

March winds and April showers

Bring forth May flowers

My mother and both my grandmothers used to recite that rhyme every year at this time. My birthday falls in May and I was encouraged to consider myself a May flower. The seasons have changed over the years and the rhyme is no longer strictly true, this April has been particularly dry. We are beginning to learn about the difficulties brought by insufficient rain.

I think the principle still stands though, weather that we find unpleasant is necessary to produce the flowers we love and the harvest we need.

Life can be like that rhyme, we have patches that we definitely dislike and patches full of happiness and joy. Just as we struggle through the wind, the rain and the storms to a time when our gardens and our city are beautiful with flowers so we struggle through the bad times and rejoice in the good times.

Jesus suffered some pretty bad storms on the path that led Him to the Cross, later this month we celebrate the good time when He ascended into Heaven to be with His Father.

After Easter the disciples suffered hard times as they felt all was lost and, leaderless and anxious, they hid from the Pharisees - then came the Day of Pentecost and they were strengthened with the Holy Spirit as Jesus had predicted. We celebrate

Pentecost this month as well, it marks the birth of the Christian Church.

I think it is fair to say that when we are enduring the wind and the rain we do not think about the flowers that will surely follow and when we see the loveliness of the flowers we forget the wind and the rain that are past, instead we congratulate ourselves on our cleverness at making the world more beautiful.

We forget that one situation created the other and we forget that it is all God's work and not ours. For all our modern technology we cannot yet create a primrose, a daisy or an ear of wheat.

When we have bad times in our lives we can forget that God is with us, supporting us. We forget that when things go badly wrong God's heart breaks first. When things go right it is tempting to think we have managed everything for ourselves and forget to thank God for His blessings.

As we celebrate the glory of Ascension Day and the wonder of the Day of Pentecost let us celebrate the March winds and the April showers that nurture the flowers of May.

Shall we all resolve to remember to thank God for the rich and varied lives He has given to us.

Una

Chronicle

Happy Holidays

On the Tuesday after Easter 55 of us set off for our spring break to Portland Bill. Our first stop was Winchester, a look around the cathedral and coffee in the refectory.

Next stop was Compton Acres, the weather was warm and sunny, it was wonderful to see everyone enjoying the wonderful grounds and gardens and views over Brownsea Island.

Teatime saw our arrival at the Heights at Portland. Mary and Richard Sharp were waiting for us there, so pleased to see all the friends they had left behind when they moved to Wanstead to be near their son and daughter. Wednesday morning saw several of us walking in the nearby quarries before breakfast, enjoying the amazing views of Chesil beach and Weymouth.

First stop Bidport, market day in the small Dorset town. A sunny afternoon saw us picnicking in the grounds of the Swannery at Abbotsbury. Staying to see the feeding of over 1000 Swans. Many of the swans were nesting, not at all disturbed by the visitors to the Swannery.

Thursday morning dawned sunny again, walkers out again before breakfast, then a morning visit to the lighthouse, many of us going to the top to admire the wonderful views. A visit from Stephen, Sharon and Lizzy in the afternoon, and they were pleased to enjoy the evening meal with us all.

Friday was our trip on the steam train from Corfe Castle to Swanage, and then a few hours exploring the town. A group of us found the local pitch and putt great fun.

We left Portland Bill on Saturday morning, refreshed by the wonderful weather and friendship we had enjoyed. Our visit to Stapehill Abbey on a warm sunny afternoon, including a craft fair, was a fitting end to an amazing few days. For Brian and myself, as well as Richard and Mary, it was great to be with our friends at St James and St Francis, we treasure the friendships we all share. We now look forward to a winter break in November to Torquay, and our spring holiday to Eastbourne in 2008 God bless you all

Barbara and Brian

Help with the Prayer Diary.

I invite readers of the Prayer Diary to help me by giving me ideas for subjects for prayer. I cannot keep thinking up things all on my own, month after month. I am sure many of you have special things for which you pray or know of circumstances which need our prayers.

Also I would welcome ideas for the front of the Diary, small items, prayers, sayings, charity explanations, anything that would stir people to thought and to prayer. I may have to edit these pieces to fit the space.

I can be found at St James' on Sundays, at the lunch club, at tea break, at the Saturday service at St Francis - you all know that I am the one with the white stick and tinted glasses. My e-mail is: una@deanery.fsnet.co.uk, my telephone number is Oxford **779855** and I live at 66 Fern Hill Road.

Would anyone consider typing out the list of roads for me? At present it is in handwriting and I have great difficulty deciphering it, I would appreciate it if someone would type it out in a good size font for me, it would make life much easier.

