

How's Our Welcome?

Ship of Fools is an interesting (if slightly irreverent) website that offers all sorts of insights into church life. I visited the site recently because the ministry team has been thinking about a goal for the parish that would be challenging, invigorating and would allow us to live out our five purposes as a church. Do you remember them? Worship, Fellowship, Discipleship, Ministry and Evangelism are the purposes we're trying to live out. One goal for the coming year is to allow our active church membership to increase by 15%. It's an exciting idea.

Let me tell you a bit about Ship of Fools. It offers news stories about how the world sees churches. For instance, a link to a BBC news story was headlined, "Fine if churches sing too loudly: £20,000." It seems two London churches, All Nations in Kennington and Immanuel International Christian Centre in Walthamstow were ordered by magistrates to lower the volume of their music or face a fine. One pastor said that since they were forced to cut down on the drums, and sing quietly with no keyboard, most members "are not enjoying their worship service, especially our youth." We'll have to be sure to check our own volume levels, especially when the choir begins to sing at St James 10:00 am service.

There are other things that might prove even more informative for all of us. A regular column is the Mystery Worshipper, modelled on the concept of stores that hire mystery shoppers to check their standards. It's been reporting since 1998 on churches all over the world. Anyone can sign up to be a Mystery Worshipper. They travel incognito and ask pertinent questions such as, "How long was the sermon? How hard were the pews? Was the welcome tepid? How was the coffee?" The only clue that a church has had a visit is a calling card "dropped discreetly into the collection plate."

One recent posting was the result of a visit to Barnehurst Methodist Church in Kent. The Mystery Worshipper was Neil, who said that this red brick church, built in 1952, was very clean and tidy, and the decor was fresh looking with pale wood, giving the impression of a church that is well cared for. Neil found a warm welcome. Someone came up to him, shook his hand and gave him a parish magazine. There are a host of questions about the service, the music, and the sermon, but two I found quite intriguing. "Which part of the service was like being in heaven?" Neil said the prayers were "thoughtful and beautifully delivered." And, "Which part of the service was like being in...er...the other place?" Answer, the temperature, which was too hot.

"...think about how we might make all of our church activities true to our purposes..."

wonder what a Mystery Worshipper (or genuine first time visitor) might think of the condition of our buildings, or welcome, or sermons, or music. How do they feel when they come in the door? What emotions do we stir up after they have found the courage to come in?

Last November we had feedback from members who attended Tea Parties all over the parish. Some great ideas were put forward as to how we might live out our purposes and demonstrate our love for one another and for God. This month I hope you might think about how we might make all of our church activities true to our purposes, and welcoming to all.

Howard

Chronicle

Cowley Team Ministry
February 2010

Editors' Letter

Dear Reader

We hope it's not too late to wish you all "A Happy New Year!" How are your New Year's resolutions going, or do you think they are not relevant?

By the time you receive the Chronicle we shall be halfway through our first Snowdrop Weekend of the year. The churchyard at St James, we hope, will be a carpet of spring flowers, and the church will be open for hot drinks and a slice or two of good cake. Do come along and visit, not forgetting to bring friends and neighbours to enjoy our beautiful ancient parish church and celebrate the early signs of spring.

On the 13th of February we will mark Pancake Day (three days early) with a fun filled evening of quiz, pancakes and a raffle (of course) at the Church Centre. If you don't like pancakes, other refreshments will be available. It will begin at 6.30 pm so that the children can come along. We're charging £10 per team, so if you bring a crowd it works out to be a cheap evening. If you haven't managed to gather a team, come along anyway and join one.

We don't know if you realise it, but 8th February marks the beginning of Celebration of Marriage week. Time to go out and buy a Valentine's card, and maybe even plan a treat for a partner?

There is another, probably more inclusive date coming up in February, namely Fairtrade fortnight. It begins on the 22nd and runs until March. This year there is a campaign to persuade every single consumer to swap at least one item that they buy regularly, to a

Fairtrade product.

Did you know that you can buy Fairtrade sugar? Well, that is a new one on us, so we will certainly go for that, alongside the other products we already buy.

It has come to our notice that a number of people in our parish enjoy a game of Scrabble, and two people have suggested a fortnightly Scrabble Club at the Church Centre. Is anyone interested? We would just turn up with our Scrabble boards and take on anyone who would enjoy a game. Of course, we would have to find a time and day when the Centre is free, and we would make a donation for the heating and lighting costs. This is only the seed of an idea, but what do you think? From small seeds grow great trees, don't they? Only this time last year we were recruiting for a band of bell-ringers, and look where we are now. Did you hear their wonderful peals at Christmas? Many congratulations to our campanologists, and long may they continue.

In closing we would like to congratulate the young winners of our Children's Christmas Quiz in the December Chronicle. Chantel Phipps (aged 5) got all her ten questions correct and won the under-seven category, and brother Zac (aged 10) scored eighteen and a half out of twenty in the under-12 category. Very well done, Chantel and Zac. We hope you enjoyed your Christmas activity book prizes.

God bless.

Rosanne and Carol

Vandals Wreck Former Cowley St James School

The former Cowley St James School building on Beauchamp Lane suffered some serious damage over the New Year after vandals climbed onto the roof and removed 50 feet of lead that helped keep the school water-tight. The gaping hole allowed water in and resulted in the collapse of the ceiling.

Temporary tarpaulins have stopped the leaks and we are hoping to have the roof fixed by late spring. The cost of the repairs could reach tens of thousands of pounds. The school is a grade 2 listed building that is held in trust. The building is showing its age but there is a glimmer of hope that funds could be raised to restore the building and allow it to be used again as an important centre for life in the community.

If you want to know more, invite the Rector for a cuppa tea and a chat.

Deep peace, pure white of the moon to you.
Deep peace, pure green of the grass to you.
Deep peace, pure brown of the earth to you.
Deep peace, pure grey of the dew to you.
Deep peace, pure blue of the sky to you.
Deep peace of the running wave to you.
Deep peace of the flowing air to you.
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you.
Deep peace of the shining stars to you.
Deep peace of the Son of Peace to you.

Fiona Macleod, Under a Dark Star (1895)

Like many churches this Christmas, we struggled with various factors to get our act together and plan services that would be attractive to outsiders and enjoyable for our own congregations. An ageing congregation, the faithful few who will voluntarily do practical work, and the weather situation all played their part in putting things together successfully, and we were pleased with the results in the end.

