

Spearhead February/March 1992

From the Curate, Jonathan Jee

DO NOT FEAR, FOR I AM WITH YOU (Isaiah 41:10)

All of us are afraid of something. If we're honest we may even admit it. The fears maybe small enough to ignore most of the time, or so strong that they paralyse our thinking, trusting and loving.

We may be afraid of spiders, snakes, mice, dentists, the dark, the wind, flying, hospitals, injections, failure, loneliness - of almost anything. Many are afraid of death, although we may try to hide the fear beneath humour, like Woody Allen who said, "It's not that I'm afraid of death - I just don't want to be there when it happens!"

Our motto this year speaks to all those fears. God says, "Do not fear, for I am with you". The same assurance comes countless times in scripture. God wants continually to assure his people of his presence with them, and his loving care for them. We can be sure the promise applies to us too, for almost the last thing Jesus said was, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age".

As we learn to trust God with our fears and anxieties, we will come to the point where we can echo the words of Psalm 23 : "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me."

So be honest with God about your fears. Tell him about them and then meditate on his wonderful promise to be with us, and on his great love for us. For perfect love casts out fear.

Jonathan Jee

Ministry Opportunities

Did you know, that in a recent survey of 113 churches in various locations in this country, 85% said that most of their church's work was undertaken by a minority of members; 72% said they had a shortage of people available for leadership roles; 54% even had a shortage for practical roles; and 14% reported that some members had so much work that their home life was possibly at risk.

Only 8 of the churches approached said they had few problems with most people willingly using their gifts and skills.

Where would you place St. Thomas', St. John's and St. Peter's if had been asked to respond to the survey on our parish's behalf? I reflect after 4 months working in the parish I think I have a idea - better than the average with an immensely encouraging willingness to work by many, but still a long way from what would preferred.

I am asked in my job brief to make "every member ministry" work. What is "every member ministry"? Quite simply it is the recognition that every member, whether old or young, relative newcomer or long standing member, has a part to play somewhere in church life. As a church we need to recognise every member's gifts and skills and to use them as they are God given for a purpose. Equally, every member must be honest as to his or her gifts and skills, express them, and volunteer them for God's work wherever they can be used.

So why don't we have that marvellous "every member ministry" now? More often than not its because of misunderstanding between what the church requires and what the willing member thinks is involved, and perhaps by a lack of clear communication of opportunities. Some of the most common reasons for not working start like:

"I was never asked to"

"I didn't know we did...."

"I am no good at"

"I can't lead...."

"I can only wash up .." (we still need you!!)

"I have never been taught to...."

"I don't really think I can sing...."

"I didn't know you could..."

"I don't want to be committed every week to..."

"I work in the evenings so I can't..."

Despite all of these reasons, there are still opportunities for each one of us to undertake exciting, new initiatives pressure on others. Can you possibly help?

Over the next few months there will be displayed various "Ministry Opportunities". Please make a point of reading the opportunities as they arise - there could be something that appeals, or something that really makes you want to shy away. The latter is often the one you will work best at and if you want to see some biblical proof of that see Exodus 4 and Moses' reaction to his apparent abilities!

And if you feel your gifts and skills are not being used, I should very much like to hear from you.

OUR AIM AND VISION:

-the body growing and moving forward with all members
- playing their part
- using their gifts
- and properly co-ordinated

Philip Herrick.

The Apostles –Who were they

Who were these twelve close friends of Jesus? Where did they come from? What were they like? What happened to them? In the next few issues of Spearhead we shall try to answer some of these questions:

Simon Peter

We begin with Peter, whose original Hebrew name was Symeon (Acts 15:14 margin), but usually used the Greek form, Simon (Mk 1:16).

His father was Jonah (Mt 16:17). Originally from Bethsaida (Jn 1:44), a largely Greek city, Simon also had a home in Capernaum, in Galilee (Lk 4:31-38). He had a thriving fishing business in Capernaum with his brother Andrew and partners James and John (Mt 4:18, Lk 5:7, 10). They also hired other fishermen (Mk 1:20).