Una Dean

May morning on Magdalen Bridge

Save the Children make and sell posies
I've heard people say "wish they were roses"
instead of gilly flowers that last for hours
and from the bridge foolish lads would leap
Just as did their dads
Then all mud and wet will creep
on May morning on Magdalen bridge

Choir sings from the tower
at six o'clock on the hour
Madrigals are sung
Church bells ring
Morris men dance
While gargoyles glance
Foolish lads from the bridge will leap
As did their dads
From Magdalen bridge on May morning

Gwen Fancutt

Rosanne Interviews Mark Oxbrow

'Mark who?' I can hear my readers saying this month! So I'm relying on all those who heard our latest personality give an inspiring address at the Maundy supper to explain to their friends. After all, there were about 70 of us there that evening in St James' Church Centre so Mark is not a complete unknown. Beside which he did give us a brief introduction on the front page of 'The Chronicle' a couple of months ago, so here I am filling in the background.

Mark is the Assistant General Secretary of the Church Mission Society (CMS) which for decades has had its headquarters in central London. As with many older buildings, there came a point when the only solution for its continued use was to spend vast amounts of money on renovation or tear it down and rebuild or relocate to an area outside London altogether. After researching the whole country for somewhere with excellent access to major roads and railway links and with a quick and easy commute to an international airport, the place that fitted the bill was – Cowley! Mark arrived here in December 2005 in order to oversee the establishment of CMS's new premises and to hunt

out suitable housing for the 70+ staff who will soon be working there. Pretty soon he found a nice house to suit his own needs and moved in. Then he found St James' Church and this is where our story really begins.

He told me at the outset of our interview that the idea of becoming a missionary had been a deep-seated wish from the very early age of five. His mother had a friend known to Mark and his two younger brothers at Aunt Elizabeth, who was a missionary in Nigeria. He loved her and treasured the little gifts she brought him from Africa on her visits to his parents' home in Ipswich. Both his parents were very involved in the local church, his father as churchwarden and Sunday school superintendent and his mother who helped him run a church youth group. So from his babyhood, church was an important part of family life.

After 6 years at the nearby Church of England primary school, he (and indeed his brothers too) failed the 11+ exams, and much to his mother's disappointment, was destined for a local comprehensive with a poor reputation. However, on the other side of town was a Ro-

man Catholic secondary school, St Joseph's College, and places were found there because of their Christian background. Mark declares that the teaching he received there added a new dimension to his faith. The majority of the staff were Roman Catholic brothers who lived on the premises and were therefore able to offer a wide range of after-school activities such as chess club and sailing, both of which he enjoyed. Asked about his academic strengths, he cited the science subjects, mainly zoology and physics. And what about sports? With a wry smile he told me he is 'absolutely useless' with a small ball, so tennis, cricket and hockey were way outside his capabilities but the oval ball is another matter. Rugby was a favourite. He also did well in athletics. One look at his tall frame would easily explain that.

University followed – he read physics at Reading. By the way, he told me that between the three Oxbrow brothers, they hold six degrees. After university it was out into the world of work. He took advantage of a scheme for graduates run by the huge company Unilever and was offered a job in quality control at the Lowestoft-based Birdseye Frozen Food

company (no, I didn't know they were part of Unilever either!)

It was during the year he was with the company, however, that he was called to the ministry, and so it was back to college, this time to Ridley Hall in Cambridge, to gain his theology degree. His first placement as curate in 1976 was at Chatham in Kent, in a parish near to the world-famous dockyard. It was at this time that the dockyard was closing down, causing much anxiety in the town over redundancy, unemployment and all the implications involved. It was not an easy time for a young curate because added to this he was caught up in an interregnum between two very different vicars and found himself running the parish for a year or more singlehanded. The parish itself was a joint Anglican/Methodist one, adding yet another dimension to his Christian understanding.

The second of his two vicars in Chatham was a hospital chaplain. Mark shared some of the work and discovered an ability to relate to the psychiatric patients in particular. So on being offered his first parish he became half-time chaplain to Newcastle's psychiatric hospital and half-time vicar of a small church on the outskirts of the city. He had spent eight rewarding years there when the new government initiative, Care in the Community, was launched,

challenging his decision on whether to move on or not. You see, he was 'head-hunted' by CMS who already knew about him and were looking for people of his calibre to work in multi-cultural areas of Britain such as Newcastle itself, Manchester, Birmingham, Bolton and Bradford. So his missionary work began. Another change in his career came when he began working in Eastern Europe and Russia as an immediate response to the fall of communism and the return of the legality of Christianity in that vast area.

Curious to know what kind of work he might do in such places (not a bit like a missionary sitting in a cannibal's pot!), Mark told me he initiated partnerships with local churches to help them to effect their own missions, also how, in Russia, there is a need to set Religious Education firmly on the school curricula and, of course, there is the international need for education about drug-taking and its consequences. In Romania, because Christianity has been illegal for so long, the churches there need help to engage youngsters (the next generation) in their faith. In many countries the Scout and Guide movements are actively involved. He also found that there was no tradition of charitable giving or volunteering. For example, a hospice in Gravesend wanted to set up a similar hospice in Romania. The Romanians had

no idea how to set about it themselves so a small house was found and experienced staff went out to help. So from tiny beginnings a hospice network began, surely God's work in practical and spiritual terms. Of course, all this involved huge amounts of travelling and since he handed over his position to a young Russian in 2001 to become Assistant General Secretary, he travels even more widely.

