

Easter – Let's celebrate.

The Diocese of Oxford has done a truly remarkable thing. They have created and are making available a great little booklet called "Easter Ingredients." It asks, "What's your recipe for a good Easter?" Try asking your non-church-going neighbours that question. I'm sure you'll hear lots of different answers. I love the daffodils. Shopping! Chocolate Easter eggs. A chance to get out in the garden. I love seeing my family, that's what I love about Easter.

The booklet says, "The Hot Cross Bun is as much a part of Easter holiday as chocolate ... have you ever wondered why we eat them?" I hope you'll read the booklet (we'll be giving away 1,000 of them) to discover the symbolism of the Hot Cross Bun.

The remarkable thing is that the booklet is designed to bridge the gap between our Christian culture and the secular world. It's a little booklet with big ideas, and tries to help those who don't know the real meaning of Easter to discover what it's all about.

After prayer, thought and discussion we are developing a new service which uses contemporary language, music and images. You may have heard of this service on the fourth Sunday of each month in the St James Church Centre. Like the "Easter Ingredients" booklet the all-age worship service seeks to overcome the barriers that keep some families and young adults from stepping inside a church. We hope the service will provide a friendly space for young families to begin exploring Christianity.

There are three primary schools in our parish, with over 1,000 students representing 500 families. A growing number of these young families believe in God and have some ideas about Jesus, but are not familiar with liturgy, prayers, Bible reading, hymns and organ music. At the same time they really do want to find a way to take faith seriously and they want to experience the reality of God in their lives.

This is an exciting time to be a part of the Church. God's Holy Spirit seems to be stirring people up, getting them interested in growing spiritually. We want more and more people in Cowley to know joy and peace of being in a relationship with the God who created the universe. I hope you will want to be a part of this project. There are many ways you can get involved.

I believe your prayers are a key to the success of this initiative. Would you undertake to pray for families and young adults in Cowley? Pray that we will find ways to reach out to them and invite them to join in this monthly service. You could also invite young families – anyone, really, who doesn't go to church somewhere else – to come and try it out. Just tell them that we guarantee some fun, some friendship, and a glimpse into what God is saying to us today in Cowley. Oh, and don't forget to mention that we finish with cake, and coffee, tea or juice.

Happy Easter.

Howard

CHRISTIANITY

Keeping in touch

First of all, I have an apology to make for those of you who thought the information I gave about the library service in last month's 'Chronicle' was going to be easy. One of my readers took up the suggestion to contact her local library using the telephone numbers we printed. The first person, Ken Saberi, knew nothing about it and the second, Hillary Wheaton, declared that the packs giving all the information are not readily available. Since I got my information from a lady who is a member of staff at the Westgate Library, I know that these packs exist. So the way forward I think is to badger these people so you can find out about the availability of the service for housebound people. If enough people do phone, they will understand that the need is there. The numbers to ring, in case you've lost them, are 01295 268249 or 01865 810209.

Now some details of a super service recommended to me by another parishioner, namely Dial-a-Ride. This is almost like a personal taxi service with a comfortable vehicle built especially for elderly and/or disabled travellers. To join the scheme, you pay £5.00 which is a lifetime subscription. Once you have joined you can

then book your ride. It has to be booked a week in advance and you are picked up at your door, driven to your destination and then returned home at a time convenient to you. If you hold a bus pass each journey you make is free, if not it costs £1.50 per ride. The number to ring to contact the service is 01865 876176. You will speak to a nice, helpful lady who will send you a leaflet. What a cheap and cheerful way to get out and about!

The other issue I thought might be helpful this month is dear to all our hearts – hairdressing. How much better we feel with a neat haircut or style. What we need is to find a friendly hairdresser who is prepared to visit a housebound person. Is there anyone out there who might fit the bill? If so, please let me know.

If anyone has any other issues that they would like me to feature in future articles, do let me know. In the meantime a big thank you to all of you who find time to give friendship and support to our housebound parishioners.

Rosanne Butler

Friends of St Francis

The Friends of St Francis meet in St Francis Church on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month at 2.30 pm. We usually open the meeting with the Prayer for the Day from the book of Common Worship and a short service. We offer prayers for people in need of our prayers, and for the Church. We then have a Bible study lasting 30-45 minutes.

After this we have tea and a general chat, relevant news of friends and members of the congregation and any other matters pertaining to the group.

We have a collection, proceeds of which are divided between the Rehabilitation Hospital in Cameroon and our Flower Fund. We send flowers to the sick and housebound members of the church. We also send them regular newsletters of events.

We hold an Annual Garden Party, and a service and tea to which we have invited groups from other denominations – we attend similar gatherings in their churches. We have contacts with the Baptist Church at Wolvercote and St Matthews in Marlborough Road. We have hosted parties for senior citizens of both congregations, and we have a Bring and Share teaparty during Epiphany.

Ours is an open group, and anyone is welcome to come along and join with us. If you wish to find out more, please talk to Molly Oliver or Diana Pope.

Thelma Telling

ROSANNE INTERVIEWS

Kim Hughes

Drugs, alcohol, clubbing and gang rivalry are not the kind of issues I usually discuss with my interviewees for 'The Chronicle', are they? But it is so refreshing to meet up with a young lady who is not afraid to 'tell it as it is'. She was also prepared to talk about her strong Christian faith and how it fits into her teenage world.

Kim is fifteen and many of us at St James have known her since she was 'knee-high to a grasshopper', sitting next to her Mum Bev, even before her legs were long enough to reach the floor. Together with her younger brothers she used to attend Junior Church, whereas now she often helps to teach the children and care for the babies. So how, then, did the subject of the clubbing scene enter our conversation?