Peter's wife, whose mother had been healed by Jesus (Mk 1:30-31), accompanied him on his missionary journeys (1 Cor 9:5). He spoke Aramaic with a strong northern accent, which betrayed his Galilean origin (Mt 26:73), and was a practising Jew (Acts 10:13-14).

Simon was first introduced to Jesus by his brother Andrew, who had been a follower of the John the Baptist (Mt 1:35-42). Jesus gave Simon the new Aramaic name, Cephas, which means 'rock' or 'stone'. In the New Testament it is usually in its Greek form, Petros, from which the name Peter comes. Jesus did not call Peter, and Andrew, to leave their nets and follow him immediately; that occurred later by the lakeside when Jesus called them to become "Fishers of men" (Mk 1:16-18).

Peter was one of the first disciples called and he always heads the list of the apostles (Mk 3:14-19). He was also one of the three who formed a closer friendship with Jesus and was often present when the others were not, for example at the healing of Jairus' daughter (Mk 5:37-43), and the Transfiguration (Lk 9:2-8). He frequently acted as the spokesman for the twelve (e.g. Mt 15:15; 16:13-16; 18:21; Mk 9:5). It was Peter who made the great declaration, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mt 16:16). He was devoted to his Lord and often very impulsive (Mt 14:28; Lk 5:8; Jn 20:6; 21:7). Peter's declarations of loyalty were usually the loudest; and his failures the most spectacular, as when he denied his Lord (Mk 14:29-31, 66). He received a special message at the resurrection (Mk 16:7) and met the risen Christ before the rest of the Apostles (Luke 24:34; 1 Cor 15:5).

After the resurrection Peter again took the lead in the Christian community (Acts 1:15) and, after Pentecost, was the principle preacher (Acts 2:14; 3:12). He was the first apostle to take the gospel message to the Gentiles, in the home of the Centurion Cornelius (Acts 10:1-48; 15:7). References to Peter in Joppa, Caesarea and elsewhere suggest that he undertook missionary work in Palestine. He was imprisoned in Jerusalem but miraculously escaped (Acts 12) and left for another place (Acts 12:17), but we do not know where. We do know that Peter spent some time in Antioch (Gal 2:11), and he may have gone to Corinth for a short while (1 Cor 1:12). Peter was also closely associated with Christians in northern Asia Minor (1 Pet 1:1).

There is a tradition that Peter spent some time in Rome, assisted by his friend John Mark. Some time between AD 100 and 150 Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis, wrote, "Mark, having become Peter's interpreter, set down all that the apostle could remember of what Jesus had said and done". Papias had talked personally with people who had known John Mark. This was the Gospel according to Mark which contains ample evidence that Mark used eye-witness material (eg. Mk 4:38; 5:41). It was from Rome that Peter wrote 1 Peter about AD 62, to strengthen Christians who were facing persecution. Just before his death in AD 64-66 he wrote 2 Peter to warn Christians of the false teaching that was creeping into the churches.

Scripture, and early historians, tell us nothing about Peter's death. However there is a tradition, which may or may not be reliable, that when Peter was sentenced to die by execution on the orders of Nero, he asked that his cross be turned upside down as he felt unworthy to die a death similar to his Lord. His request was granted.

Keith Chappell

Link Missionaries, Andy and Mandy Lines

As we look forward to 1992 and make our plans for the New Year, let us keep in our minds the changes and challenges facing Andrew and Mandy Lines in Paraguay.

They were overwhelmed by the number of Christmas cards and letters received from St. Thomas', and I feel sure with our continuing love, prayers and support they will meet all the new situations with enthusiasm knowing that they are working for the Lord through the people of Paraguay.

Dorothy Banks.

Prayer –Home and Away

I was, naturally enough, very anxious about going into hospital for my hip replacement operation. The practical arrangement regarding the children all fell into place and something that up to now had been difficult to organise was suddenly a reality.

