon dioxide and so reduce the greenhouse effect and global warming.
- They provide a source of renewable energy.
- They provide timber for furniture, buildings, and paper.
- They are useful for children to climb.

In the Christian tradition, trees are present from start to finish: the tree of life in the Garden of Eden, the tree of the Crucifixion, the tree of life in the New Jerusalem – 'its leaves are for the healing of the nations' (Revelation 22:2). Is this a reference to the 'green lung' of the rainforests?

Lent 1990

This Ash Wednesday we shall mark as usual, with special worship.

Lent is a time to aim for spiritual growth, consciously exercising self discipline in pursuit of a "closer walk with God".

From St Peter's

As we go to press, St. Peter's are at a highly significant stage. **Brian and Barbara Porter** have arrived and their ministry starts on Sunday 28th January. **The Bishop of Derby** is due to come to St. Thomas' on Thursday 1st February to license Brian.

At the same time, the **new extension** is to be dedicated and opened by one of the most senior members of St. Peter's, Mrs. Nellie Wilson.

There is a buoyant atmosphere at St. Peter's. Many thanks are due to the Wardens and many others who have worked so hard while there has not been a Curate-in-charge. We pray that God will continue the steady and exciting growth of the last three years.

Our Motto for 1990

"...walk humbly with your God" Micah 6:8

Micah was a farmer from southern Israel who, 8 centuries before Christ was born, was given a message from God to proclaim to His people. So what does an obscure phrase from this obscure prophet have to do with us?

The most obvious answer is that it has been chosen as the Parish motto for 1990. But why should something said so long ago and so far away be important for us today?

First, because the situation to which Micah spoke was in some ways similar to ours. His nation had experienced a period of prosperity - but the wealth of the nation was unequally distributed, and the gap between the rich and poor had widened. The apparent well-being of the nation had led to self-assurance and conceit. Micah, with God's eyes, saw through the appearance of security to the heart of the people - and called them back to God.

Second, because whatever situation we are in we can learn from the message of Micah who was speaking the Word of God, which always has something to say to us.

It reminds us that life is a journey along which we all should be progressing. Walking means being active ourselves, not relying on someone else to do the work for us. If walking is the means of making progress and we will not make the effort, we will not get anywhere. On the other hand, walking implies steady, constant progress, not rushing ahead and running out of energy or enthusiasm.

The pace of our journey is set by Him with whom we walk. We cannot make this journey successfully on our own. We neither know the way, nor would be able to reach our goal by our own efforts if we did. We need to walk with God, who points the way, encourages and supports us when we are weary and the path is difficult, restrains and admonishes us when in our eagerness or pride we would go too quickly or on the wrong track, and who loves us enough to pick us up when we fall and bring us back when we have strayed.

Walking with God means subjecting our own impulses and desires to His. The way to make progress is to go His way, to recognise our weaknesses and allow God to work through them: to walk humbly with God. Such humility affects not only our attitude to our selves in relation to God, but also our attitude to others. Our walk with God is not a solitary one. There are countless others walking the same path and we are called to serve them along the way.

I encourage you to collect a motto card and place it somewhere that you will see it often as a challenge from an obscure country prophet to "*walk humbly with your God*".

Church Urban Fund

"At its best it should represent the opportunity of exciting new ventures and ideas. It is this aspect we need to encourage: the development of genuinely innovative ways of tackling poverty." Richard O'Brien, Vice Chairman, CUF

The idea for the **Church Urban Fund** (CUF) came from **Faith in the City** - the 1985 report which demonstrated the need for extra resources in our inner cities. In creating the Fund the church is putting its money where its mouth is. (The Church Commissioners provide £1 million a year for the Fund.) It was launched in April 1988 to raise sufficient money to spend over £80 million on projects in urban priority areas over the next 20 years.

The CUF is now one of the largest grant awarding charities in Britain today. Over £4.5 million has already been awarded to nearly 200 projects in over 30 dioceses. Most of these projects are low cost and locally run. The trustees of the CUF require that there is a local financial contribution to any project they sponsor, and often a grant from the CUF unlocks other sources of local finance, from a trust or the local authority. Every project that is sponsored is carefully investigated first, and is regularly reviewed.

It was decided in our Parish to concentrate on the CUF from Feb. 4th - 25th in order to give it a higher priority than would have been possible in September during the designated CUF week. There will be guest speakers at all 3 churches during the month to talk more fully about the Fund.

There will be information **about the Church Urban Fund displayed at the churches, and at St Thomas' on Feb. 25th at 6:30 p.m.** **Jabbok** Theatre Co. will be performing the play commissioned for the launch of the Fund. There will be opportunity after the performance to discuss the issues raised. Please make full use of all the information and resources to become involved in the vision and work of the CUF.