

From the Rural Dean - Edward Bryant

Welcome to this first edition of our Deanery E-Newsletter. This is essentially for you to make it what you want, as a forum for news, articles, questions, so that we can all be better informed as to what is going on in the Deanery at large and in individual parishes. Communication lies at the heart of the Gospel message – God's communication with us in so many ways, but supremely in coming to us in and through his Son, Jesus Christ, but also communication with each other, as we are called not simply to personal discipleship but to live as a community of faith, charged with being the heralds of the coming Kingdom. We all know that the Church in this country is living in testing times, perhaps the most testing times it has ever known; that in itself is a good enough reason for us to communicate with each other, because the better informed we are, the better we will be able to face up together to present and future challenges. But it is more than that. There are wonderful and encouraging things going on in many of the parishes in the Deanery, and we all need to know about them, partly to encourage us all, and partly because we can learn and profit from other people's experiences and maybe try new ideas in our own parishes. Our churches are not in competition with each other – the more we can learn from each other, the more we can support each other, the stronger the Church can be in promoting its mission, which is to bring the Good News of Christ to those among whom God has placed us. So, over to you!



VIEW FROM MALCOLM BATES - THE LAY CHAIRMAN OF DEANERY SYNOD



First of all, a huge “thank you” to Simon for taking on this task in addition to the workload in his Parish. I often hear the complaint that Deanery Synod members don't get the opportunity to bring up their own concerns or have the chance to share views with all the other members. Well – now's the appropriate forum! This exciting new venture could be just the occasion to air opinions, suggest topics for discussion in Synod and inform the Deanery of what's happening in your church.

continued overleaf. . .



THE DEANERY E-NEWSLETTER

Issue 1 December 2011

There are many challenging things coming up at the present time – Deanery Review, Diocesan Review, parish vacancies, appointment of new Bishops etc. As members of the Synod you have a voice to have your say on behalf of yourself and your church – use it! Please feel free to give your or your church’s views on any matters you feel are of interest. Share what is going right (or wrong!) in your church so we may all benefit. I hope and pray this new venture will truly open up a fresh experience of expression which will enable us to share in knowledge and understanding of how we work and think as individuals and individual churches so we can grow closer together as a Deanery in our united resolve to serve God in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

As you read this no doubt we’ll be well into the “run up to the festive season” so may I take this opportunity of wishing you all a very happy, Christ-centred Christmas.

Note from Editor

A regular feature of E-Newsletter will be to focus on a different parish in each issue. In future issues it will be up to the parish to decide how to showcase itself. For this first edition St Mark’s Little Common were approached and Ann Bates agreed to interview Revd Jonathan Frais. Thank you both very much, especially for your time. Here is what Ann found out about their Rector -



Jonathan, as Rector of St Mark’s, thank you for agreeing to me, as your Reader, conducting this informative interview with you.

- *Firstly, the question you always ask people when you interview them in church services. Were you brought up in a Christian family?* JF: Half! My father is a non-practising Jew and my mother remains a churchgoing Anglican. In that context I learnt morals and conscientiousness although baptism and church attendance had to wait several years.
- *How did you come to know the Lord in a personal way?* JF: I was 17 and beginning to attend church in Tunbridge Wells. A background of periodic input from Sunday School, church youth groups and daily Bible reading notes (from a school R.E. teacher) all helped but the crucial moment came when my sister (younger than me; still is) took me to an evangelistic meeting. The preacher invited unbelievers to pray a prayer with him and I did. From then on, I just wanted to learn more (often evidence of conversion!).



- *How were you called into full-time ministry and what did you do before joining us here?* JF: I mixed with ordinands and clergy on church summer camps run by CYFA. I loved what they did and the people they were and wanted to be like them.

The main test was a C of E selection conference (1989) and ministry after the vicar factory (theological college) took me to the London suburb of Orpington, then abroad for nine years within the Diocese in Europe – first to a high-turnover expatriate Anglican church in Moscow, and after that to plant an English-speaking church in Kyiv (Kiev).

- *I understand your meeting and subsequent courtship with Ruth, now your wife, was somewhat unusual. Would you please enlighten us?* JF: I knew a friend of hers at St Andrew's, Moscow who had mail for me to pass on to an English-teaching Christian friend who would meet me when the overnight train arrived in Ukraine (I was visiting a prayer group there). Ruth found me on the station platform, agreed to come to the church service in a private flat two days later (the group sweltered in the summer heat), and we met again in London before continuing the romance amid the chaos of Post-Communist Eastern Europe.