It was odd hearing my name during the intercessions, but I gradually became aware that peoples prayers for me, were sustaining me quite well. My knees only shook a bit walking into the Northern General. I must admit to one moment of panic when I saw everyone else's condition on the orthopaedic ward, but managed to suppress the urge to go home.

Christopher had given me a card with appropriate prayers; which I found myself relying on during the hours before the trolley came to take me to theatre. The lines of prayers and bible quotations gave me the peace and inner strength I needed; as well as the 'pre-med' calming me down.

When I finally surfaced - 48 hours later - I found myself in a ward next to another Christian, who was organising Communion for Sunday. "Me too," I whispered, and suddenly it was like being at home and having the support one gets used to at St. Thomas'. The chaplain was great. Hugh - a Church Army worker came round once a week for a chat (most appropriate the week Terry Waite was released.) I went on to discover the receptionist and male staff nurse on my ward were Christians too! (Marks hymn singing always brightened the day!)

All this made three weeks in hospital more bearable than have been. Somehow since Jesus has come into my life he always puts me in the right place, at the right time, with the right people around me.

It is great to be home again, and next time I have to go into hospital I'll know what to expect. But I also know where my main strength comes from; the prayer support from St. Thomas', particularly my house group and the clergy. But mainly from my heavenly Father who held my hand and continues to, every step of the way.

Valerie Foan.

Welcome(d) to St Thomas'

For quite a long time I had been thinking that it was about time I did something about a religious upbringing for my 2 youngest children, Paul and Ellen, besides the usual stories about baby Jesus (usually done around Christmas time) and that they were both introduced to Church and Church services -previously they had only attended church for their own christenings and a family wedding.

For quite a while I had been intending for all the family to attend St. Thomas' for one of the family services. Finally in July we did all get around to attending a family service, myself, my husband Geoff , our elder daughter Rachel (who is handicapped and in a wheelchair) and of course, Paul then aged 4, and Ellen age 3, and I'm very pleased that we did. We all enjoyed the service but not only that, we were made to feel very welcome afterwards as many people (several of whom we had never met before that day) came up to greet and welcome us. Plus Geoff also had a surprise in meeting one of his teachers from when he attended Tupton Hall School when it was a grammar school - coincidentally it was his old R.I. teacher.

Now we have become regular attenders at the morning service with Paul and Ellen now going to Climbers and Scramblers respectively when it isn't family service Sunday. I used to go to Sunday School myself in the late 50's/early 60's when nearly every child attended Sunday School. I used to go to the Gospel Mission on Chatsworth Road and also for a time to the Ragged School where my aunt was one of the Sunday School teachers.

Recently Geoff and I also attended an evening service at St. Thomas' (while Gran babysat). We attended the marriage vows re-dedication service - it was very special to us as we were married at St. Thomas' back in 1972.

Ellen is very keen on her Sunday School and every week day when we drive past on our way to take Paul to Westfield School, she wants to know when she is going to Church again. Recently her Nana asked her what she did at Church. Her reply? "We sing and I go to the toilet"!

Back when I was about 14 or 15 a friend and I (who was also married at St. Thomas') attended morning services at St. Thomas' for about 2 months. We stopped going because in all that time no one ever spoke to us or welcomed us in any way - how different from our visit back in July. I'd like to thank everyone who made us feel so welcome on that first visit and I hope all visitors and newcomers are made to feel as welcome as we were on that day.

Jane Smith

Holymoorside Nativity Scene

Working together, churches made a real impact in the village this Christmas. Someone had the great idea of using the stone site of the Well Dressing for a roadside Nativity scene. Representatives from the three churches met with great enthusiasm. They toyed with the idea of using hardboard cutouts with a painted backcloth. Then someone discovered that there were some papier mache figures which had been stored in the school loft for 35 years or more.