Some six or eight of us worked together in a very happy group to clean and decorate St Francis Church, and together we prayed that God would bless our work on Christmas Eve, and bless our church on the great day.

Susannah, our vicar, and Patrick, our organist, put their heads together and planned a really good Carol Service which was held on Saturday this year.

This was a great success, and we were especially grateful to Patrick who brought along some of his college friends to form the nucleus of a good choir for the occasion. Mulled wine and mince pies at the end added a real festive note to the occasion.

The usual St Francis 'GPO' ensured that people got their Christmas cards and did not feel left out, whatever their situation.

A few dedicated souls were welcomed at the local pub, and sang carols which were well received. The youngsters had their Christingle and Crib Services. All in all, St Francis people did their best to make this Christmas the best of Christmases.

John Shreeve

Lent Course – Exciting News

For Christians, Lent has always been a time for reflection, study and growth. But that doesn't mean it has to be dull. This year we are encouraging everyone in the parish to get involved in the five week "Living Faith" Lenten course.

Written by our very own thought-provoking Bishop John of Oxford along with author Paula

Clifford, the course focuses on a vision of personal discovery and growth, and an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of people throughout the parish. Pivotal to the course is a dynamic framework to enable and encourage participants to deepen their enjoyment of God and to recognise His presence in everyday life.

What should you do about it? Put your name on a sign-up sheet at the back of the church to join an existing home group or to be involved in a new group that will meet during Lent. For more information leave a message on the Parish Office telephone – 01865 747 680.

Chronicle

Details and Deadlines

The Chronicle is the monthly magazine of the Parish of Cowley Team Ministry. It is published ten times a year, with no publication in January or August. Issues going back as far as January, 2000 can be found online at this address: www.cowleyteam-ministry.co.uk/chronicle/

The Chronicle is edited by Rosanne Butler and Carol Thornton, and published by Philip Hind. Material from St Francis church members is collected by John Shreeve. This is the email address: chronicle@cowleyteamministry.co.uk

Or you can ring the parish office on (01865) 747 680.

We encourage contributions from everyone at St Francis and St James churches.

Chronicle Deadlines 2010

Issue	Deadline
March	17 February
April	21 March
May	18 April
June	16 May
July	20 June
September	22 August
October	19 September
November	24 October
December	21 November

A review of the branch news will be included in the annual parish report. However several items of news need to be included this month.

For six years Pat Chung has been the branch leader and has served us with energy and enthusiasm. She is now standing down, so we extend her a huge vote of thanks and gratitude for all she has done. Connie Uren has agreed to take Pat's place to carry the branch forward for the next 12 months so we extend her a vote of thanks. As she is one of our most experienced members, we know that the Cowley MU is in safe hands. By the way Pat is not getting away lightly as she has been elected on to the committee! Said committee will continue to serve, with two small changes. Margaret Randall hands over Treasurer duties to Rosanne Butler, but has taken on the role of minuting secretary. Margaret has looked after the accounts for many years, so she also deserves a big thank you.

Molly Oliver, in her quiet unassuming way, performs an important task on behalf of the parish and the MU. Every child who is baptised in either of our churches receives an anniversary card of their baptism day for the first, second, third and fourth year. MU members have kept this communication going for decades. Molly now sends about twelve cards each month.

As we have reported in the past, our deanery has been collecting toiletries to support the

work of the Women's Refuge. We felt it was important for women who had often escaped homes carrying nothing to receive nice items of toiletry. So four huge bags full of things we have collected have recently been handed in.

This year we are supporting the Children's Hospital at the JR. The hospital told our diocesan representative of particular things to make life a little easier for sick children (especially the little ones) and their parents at what can be an anxious time. The nurses have found that glove or finger puppets are an ideal way to distract a child undergoing treatment. So we now have a carrier bag full of these ready to deliver. Parents usually welcome a warm drink and a snack whilst they are waiting for their child to be assessed or treated, so we are starting a collection of teabags, instant coffee and drinking chocolate, together with packets of biscuits. If any of our non-member readers would like to contribute, that would be lovely.

"In house" notices to present members include a reminder that annual subs are due at the next branch meeting in February. The theme for that meeting on the 15th February is preparation for Women's World Day of Prayer.

As ever, may we remind readers that anyone will be welcome at our meetings and new or returning members are very, very welcome too.

The Word of God

In these days of easy, fast printing, it's difficult to imagine a world without it. A world in which people communicated with each other either verbally, or through handwritten books or letters. It was into such a world that our Gospels came into being.

Originally the first Christians proclaimed the good news by word of mouth, just as Christ had commanded them to, boldly and face to face. Then they started to write things down; why was this? Some Bible scholars attribute it to a crisis of confidence within the church. I do not subscribe to this view. I think that several other factors were involved. Firstly, the first Christians, many of whom had followed Christ and heard him speak, knew that he had promised to return again to them. Many of them half-expected this to happen within their lifetime. When this did not happen, they had to make new plans.

It was very important to them that the precious sayings and teachings of Christ were not lost to posterity – or distorted by failing memories.

Then there was the question of distance. As the new church rapidly expanded to new lands and even new continents, long journeys were not always possible. Then came persecution and oppression both from the Romans and the Jews. Many Christians had to flee to wild places and live in caves or in Rome in the catacombs. Then the New Testaments came into their own. In them, these scattered and fearful Christians could always be sure that they had before them the authentic words of Christ. In recent years

SAINT OF THE MONTH George Herbert

George Herbert was born in Montgomery, in Wales, in 1533 into a wealthy and cultured family, the fifth of nine children. His father died when he was three, leaving his mother Magdalen a widow. When his brother came up to Oxford, his mother came with him and stayed for four years, during which time she met the poet John Donne and became his patron.

Herbert was educated at Westminster School and Trinity College, Cambridge. Like many of us, his life was marked by conflicting desires. He was a gifted scholar excelling in music and languages, whose talent had earned the favour of the king, James I, and he seemed bound for a glittering career at Court. At 17 he had promised his mother that he would only write poetry to glorify God. With her guidance, he remained conscious of a calling to serve God. This constant tug-of-war between sacred and worldly concerns inspired much of his poetry.