- *You serve on General Synod but which other Christian organisations are you involved with?* JF: When overseas I was with Intercontinental Church Society and I still use the ICS prayer diary and love to intercede for friends I made at conferences in Holland or locally at Ashburnham Place. Family connections keep me in touch with London City Mission (a brother-in-law works for them with the Met) and People International (PI) (with whom my sister and her family serve as part of ministry to Central Asia – a fascinating and dangerous part of the world). I have served as a Board member for PI and worked for other groups as a book review contributor and even (briefly) a newsletter editor. Involvement is less nowadays but I receive literature from many groups (not always ones I agree with).
- *When you arrived at St Mark's, you had two children and six years later you now have four (Hannah, Joshua, Naomi and Nathan), so how do you balance church and family life?* JF: My role at church is “prayer and the word” (Acts 6v4) which will “prepare God’s people for works of service” (Ephesians 4v12). Alongside that I am still a Christian, a husband, a father to four pre-teens, and a son. Each day brings responsibilities in these realms too. Friday is my day off with Ruth and Saturday is usually a family day. (Don’t children grow up fast! I thank God for people at St Mark’s who encourage me to spend time with them.)

- *You've always been extremely gracious to me as your Reader but, in a few short words, please could you sum up your beliefs regarding women in the ordained ministry?* JF: The New Testament sees women speaking out for the Lord (whether Mary Magdalene announcing the resurrection, John 20v17, or the gift of the Spirit so “sons and daughters will prophesy,” Acts 2v17). But this does not negate how God tells men and women to relate. As I read out in debate at Diocesan Synod in October, “the head of every man is Christ, and the head of every woman is man, and the head of Christ is God” (1 Corinthians 11v3). Or, put another way, God humbles men, and calls women to respect the heads of households, while Christ shows that headship is good for you. So placing women as heads of churches (the household of faith) misunderstands God’s will.
- *What has been your greatest challenge since arriving in Little Common?* JF: Keeping the focus on pleasing the Lord whatever requests are made. Parish ministry is the greatest job in the world but you never know what the next week (or day!) will throw at you so you find friends, pray fervently and trust the Lord.
- *How would you describe your vision for the future of St Mark’s and the Church of England?* JF: In a society with soft heads (believing everything) and hard hearts (callous towards faith and the weak), we must have hard heads (full of God’s truth) and soft hearts (full of God’s love). But the Church of England has fallen into the trap of thinking that the world has the answers and we must play ‘catch-up’. So St Mark’s must offer an alternative culture based on the Bible and mindful of our historic faith.
- *Finally, which football club do you support and why?* JF: My first football memory was staying up to watch Leeds play Bayern Munich in the 1975 European Cup final. Big Billy (Bremner) was supposed to win and I couldn’t understand why the Germans got the trophy. However I follow Chelsea because, on one of our trips to London with Dad, we stopped the Hilman Hunter on the Kings Road to buy a red rosette for my brother (clueless on football; still is) and a blue one for me. I scrap-booked through The Blues’ Division Two days, became familiar with the District Line and was thrilled in the ’80s to see Clive Walker and Ray Wilkins for £2 at a dilapidated Stamford Bridge. (Incidentally, the high profile of football today may be partially explained by the need to belong to a group in an era of family breakdown. May church build family life and make people feel they belong!)

Thank you, Jonathan. Thank you, Ann!

ST. MARY MAGDALENE, WHATLINGTON

Restoration Update

The roof timbers for the Chancel should be returned to the church by the time this is published, the wall tops will have been levelled off, quite a task as they are 27" thick. The timber roof plates will need to be levelled as there is some 25 to 30mm variance in places and there will need to be a degree of trial and error, with packing as necessary, much as may



have been done when they were originally erected in the 13th century. It is also likely that the first five bays of Nave rafters will be erected so as to ensure continuity for the roof line.

It has been found that the tower requires quite extensive work resulting largely from the fire damage but also due to the way in which the Victorians built it in 1862. As has been said before the roof timbers were built over and encased and as a result rotted. The weight of the tower rests on the medieval walls and over the top of the North door, something which perhaps modern building regulations would not allow. The movement in the roof caused by the fire has meant that in turn the tower has moved slightly and this needs to be corrected and underpinned before the Nave timbers can be returned to their place. This will require new RSJ's and will be a task requiring considerable care.

All being well it should be possible for the Chancel roof to be insulated and tiled whilst the other work progresses. The salvaging of the medieval timbers has of course slowed the whole project, but the finished result will be very worthwhile.

The PCC are exploring the possibilities for the bells, with a meeting planned on site with the diocesan adviser, there are a number of options which will of course depend on the costs and on which we shall expand when we have some idea of what is practical. Out of interest the oldest bell the treble, dates

from 1350, so may be the original one for the church, the other two date from 1724 and 1862 respectively.



Our architect is progressing with plans for the Gallery, slowed by the structural works associated with the tower which will require an additional tie beam. The vision is for something which will allow light from the West Window to flood into the church, something not possible previously due to the location of the old organ.