A few were brought down and viewed with horror. They were grotesque, misshapen caricatures, not beautiful figures. Proportions were all wrong but time was getting short, and it was felt that they would do! It was suggested that at the original Nativity scene, they couldn't all have been beautiful. With growing enthusiasm, individuals chose a figure to take home to be cleaned and redressed. One little figure was left as being too misshapen to be used. "I'm not having this," said one tender-hearted lady. "I'll do something with him,

Dutifully, villagers, congregations, and a group of passing hikers, gathered for the Blessing of the Crib. Gradually, faces were wreathed with smiles of joy and delight. This was no bland scene of factory made figures. There was so much to discover. The angels were middle-aged!- And why not? Angels don't have to be young. And the poor little misshapen figure? He blended in perfectly.

You couldn't tell which shepherd had been dressed by a Methodist and which had come from a United Reform home. Had the baby Jesus been made by a St. Peter's member? .It didn't matter. Each had played a part and the whole was perfect.

The message 'Peace on Earth' had real meaning in the village this Christmas.

Dorothy Marsden-Jones and Mavis Martin.

From Bishop Peter

Dear Friends,

Excuse the duplicated letter in reply to yours (and in many cases signed by the congregation), your cards and your good wishes. You will guess that they have been flowing in and continue to do so. I have been very touched by all your love and care.

While replacing a very high up light bulb I overbalanced and fell a good distance to the floor. The result is a pelvis broken in more than one place and the "cup" socket into which the top of the left thigh bone fits has been smashed.

I have to be in traction for six weeks (all ropes, pulleys, weights, etc.) and then in bed for four weeks for a machine which apparently flexes one's muscles and, as far as I can understand it, tends to grind the hip socket into place again. The net result, as you can see, is that I shall be totally out of action, correspondence apart, for December and January, and I guess probably somewhat longer than that.

It has put an immense amount of work on Bishop Henry, the other members of my Staff and my office, who have rallied round magnificently, to say nothing of my wife, on whom the heavy end has fallen. Please continue to support them. The Bishop's House is now on an answerphone as my wife is spending much time with me. The office will pass on to me any personal messages.

My love to you all for Advent and my grateful thanks for all your concern, which has deepened the ties which bind us together in Christ. May God bless you all.

Yours ever,

Peter Derby

C. of E. Health: Warning: Christianity Can Seriously Damage Your Health

Does anybody take notice of the warning on 'Fag' packets? Will anyone take notice of this article? For your sake I hope so!

I've been thinking of writing about becoming a Christian ever since it happened to me in 1986. Being a cautious and I fancy a 'thinking' person, I have repeatedly put it off until the fullness of time to give myself a more balanced and objective view (or I've been lazy - take your pick). I'm not going to bore you with my testimony, which is what people call the account of their conversion, coming to faith, being born again, or just plain (like myself) asking Jesus into their lives. I'm sure there are much more dynamic and interesting examples than mine.

I would just ask that if you have any leaning towards finding out more about the Christian faith, that you don't do as so many do, nothing, instead, have a chat with someone whom you suspect to be a Christian and ask them why. (A word here to the Christians, if no one suspects you are one you're not doing it right! - lamps under bushels etc.)

Better still approach one of the blokes and hopefully, in my opinion soon, the ladies with the funny collars. The ones I know are really quite human and very understanding. Don't allow yourself to be pressured or brainwashed but do allow yourself to be challenged. That is the reason for the health (that should read spiritual health) warning!

When I said 'Seriously' that doesn't imply dour or miserably foreboding. In my experience exactly the opposite is true. You will find that God honours honest and open enquiry and will cause you to experience what I can only describe as real joy.

It is not all joy though. Trying to live a life as Jesus would like is very challenging, and at times downright difficult. You may experience ridicule, resentment, misunderstanding and even outright opposition. Don't worry about that, He (note the capital H) will guide you through.

I find that I'm still learning and still trying to grasp the wonder of it all. I can only hope and pray (and if this is speaking to you I do mean pray) that you and those I know and love, and moreover those I know and find hard to love will come to know the real love that comes only from the Lord. Warning:- Becoming a Christian can seriously alter your life!

FOR THE BETTER!!

Alan Sheldon