When he was 36, after the king's death, he renewed his determination to be a priest, and gave up any ideas of public life. He was ordained in 1626 and married in 1629. He became vicar and then rector of Bemerton and Fugglestone, a small, insignificant parish near Salisbury.

His inherited means and his connections allowed him to

rebuild the nearly-derelict parsonage and chapel before he moved in. His known status must have given him some advantages at first. He wrote a guide to Christian ministry, *A Priest to the Temple; A Country Parson*. It shows how he believed in moulding this inherited authority to his position, a servant responsible to his master, Jesus, and the country people he served. He showed how a priest must be seen by his people as someone who cares for their physical welfare, but also challenges them to take God as seriously as he does.

He served faithfully as a parish priest, diligently taking the sacraments to any who were ill, and providing help for those in need. He read Morning and Evening Prayer daily, encouraging people to join him when they could, and ringing the church bell

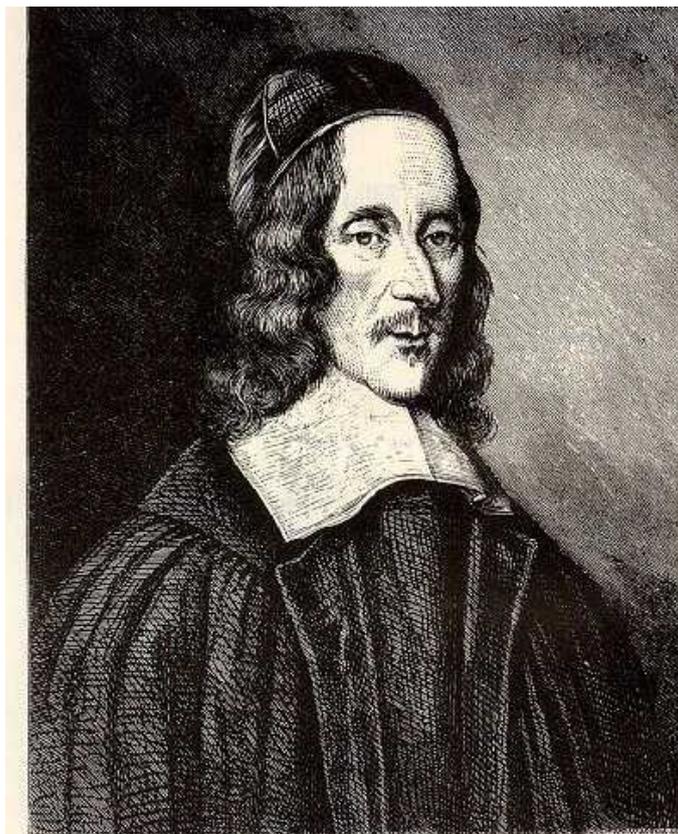
so that those who couldn't be there might hear the bell, pause what they were doing, and pray with him wherever they were. His goodness and generosity gained him the love of his parishioners.

Herbert is now remembered mostly for his poems, written throughout his life but published posthumously. If his prose articulated his relationship to his work and his parish, his poetry shows us how he saw and knew himself in relation to God. Truthful and intimate, they are an example of one's relationship with God. Beautifully crafted, they inspired many later poets, including Coleridge and Wordsworth.

After only three years as a priest, George Herbert died of tuberculosis at just 36 years of age, on 1 March, 1633, and is commemorated February 27th.

A prayer:

Our God and King,
who called your servant
George Herbert from the
pursuit of worldly honors
to be a pastor of souls, a
poet, and a priest in your
temple: Give us grace, we
pray, joyfully to perform
the tasks you give us to
do, knowing that nothing
is menial or common
that is done for your sake;
through Jesus Christ our
Lord, who lives and reigns
with you and the Holy
Spirit, one God, for ever
and ever.



Rosanne Interviews **Cynthia Retter**

It was the end of a busy working day for Cynthia when she arrived at my home for her interview for the Chronicle. It was one of those bitterly cold January days with snow on the wind so I was very grateful that she had found the time and energy to turn up at all. However, settled on my sofa with a hot cuppa her tiredness vanished as soon as we hit on her favourite topic – Girl Guides. Leaning forward with a sparkle in her eyes she told me about her total involvement in Guiding. You see, Cynthia is a special Guide; Girlguiding UK has recognised this by presenting her with their gold award for thirty years of unbroken service as a Guide leader. She has also been made District Commissioner for our area.

To all intents and purposes Cynthia is a Cowley girl since she was brought here to live when she was only six months old. Her father was a full-time union official with the Transport and General Workers' Union, serving alongside people like the well-known union official Jack Thomas, promoting better working conditions for their members in the car factory.

Cynthia has lived, gone to school, married, worked and brought up her children in the heart of Cowley so it was interesting to hear her assessment of how our area has changed. She remembers when Florence Park estate, where she grew up, would have had no black or brown faces, no different accents nor, least of all, foreign languages spoken. Yet she enjoys the rich mix of ethnic diversity amongst her neighbours

and friends. She celebrates the fact that her area is peaceful and neighbourly and she finds great pleasure day by day in helping young children cope with the demands of the 3Rs when they're learning in a language not spoken at home.

She was educated at Donnington School (nursery, infant and junior departments) until she was eleven. She remembers clearly the nursery playground with its sandpit and paddling-pool (more about that later!) which were still in evidence, minus their respective sand and water, when I retired from Donnington School fifteen years ago. She was very happy there and recalled lessons in history and geography as her favourites. She spent a brief time (which she prefers to forget) at Cowley St John Secondary School and transferred to Temple Cowley School which was a happy time amongst many of her friends. At fifteen she left to attend the College of Further Education (at that time situated in the Cowley Road). Her secretarial course included all the usual office skills and after passing her exams she found a post at the Nationwide Building Society in Oxford. Alongside her studies she also learned to drive and gained her licence whilst still seventeen.