The PCC do intend a further Village open meeting as soon as the works have reached a stage where the outline plans for the further stages of work can be shown and explained. The benefits of having the restored medieval roof timbers will outweigh the delays which their restoration cause, as opposed to having an all new roof.

The fire, awful as it was has in many ways proved to be a blessing in disguise. The PCC would not easily have been able to raise the sort of money which would have been necessary to make the repairs, which it has become apparent would have been required in time to correct the faults which the fire has revealed and hastened.



Many thanks to Jeffrey Bridges for this interesting article. Is there something about your church that you could write about and share with the Deanery. It doesn't have to be a story with such a dramatic beginning!

BETHLEHEM, THE PLACE TO BE

Reflections of a Holiday Visit by Toni Huggins.

As thoughts turn once again to Christmas, I'm reminded of the trip which was made about two years ago, to the most famous of biblical places - Bethlehem.

My memory is of a rather inconspicuous town, consisting of slightly run-down houses and a large central square, dominated by the tall slender minarets of the local Muslim mosque. Yet to one side of that square, noticeable for its ancient looking stone walls, is the cavernous Church of the Nativity.

.. steps of a thousand feet . .

For tourists and pilgrims alike, this is the primary reason for making the journey from Jerusalem.

Within these imposing walls is a series of steps, taking one down into the bowels of the church. They are narrow and well worn. These steps must have been tramped upon by thousands and thousands of feet.

At the bottom of these steps, sunken into the hard stone floor, is a silver star surrounded by burning lamps. This focal point marks the spot on which it is thought the birth of Christ took place. A stillness pervades the place and one cannot remain unaffected by the sense of awe it generates in its observers.

*.. such a wondrous act
of God's love for
mankind . .*

Stood in the hazy light and hushed atmosphere, it would be churlish to question the authenticity of the location. Whether Mary gave birth to her Son here, or elsewhere in the town, it is fitting that we remember such a wondrous act of God's love for mankind and take time to gaze upon the star that is so full of meaning and hope.



This article was originally written by Toni in December 1997 for St Augustine's The Outreach paper.

Have you any similar visits or pilgrimages which you could share with other members of the Deanery. An Easter story would be especially welcome - see back page for details of where to send your article.

FOOD & DRINK CORNER (what about you writing for the next issue!)

It's too late to give you a Christmas Cake or pudding recipe, so here's one of my favourite cakes - easy to make and even easier to eat. Hope you enjoy it. *Simon*

Carrot Cake - moist and very more-ish!

Basic Ingredients

9 oz plain white flour	2 large eggs, beaten
12 oz demerara sugar	2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1/2 teaspoon salt	3 oz walnuts, chopped
1½ teaspoons bicarbonate of soda	3 oz desiccated coconut
2 teaspoons ground cinnamon	6 oz cooked and puréed carrot
6 oz corn oil	4 oz drained, crushed pineapple

For the Filling: 4 oz cream cheese 1 teaspoon vanilla essence

1½ oz unsalted butter 2 teaspoons lemon juice

9 oz icing sugar, sifted a little extra icing sugar for dusting

Sift together the first five ingredients; add oil, eggs and vanilla, and mix well. Fold in walnuts, coconut, carrot and pineapple. Pour mixture into two 8" sandwich tins and bake for about 45-50 minutes in a moderate pre-heated oven. Gas Mk. 4 Electric 350F/ 180C when cooked turn onto a wire rack and cool.

For the filling, mix well together all the ingredients, and use to sandwich the cake. Dust top with the extra icing sugar.

Here is a repeat of the original ideas list that was sent out - can you help with something for the next issue ?

1. Interesting ones! 2. About your church and what's going on 3. General interest articles 4. Church projects 5. Personnel projects 6. Poems 7. Stories 8. Anecdotes 9. Food, drink etc 10. About you & your faith; Faith in the workplace! 11. Country stories 12. Religious ones 13. The Churchwardens story, The PCC Member's story, The Vicar's story, Your story 14. Anything which isn't mentioned above but might just capture people's imagination.

PILGRIMAGE TO POLAND

10-14 September 2012

£585.00

Flights from London, Gatwick,
3star Hotel

Staying in Krakow

Day trip to Auschwitz included in price.

Free time to explore the beautiful city of
Krakow - home of John Paul II.

Further details:

Fr. Robert Coates 01424 210785.

Contributions for the next issue should be with Simon Earl by 13th March 2012

Email address - rector@ninfield.org.uk

Please include the words Deanery E-Newsletter in the subject line so it goes to the correct mailbox on my computer. Inclusion of articles may depend on available space and the editor reserves the right to decide if the content is appropriate.