Well, I asked Kim about her friendships and the inevitable parties which seem to feature quite strongly amongst teenagers these days. She has a group of about eight close girl friends who all attend her secondary school, St Gregory the Great's. They meet up, not just during the school week, but in leisure times too, for birthday parties, ice-skating, cinema trips, sleepovers, shopping (a very important pastime!) or simply chilling out in each other's homes. I noted the emphasis on home, not nightclubs, so pursuing this strand of conversation I was told that, though nightclubs exclusively for teenagers do exist in Oxford, they often provide

the excuse for gangs to challenge each other. This frequently leads from posturing and name calling to scuffles and fights. Kim and her friends do not see that as a fun night out and stay away.

The alcohol and drug situation I found particularly alarming as Kim explained that outside school (not just her school I hasten to add) she and her friends have to walk past young people, often younger than fifteen, drinking and 'doing' drugs. The girls find it upsetting and steer clear knowing that these kids are seriously harming themselves. They tell each other, 'It's not for us'. She wonders if those who indulge are trying to prove her 'grown up' they are, whereas the really mature people are those who reject the whole thing.

The Hughes family is a close-knit and loving one, so Kim is a lucky girl and she knows it. She is also very close to her grandparents who live locally. In fact she visits her 'nanny Audrey' for a couple of hours every day after school where she has a quiet place to do her homework and eat a meal with nanny and pampy (her pet name for her grandfather). Those hours are important to her because she describes her three younger brothers, very affectionately as noisy and 'all over the place' at home and what's more, her Dad joins in! She is currently preparing for her GCSE exams, ten subjects in all, including maths and three sciences. She intends to continue

her science studies for her A levels in two years' time adding French as a fourth subject. She has plans to follow this with a nursing degree.

Another important part of her busy life is her bassoon. She began to learn to play at primary school and now has a weekly lesson with her tutor at St Gregory's. She plays on Saturdays with the Oxford Senior School Orchestra and toured last year with them in France. This year they will be on tour in the Czech Republic. Why the bassoon, I asked? Kim explained that as a little girl she was attracted to the lovely deep, low notes.

Her first memory of school is of the wonderful old rocking horse in the hall at Church Cowley St James. She was happy in those early years there but came down with a bump when at nine she moved on to Lawn Upton Middle School. She found it hard to make friends and it was a difficult time. However, once she reached secondary school, life took an upward turn.

We next spoke about her faith which is so important to her. She has always enjoyed going to church at St James, but she also attends the Roman Catholic church in Littlemore with her other grandmother. She remarked on the contrast between the serious style of mass at the Catholic church and the more relaxed atmosphere of family eucharists. Of course

ROSANNE INTERVIEWS Kim Hughes

there are regular masses at St Gregory's too. She finds both services inspiring, but best of all she loves the modern approach to worship with lots of lively music. She attends fortnightly Youth Church on Sunday afternoons at St James Centre, but the best religious experience she has had so far was at Letton Hall in Norfolk. Her Mum took her and her three brothers for a weekend of Christian activities for children of all ages. There was worship with dancing and modern songs along with lots of chances to deepen one's faith. Go-karting, treasure-hunting and many other exciting things were organised too. Bushra took her son, Nathaniel, and both Mums and children had a great time.

Because of her faith Kim sometimes wishes she could sweep her close friends along with her enthusiasm. Like many of us she finds it hard to know how to begin addressing the issue. However, she prays and thinks God will help her find a way. Meanwhile she has the rest of her teens ahead of her with all their complexities. We ended almost where we began on the subject of drugs. She has wise parents with whom she can discuss the problem and they are well aware of her anxieties. On a lighter note she has her morning paper round which gives her time to sort out her priorities and put her world to right.

How would you describe yourself as a little girl?

I really loved being with my grandparents as I do now. They tell me lots of interesting things about their lives. For instance, my Dad's Mum was born in Ireland. She tells me about what a hard life she's had and how she drove cranes during the war.

Have you any special childhood memories you'd like to share?

I can remember when I was very young my Nan used to cook boiled eggs for my brother and me. After we'd eaten them we used to turn the shells upside down to trick my grandfather into thinking they were whole eggs. He knew really, but played along with our game over and over again.

Has God always been part of your life?

Yes, my Mum has always been a Christian, but it was about three years ago that I recognised the importance of God. It was when He helped me to find my new friends. I was going through a bad time but I prayed about it.

If you could make a major change in the world, what would it be?

Probably the way people treat those with mental health problems. This is something I feel very strongly about.

Is there anything you find positive in our modern world?

I think that even though there is

still too much racism, there is a lot more equality and friendship between different races. People do mix more.

Do you have a treasured possession?

I have a little tatty rabbit, Bunny, that I've had for ever and I love her.

Do you have a hero or heroine, past or present?

Sister Frances Dominica, the founder of Helen House, because I think she's wonderful.

How do you spend your leisure time?

I practise my bassoon. I spend a lot of time with my parents and grandparents. Oh yeah, and shopping's always good!

Are there any places in the world you'd like to visit?

I'd love to visit New Zealand, and I'd love to visit the places in Ireland that my nan has told me about, best of all with her.

Do you have any ambitions for the future?

I'd love to get into Oxford County Youth Orchestra and get through my exams too.

I'm very sorry the Chronicle is so short this month but a lack of material made it impossible to produce a fuller version.

The next healing service will be at St James' at 7.30 on April 2nd