Throughout her childhood Cynthia was a devoted member of the Guiding movement, first as a Brownie at the United Reformed Church (3rd Cowley) pack under the brilliant leadership of Brown Owl, Mrs Smith. She moved up to Guides and soon learned of worldwide Guiding through the work done abroad

by Rosemary Jeffries, her leader's daughter. She, of course, was also introduced to camping, a side of Guiding she so much enjoys. By the time she was sixteen she was helping with Brownies at St James (2nd Cowley) and St Luke (7th Cowley) which used to meet in St Francis School. Her enthusiasm was soon recognised and she was "roped in," as she put it, to help with the 2nd Marston Guide company under the indomitable guidance of Miss Finch. (I am including various names in this article because Cynthia holds them in respect and I feel that many of our readers will remember them too.) She also worked alongside Angela Mundy in the old Parish Hall. One has to reach the age of twenty-one to gain a leadership warrant and this she did on her twenty-first birthday.

We could be led to believe that with all this Guiding in her life she would have little time for other leisure activities. Not so. She went to Oxford Speedway with a friend and there palled up with a young man named David. They dated and became engaged, and then were married at St James Church. After a brief time living in a flat in Divinity Road, Cynthia and David bought the house in Campbell Road where she still lives. Their elder daughter, Heather, was born seven years later followed by Alison, their second baby a few years later. Sadly, while their little girls were still quite young the marriage broke up. David and Cynthia are still friends and are both close to their girls.

It was a foregone conclusion that both girls would join

Brownies and Guides. Heather is leader of the Blackbird Leys group and Alison is fully involved in running 5th Cowley Guides with her mum. One of Cynthia's delights is bringing "her" older girls into positions of leadership. She was pleased to talk about Laura Sherwood, soon to be made a leader, and about Becky and Gemma who look set to follow suit. The Guiding movement is alive and flourishing in our area thanks, I'm sure, in no small measure to this month's interviewee.

Cynthia spoke at length about plans for the future, also about the decimation of vital camping equipment damaged by flooding in the church boiler house where it had been stored and most importantly about the fact that money, or lack of it, is a big issue in the running of a Guide company. She does everything in her power to make membership affordable for children from less well-off families.

And what about her working life which I mentioned earlier? Her two daughters attended Larkrise Primary School, and when Alison started school Cynthia was invited to work as a dinner lady (now called a welfare assistant) and a classroom assistant. She jumped at the opportunity and has worked at the school ever since. As you can see she is one of life's loyal "stickers". She is now a trained Teaching Assistant and has worked with children of all ages throughout the school. She pays tribute to the fine teachers she has been privileged to assist and is particularly pleased to be working with a newly qualified teacher this year. Her mornings are busy in a classroom with 32 nine- and 10-year-olds and her afternoons are filled, helping

a small group of children with special educational needs. She is very happy that her elder daughter does a similar job in the same school while Heather's daughter, Cynthia's grand-daughter, Janine attends a nursery at Rose Hill.

At the age of sixty-five Guide leaders are required to retire and that date looms on the horizon for Cynthia. With two daughters still fully involved in their respective groups I can't see her sitting back for years to come. There is a saying "Once a Guide, always a Guide" and in her case, I'm sure, that couldn't be more true!

Can you remember an incident in your early life which you will never forget?

I was about four and at nursery school. We had a concrete paddling pool in the school garden. My best friend, Coleen, was standing on the edge so I pushed her in, fully clothed!! I suppose I must have been told off but I don't remember!!

What were you like as a child?

Happy. I played with lots of friends up and down the road. I was lucky because we had a car and Mum and Dad would invite one of my friends to join us on days out. I was never lonely even though I was an only child.

Has your faith been with you since childhood?

My mum has always had a strong faith in God. I was encouraged to go to St James Sunday School. Mum and Dad became involved in the URC so I would go there too. I went to Evensong at St James, then I began to attend St Luke and was confirmed. Everything to do with my faith came

together at St Luke's mother-and-toddler group. The church was a great support when my marriage broke up.

Which period of your adult life has given you the most satisfaction?

I think I've been satisfied with most of my life.

Are there aspects of modern life which you dislike?

I don't think so because if you don't like something you've got to be prepared to put it right.

What do you think is best about life today?

Computers make a much smaller world.

When you find time for leisure how do you like to spend it?

I baby-sit! I like gardening but wish I had more time to spend on it. I enjoy reading – I always have a back-log of material. I enjoy going out for a meal with friends which we do regularly once a month.

Do you have a treasured possession?

I've still got my teddy.

If you were not doing what you do now what would the alternative be?

I am happy with the things I do now; if I weren't I would have done something about it.

Any plans for the future?

I ought to concentrate on my garden and redecorate my house but I really hope to catch up on my reading.

Dates for your Diary

Snowdrop Weekends

The church will be open this afternoon and next Sunday from 2:00-4:00, and Saturday, 13 February from 10:00 am until 4:00 pm. Brian Tidy will play the organ Saturday from 11:00 until 1:00. Hot drinks and cakes will be available. If you haven't signed up to help yet, please speak to Rosanne Butler. And of course, bring your friends and neighbours!

Confirmation Classes

The next preparation meeting will be at 7:30, on Thursday evening, 11 February, at St Francis, and then fortnightly. If you are interested but haven't yet registered, contact Susannah.

Family Quiz and Pancakes

Saturday, 13 February, 6:30 pm, in the Church Centre. Tickets are available from Rosanne Butler – 453 257 – and are £10 for a table of up to 6 people.

Deadline for Electoral Roll Forms

If you haven't yet, but would like to register as a member of the parish, please complete an Electoral Roll form, available in the church, and return it to Lesley Williams by 14th February. This will make it possible for you to vote at the Annual Meeting.

Third Sunday Lunch

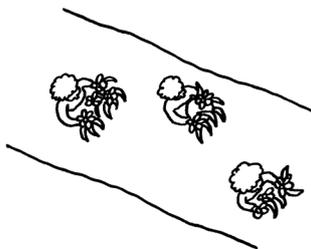
This takes place on Sunday, 21 February in the Church Centre. If you will be there, please sign the list on the screen at St James or let Chris Woodman know – 778 078.

Fairtrade Fortnight: The Big Brew

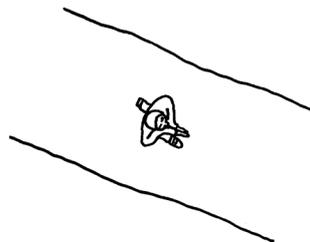
Could you hold a coffee morning at work, or at home for friends, between 22 February and 7th March? Resources will be available. If so, contact Margaret Martin.

THE CHURCH TOWER

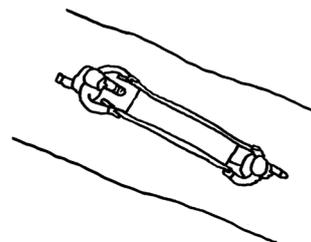
THINGS I HAVE SEEN FROM THE TOP



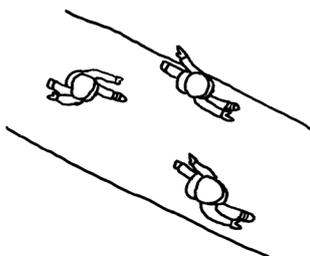
1. THE FLOWER LADIES ARRIVING



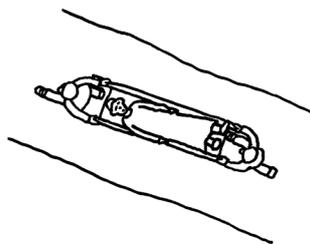
2. THE VICAR ARRIVING



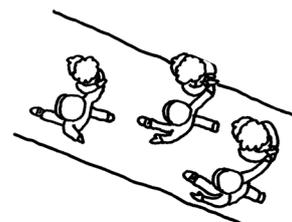
3. THE MEDICS ARRIVING



4. THE POLICE ARRIVING



5. THE MEDICS LEAVING WITH THE VICAR



6. THE POLICE LEAVING WITH THE FLOWER LADIES

CartoonChurch.com

This CartoonChurch.com cartoon originally appeared in the Church Times and is taken from 'The Dave Walker Guide to the Church', published by Canterbury Press.

Coffee after church on Sunday, 28th

February will be special, with everything fairly traded, and a few extra treats. It's Church at the Centre Sunday, so we expect there will be lots of socialising!

Churchyard/Church Centre Garden Working Party

The fourth Saturday of each month, 10:00-12:00 will be dedicated to working parties. The next two will be on February 27th and March 27th.

Songs from Around the World

A fundraising concert is planned in aid of The Archway Foundation (serving those hurt by loneliness). It takes place at 7:30 pm, Saturday March 6th, at Harris Manchester College chapel, Mansfield Road, Oxford. Entrance by programme (£10; concessions £8). It will include vocal gems by Mozart, Schubert, Dvorak, Rachmaninoff, and Cole Porter, with Tatiana Soloviova (soprano), Chris Fellner (bass), and Myles Hartley (piano).

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

This will be held on Sunday, 14 March.

Preparing for Plant Sale 2010

Calling all those with green fingers. We need your help right now!

RECIPIES

New College Pudding or Oxford Dumplings

(Rosanne grew up knowing these as "Oxford Pancakes", which is why we decided to include them for February.)

(Serves 4-6)

4 oz shredded suet
A pinch of salt
2 oz finely grated breadcrumbs
2 oz self-raising flour
2 oz caster sugar
4 oz currants
2 oz candied peel
2 eggs
1 tablespoon brandy (optional)
A little milk to mix
About 3 oz butter for frying
Caster sugar (for dusting)

Have you ordered or bought your seeds for 2010 yet? If you haven't, please think about growing some extra seedlings or trying something completely different for our Plant Sale on Saturday 15th May at the Church Centre. When the weather lets you start in the garden, remember that loads of perennials can benefit from being lifted and divided and excess bits can be potted on for the sale.

We had a great sale last year and we hope to repeat its success this spring.

Please get in touch if you're able to help on the day, and if you have any other fund-raising ideas to add to the event. Joan Coleman Tel: 770 865 e-mail: ojcoleman@btinternet.com

Flower Festival

The St James "flower ladies" are planning a summer flower festival to be held in St James Church on June 19th, 20th, and 21st.

We will be asking for help with stewarding, serving refreshments, baking, and on the previous two days, back-up for the flower arrangers in coffee making and tidying.

If you enjoy flower arranging, please contact me if you would like to be involved.

Further details will follow in the Chronicle and Link. Margaret Martin (phone 718 532)

Combine the suet, salt, breadcrumbs, flour and caster sugar. Stir in the currants. Beat the eggs and stir in the brandy, and then add to dry ingredients. Mix to a soft dough that will drop from spoon, adding a little milk if necessary. Melt the butter in a frying pan and fry spoonfuls of the mixture until golden brown on both sides. Sprinkle each pudding with caster sugar before serving hot with a sweet sauce.

Oxford Sweet Bishop Punch

Did anyone try the punch recipe from the December issue? I thought Bishop John might be interested in a copy, and he kindly sent a note of thanks, saying in part, "What a brilliant recipe - or at least what a brilliant name! I'm not often called Sweet Bishop but I look forward to more regularly being seen as such. It remains for us to try it out and this is obviously the time to do so."

God in my life: Jason Dudley

Those who belong to Jesus Christ have crucified their own sinful selves. They have given up their old selfish feelings and the evil things they wanted to do. We get our new life from the Spirit, so we should follow the Spirit. (Gal 5:22,23)

This, to me, is how God has changed my life in the most significant way. I'd always been critical, an "atheist" I would call myself, even with religious influences whilst I was growing up. Going to an average secondary school in Bicester through my teenage years, I was always led to believe there was only one way of thinking, and that was the theory of evolution. I was always too quick to turn my back to God's love, but six months ago my life changed in the most unexpected and amazing way.

I was working a week of nights in a hospital for adults with learning disabilities in Oxford. God popped up and stole my heart without warning. I can't quite remember how the conversation came about, but Gamu (a lady with whom I work) was on the subject of her religion, and how she'd be going to church in the morning, and would then sleep afterwards. I laughed, ignorantly, thinking to myself I was the lucky one going home to bed! But I began to listen, because what she was saying was making a lot of sense. How could I be the one to judge when I hadn't read the bible? – the book with ALL of the answers in it. She would be going to church, smiling, feeling happy, being with friends, being revitalized with the Holy Spirit, ("refreshed" is how I would describe it), and I would be going home to bed, feeling lonely and tired, and probably a tad miserable too.

I remember Gamu saying she feels great talking to people about God, and that she feels like God walks with her wherever she goes. I loved the idea and felt drawn to it. I wanted to feel loved, and I too wanted to have someone with me all of the time. I needed to do something about it.

I had some knowledge of the bible from the things my mum and grandmother had told me when I was little, and I knew what being in a church felt like. So that morning I phoned my Gran and asked if I go to church with her. About three hours later, my life had completely changed. I was overwhelmed and overcome with the Holy Spirit. I spent most of

the service wiping the tears from my eyes. Nothing could have done this but God himself.

I felt refreshed and happy – no, ecstatic... But I also felt stupid, and somewhat angry with myself for being so ignorant before. My emotions were running wild, but what I felt most was a feeling of relief and satisfaction. God was most definitely there; I felt him, and boy did it feel amazing!

From that day, my life hasn't been the same. Countless things have happened in the last six months that show God's presence is, and always has been, with me. Gamu kindly bought me a bible when I'd mentioned that I wanted one, and it has stayed with me since.

When you read the bible, and actually make sense of what it's trying to tell you, you begin to understand what life is all about, and how precious life is. Before, I took it for granted, and I suppose I was selfish. But with God's love and influence in my life, my whole perspective of life changed, and the world seems like such an incredible place.

When I go to church, I feel amazing. I feel like I'm with brothers and sisters, and we all love, share and enjoy each other's company. Everyone is at peace, just how the world was intended to be. Everyone is happy, joyful in their relationship with God. I pray for the day my friends and family receive God's call, as I did, so they can live in a newness of life, and feel just as I do about God.

God's will, power, grace, and love have provided me with something that no one in the world can ever take away from me, something that to me is priceless and invaluable. I feel I know myself more than I have ever done before.

From the Parish Registers

Funerals

Ian Foster 8 January 2010

Marjorie Blakeman 8 January 2010

Gardening : Thoughts for food

Happy New Year, good health and God bless.

Do you remember your garden? Or was it a white no-go area for too long? Well, now is the time to start again. Your lazy holiday has finished for the moment – there's work to be done! Go gently at first; those muscles are not used to digging, and the soil is too cold and wet anyway.

Put your seed potatoes in egg boxes with the eyes up and keep them in a cold frost-free light area. Now that wasn't too difficult, was it?

When the soil is thawed, go outside. Plant shallot sets and garlic (onions are planted in March). They will benefit from fleece being draped over them, if only to stop the birds pulling them out of the ground.

Traditionally it is time now to sow early peas, onion seeds, parsnips and broad beans, but with the funny seasons I would recommend planting under some cover like fleece or cloches. Sweet pea seeds usually benefit from sowing in toilet roll centres of compost under some cover, if you did not do it in autumn. Oh, for a greenhouse! A nice sheltered area for seeds, plants and gardeners. If you have such a luxury, then it would be good to sow aubergine seeds; they need a long season. That's enough for now!

Plan your fruit garden soon. Have you noticed how many new fruits are available that are said to be good for your health? Many can be grown in your garden without a greenhouse, especially if you have acid soil. Even then, many can be planted in ericaceous soil, as you do azaleas and all hydrangeas that you wish to remain blue. Acid-loving fruits include cranberries, blueberries and lingonberries. I noticed honeyberry *Lonicera kamtschatica*, an edible honeysuckle. (Don't eat the usual ones.) Don't you think that it sounds sweet? The catalogue just says "a reasonable soil".

We've all heard of many others – blackberries (some with no thorns), tayberries, loganberries and jostaberries (also thornless). Then of course there are the usual fruits seen in many gardens – gooseberries; black, white and red currants; raspberries and strawberries. Do you remember how good they were in your grandparents' garden, or your parents' allotment? Try some fruits yourself. You don't need a huge garden. In fact some of them can be grown in a small garden or even in a pot on the patio or balcony.

Now let us think about an orchard – trees on dwarfing root stock?

You've had enough, you think? Well, maybe next month. Look forward to a tasty year!

Diana Pope

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

there have been some remarkable discoveries regarding these Gospel writings. Fragments of very early copies of St Luke's and St John's Gospels have been found at Karamis in Egypt, written on parchment. A tiny fragment of St John's Gospel was discovered in the Cairo shop in 1920, but it was not until some fifteen years later, when it was in the John Rylands Library in Manchester, that it was recognised and dated officially to around AD130 – around a century after the crucifixion of Jesus.

This fragment contains snatches of the report of the Trial of Jesus before the Jewish Council on one side, and Jesus' interview with Pilate on the other. The brief text confirms the reliability of later versions of the same story and is virtually the same as found in modern bibles. Indeed, in all the known versions of the New Testament, that are ancient, there is very little that gives any grounds to suppose that there have been major changes to them. The original Gospel message remains intact. That is a most remarkable fact.

The oldest known book of the Gospel of Luke – two papyrus pages dating from about A.D. 220 – contains fragments consisting of Luke 12:18-37 and Luke 12:42-13:1. This is also one of the oldest surviving books, known as 'Biblia' in the ancient world. It has a central gutter with the holes that once held the stitching. (Chester Beatty Library, Dublin).

So these Gospel writings so familiar to us in our churches today are firmly based in history and properly attested and authenticated by expert scholars.

We owe much to the unknown scribes who laboured faithfully to give us an accurate report of the life and sayings of our Lord. A true testament indeed.

John Shreeve

How to make Cowley Parish (even) better

Thank you for the work of the Home Groups and TEA Parties during Pledge Fortnight, and for the suggestions that were made. I have compiled a list of some of them, particularly suggestions made by several people or ideas that are straightforward to put into practice.

It is an ongoing challenge to use well our money and talents, so please think about which ideas you can put into practice.

(Remember, it's a dangerous thing to leave it to the clergy because a) there are only a few of us, and b) we don't know everything.)

– Revd Susannah Reide

- Invite other Christian churches to share our buildings, contributing towards the costs of running the churches. Looking ahead, could the Asian Christian Fellowship make a contribution to our costs if they were to meet in St James?
- Save money on use of envelopes to distribute letters by folding them, stapling them and addressing them on the back.
- Photocopying uses paper/ink/fuel/time, so keep it to a minimum. Paper is probably cheaper at Honest Stationery. Regular churchgoers did not need mailed letters about the Memorial Service (notices in the Chronicle and Link suffice.)
- Always take a collection at Church in the Centre and other special services.
- Use the St Luke's chapel for services with congregations of less than 15 people (Can the chapel be heated separately from the chancel?)
- Recycle palm crosses by asking people to return their crosses on the last Sunday before Lent to be blessed.
- Ask for contributions of oranges for Christingle from local suppliers.
- Buy communion wine on a French booze run.
- Increase lettings of church buildings to societies, choirs etc.
- Sell advertising space in the Chronicle.
- Increase Sunday and Tuesday lunch prices.
- Reduce paperwork: do not reprint hymns from the green hymn book.
- Rationalise raffle ticket prices: amend to one ticket for £1, rather than a strip of 5 for £1 – saves the cost of raffle ticket books.
- Check that heating is switched down on leaving the building, particularly on Tuesday evenings.
- Have church services in the Church Centre, instead of the church to save costs.

Fundraising ideas

- Gift day linked to flower festival or art exhibition.
- Cake sales after church on Sundays (Yes please! Ed.)
- Organise a Friends of St James group.
- Have a free stall in Templars Square; two charity stalls a year are offered.
- Ask people to submit a recipe so we can publish a Parish Recipe Book.
- Talents – give people a small sum of money and ask them to use their talents to increase the size of the stake by a specific date.
- Annual Gift Day.
- Coffee mornings.

General Comments

- Sadness about the emphasis on giving our money. Help is also much needed for cleaning, visiting and Sunday service rotas.
- The Parish Share was discussed, but Cowley appears to get good value for money with two stipendiary priests, while most other parishes in the Deanery have only one but still pay a Parish Share as high as ours.
- People need to realise that the Church relies on pledged money, so they should try to pay for missed weeks.
- Please will clergy process at the start of the 10 am Eucharist to give a clear signal that the service is beginning?
- Please can there be one evening service a month at St James?
- Can we have authorised lay people to bring Holy Communion to the housebound?

Once again, thank you very much for your hard work and suggestions. Let's choose our priorities and work on them in the coming year. If you feel like taking up one of the ideas listed above, please do so!

Can we?
How much?
Are we prepared to?
Now or later?
Give a little, take a little?
Exciting or annoying?

In a recent letter, one of our Chronicle readers pointed out that in their 2010 diaries, the publisher Letts has named the Sundays in Lent as follows: the seventh, sixth, fifth, and fourth Sundays before Easter, rather than using the beautiful old names of Septuagesima, Sexagesima, Quinquagesima and Quadragesima. When the Church of England was questioned, the authorities pointed out that since many congregations now use the more contemporary Book of Common Worship (as we do in Cowley) rather than the Book of Common Prayer, it seemed sensible to drop the old names which do not appear in Common Worship any more.

“Ah, well,” I sighed, “there goes another tradition and here comes another change.” I must add that as a little girl I loved my Septuagesima Sunday school stamp, and the others too, to stick in my Sunday attendance book. But as I was then (and always have been) a person who loved beautiful words that trip off the tongue, my sadness at the loss of these names is understandable.

I have been giving deeper thought to that controversial word, “change”. Then there is that even more controversial word – “traditional”. As a result of Susannah's brilliant New Year sermon, I found myself addressing the idea of change within the Church.

Harking back once again to my childhood, I well remember

when the vicar in my village church tried to introduce the New English Hymnal (the “green book” as we call it). You see, we had formerly sung from Hymns Ancient and Modern and the idea of using a different “newfangled” book had my mother, along with a good many villagers, up in arms! How could anyone call our green book “newfangled”? Well, I can assure you, 60 years ago it was.

Then my mind moved on to think about those two lovely old pictures, both original works of art, on the walls of the Ranklin Room at the Church Centre. What treasures they are, full of historical information if you look closely. The one depicting the exterior of St James Church shows a rather sad-looking building. Its roof, which in the eighteenth century was lower than the tower, is in a pretty poor state and the whole appearance is one of (almost) neglect. What of the church exterior now?

A high pitched roof in excellent state of repair, the tower with properly pointed stonework, beautiful windows; in all we have a building which speaks of care. The second picture, again from the eighteenth century, shows the interior of the church. The floor is paved with ancient flagstones, there are no stained glass windows, and it has a rough wooden pulpit and a long gallery above where the arched pillars are now positioned. There is no north aisle, the altar stands at floor level against the east wall, and the walls are covered in painted texts and the Ten Commandments. The seating is all boxed pews. Well, where do you begin when you think about the changes?

Let's start with the gallery and the north aisle. Because the parish church at that time

was in such a poor state it was suggested, quite seriously, that it be pulled down. Imagine that! The eminent church architect G. E. Street (RA) was brought to the rescue. It was he who had the gallery ripped down, built the north aisle with its lovely little chapel (now dedicated to St Luke), and installed the fine pillars and arches we know today. He also removed an existing flat ceiling, raised the roof to sit higher than the tower, and replaced the wooden pulpit with a stone one.

Try to imagine the outrage among the people of Cowley about what was happening to their dear old church. While you do that, what on earth do you think they would have felt about the texts on the wall being painted over? – Texts they had known and possibly loved since childhood. I don't have to use my imagination about the removal of the box pews - I know! You see, when I first worshipped at St James we sat on splintery wooden bench pews. I can't tell you the number of pairs of tights I laddered on those splinters.

As a young 30-something, sitting on the PCC, I well remember the battle faced by the Revd Edward Walker, our rector at the time, when he wanted to introduce new green leather chairs. The majority of the PCC were outraged. “You can't get rid of our old pews; they've always been there!” was the cry. I, by the way, could not wait to see the back of them, and no, they had not always been there. People had forgotten that before the pews they recognised were installed, the old box pews had been there.

So I hope you see what I am talking about. Change is tricky – remember the reaction over

selling the Parish Hall?

Even New Year's resolutions are tricky to keep, aren't they? Radical change is even harder, but if our forbears had not endured the changes made to our church and worship in years gone by, we would have no seats at all, our services would be in Latin and (heaven forbid) the sermons would probably go on for anything up to two hours.

– Rosanne Butler

Recycling in St James Church Centre

As stewards of our planet, we in the Church Centre kitchen and office are trying a bit harder with our recycling. As you will have noticed, we have a (donated) set of three stacking recycling bins in the vestibule – mounted on castors so they are easy to move.

The bins are colour-coded to be used as follows.

1. GREEN: coloured paper, paper wrapping, junk mail, envelopes and card, plus juice cartons, which

will be taken separately to Redbridge. (White office paper will continue to go into the outside green box, along with glass bottles & jars.)

2. YELLOW: cans, tins, and foil – all washed. These will then be transferred to the Centre's blue crate.

3. BLUE: soft plastic – all washed. That's bottles, food trays, plastic bags and wrapping but not clingfilm.

None of these items, apart from bottles, should be put into our household blue crates, so they will be taken directly to Redbridge recycling centre, once a week.

The only things that should go into the kitchen pedal bin should be non-recyclables and, unfortunately, all food waste. We would love to have a compost bin, but at the moment do not think it practical. Roll on the council food collection scheme for Cowley, later this year!

Please help us reduce the amount leaving our buildings for land fill and please check where you are putting what material. The bins are clearly labelled.

Thank you. Lesley Williams

Women's World Day of Prayer

The date this year for this important day in our church calendar is Friday, 5 March.

Why Women's World Day of Prayer and not just a World Day of Prayer? Well, the services are devised mainly by Christians from third world countries, many of which consider women to be inferior and not capable of preparing a proper act of worship. Women's World Day of Prayer provides these women with a voice, and very moving are the results. This year's service has been produced by the women of the Cameroons. Although women there were granted equal rights in 1983, tradition is so strong that discrimination is rife and socially they have very little say. It is a privilege to participate in the prayers and act of worship of this year's service. The theme is "Let everything that has breath praise God."

We in Cowley have our choice of services. St Francis holds an evening service at 7.30 pm. Churches Together in Cowley will hold theirs at 2 pm at the Roman Catholic church, The Blessed Dominic Barberi, in Littlemore. The Cowley churches taking part in the afternoon service are as follows:

Rosehill Methodist

United Reform Church

St Mary's, Iffley

St Mary & St Nicholas, Littlemore

Sacred Heart, Blackbird Leys

Holy Family, Blackbird Leys

Blessed Dominic Barberi, Littlemore

Cowley St James

All women are invited to the two services and will receive a warm welcome. The services are followed, of course, by tea, coffee and refreshments.

News from the Schools

ST CHRISTOPHER'S C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL

A very Happy New Year to all the readers of the Cowley Chronicle from everyone at St. Christopher's.

During the autumn term, the children practised hard for their Christmas production of "Hosanna Rock", a story about the Nativity with songs and music. The children gave two performances of this on the 8th December for their family and friends.

There were lots of class parties, a Christmas Disco and a visit from Father Christmas. With all the excitement of Christmas we saved the children's Christmas treat for the first week in January so that they would have something to look forward to in the New Year. M & M Theatre Productions visited the school to present "Beauty and the Beast" which the children thoroughly enjoyed. The school was extremely grateful to the Parent Teacher Association who helped pay for the production.

On Friday, 22nd January the school held a "Non-Uniform Day", when the children can wear normal clothes and bring in a donation for a charity. The school normally holds this in November but because the children and staff were so upset at seeing all the people's suffering in Haiti, the children wanted to do something now. Miss Hanlon organised a staff lunch for everyone to raise funds and in total the school raised over £600 for the Appeal.

Bernadette Fathers, PA to the Headteacher

CHURCH COWLEY ST JAMES C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL

Maniba's Report about our Visitors from the Museum

On Tuesday morning, two strangers came to my class with two big boxes full of interesting things. I wondered who these strangers were. Surprisingly they were Mrs Watts's friends from the Museum. The strangers' names were Andy and Rohan. Andy talked to us about the Pitt River Museum where he works and the Natural History Museum where Rohan works. Meanwhile Rohan was putting these extraordinary things that I have never seen before on the table.

I was longing to touch and smell the objects on the table. And guess what? My dream came true!

We had to be in groups of two or three and were allowed to pick up the objects, but we had to sit down. I touched and smelled a polar bear's foot, reptile skin, snake skin, deer's hooves, a zebra skin and much more. Then we had to pick an object and think of three different questions to ask Rohan or Andy. The object my group chose was a crocodile skin. The questions we asked were: How did the crocodile die? Was it male or female? And, last of all but not least, was it young or old? We got different answers that we did not expect. Overall we all had fun and learned lots of facts and I am really looking forward to going to the museum.

– Maniba Zafar

Climate Change Conference at the Sheldonian

On 14 January, the Year 5s and some of the Year 6s went on a trip to the Sheldonian Theatre. When we got there, a few scientists from Oxford University explained that the morning was about climate change.



As we came in, a wacky man with crazy long hair was singing about socks, because if we don't wear warm clothes, we heat our houses too much. After we sat down, a woman with long red hair told us that an ark or boat will be put in the centre of Oxford with our climate change work in it. Next we learned how we can make new cars powered by hydrogen and we saw models of them – as well as polluting petrol cars. At the end Sydnee and Tom were interviewed by the BBC Oxford.

Abigail Evans

Sunday Services

ST JAMES' CHURCH, BEAUCHAMP LANE

8.00 am Holy Communion

10.00 am Sung Eucharist

Every fourth Sunday: *Church at the Centre*

Every third Sunday: *Sunday Lunch*

ST FRANCIS' CHURCH, HOLLOW WAY

10.30 am Parish Eucharist

Mid-Week Services & Meetings

Monday 8.15 am Morning Prayer – St James
2.30 pm Parish Mothers' Union –
St James (3rd Mon)

Tuesday 8.15 am Morning Prayer – St James
10.00 am Seashells Toddler Group : St James
12.00 pm Eucharist – St James
12.30 pm Tuesday Lunch Club – St James
2.30 pm Friends of St Francis –
St Francis (2nd & 4th)

Wednesday 8.15 am Morning Prayer – St James
9.15 am Morning Prayer – St Francis

Thursday 8.15 am Morning Prayer – St James

Friday 8.15 am Morning Prayer – St James
5.30 pm Evening Prayer – St James

**The Parish of Cowley office in
St James Church Centre is open**

Tuesday 12.30 pm to 3 pm
Friday 9.00 am to 3 pm
and by appointment.

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