He meets people in many countries, from eminent leaders and politicians to the poorest of the poor and confided that although it is a great honour to be received by the likes of the Grand Mufti of Syria he most enjoys sharing the lives of ordinary families in ordinary homes. Still he is impressed with how the moderate ruler of Syria is seeking agreement with his muslim people and the Christian church. And so his work continues. He is planning to spend much of the summer here in the UK to oversee the opening of the new CMS headquarters sited behind the BMW factory in Watlington Road. In October the Archbishop of Canterbury will perform the official opening ceremony and then Mark will be off again on more missionary journeys.

How would you describe yourself as a small child?

Fairly quiet. My mother was

concerned about my call to the ministry, wondering how I'd cope. I was a serious child who was a responsible older brother.

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

This is a comment on society then and now – I remember going off with a group of friends (we were still quite young) on our bikes in the summer to Framlingham and coming back when it was nearly dark. My mother just said, 'Did you have a good day?' (which we had), whereas nowadays parents would probably have the police out searching.

Is there anything in modern society which disappoints you?

What disappoints me is individualism. People are so focused on their own lives. I've seen kids around the world having so much fun living in a wider community.

Is there anything in modern life that you find en-

couraging or positive?

One thing I'm very aware of is the way the world is waking up to the need to care for the environment, especially the under thirties.

Do you have a treasured possession?

I have an Ethiopian coffee pot. I have a friend, Gabriel, who lives in Addis Ababa. He became my pen friend when I was 14. One evening I went to the house of his in-laws for a meal and although they didn't have much to give as a keepsake, they wanted me to have the coffee pot. A couple of weeks later their home, which happened to be near an ammunition dump, was totally destroyed and everything in it when the dump was blown up. Luckily they were not there – but the coffee pot would have been destroyed too. And it makes very good coffee!

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

Somebody who has been a big influence is Brother

Roger of Taizé. I have actually met him. Because he has lived a very simple lifestyle I aspire to do the same.

How do you like to spend your leisure time?

Nowadays I like to walk in really remote and wild countryside. I have a little cottage in Cumbria which is just right.

What makes you laugh?

I enjoy subtle humour and reflections on the humour of real life, such as the films of Jacques Tati.

Do you have ambitions for the future, say in ten years' time?

One plan workwise is to take the lead in setting up a missionary network across the world, especially getting Asian and African churches involved. When I retire I think I'd like to write more for my own fun rather than for publication.

Cowley
PARISH REPORT

This month and next month the Chronicle carries reports from the various annual parish and church meetings.

Church membership & attendance 2007

The previous roll had built up over 5 years with the only removals being through death or leaving Oxford. There are 187 [199 in 2006] parishioners on the new electoral roll (47 [60] from St Francis Church and 140 [139] from St James Church), 28 of whom were not on the previous roll. 42 [37] are not resident within the Parish. The average Sunday attendance is 135 [118] - (35 [33] at St Francis and 100 [85] at St James).

Cowley PARISH REPORT

Parish Warden's Report

This interregnum year has been a busy one for many people as they have taken on extra work which Fr Stephen and Gwen did in previous years. First of all we thank Beth for all the work and pastoral care she has done as our only full-time priest in the parish and in her first year as a curate. We thank Fr Lorne for his work and pastoral care to the congregation at St Francis, we also thank Michael our part-time deacon for his work and the retired priests John Gawne-Cain, Tony Beetham, Mark Oxbrow, Revd Hugh Wybrow, Fr Donald Clewer, Revd Sister Margaret Anne and lay reader Eric Uren who have assisted Beth and Fr Lorne by taking services, giving home communion and other support.

Throughout the year through the commitment and work of lots of people, our patterns of the worship have been maintained, outreach work, the home groups have continued and the communication outlets the Chronicle and Link.

Following Stephen's final Eucharist at St James a lunch party for the whole parish was held at the church centre at which we said farewell to Stephen, Sharon and family and made a presentation to Stephen thanking him for his 10 years as Rector. We welcomed Michael to our clergy team following his ordination as Deacon last summer. Beth was ordained priest at Christ Church Cathedral in September supported by a good number of parishioners.

Our main outreach mission has been to welcome *Florence Park Family Centre* to rent St Francis Hall for a year and *Seashells* at St James Church Centre.

We thank the Archdeacon, the venerable Julian Hubbard, our PCC secretary and the group appointed by the PCC to compile the parish profile. This entailed many hours of work and extra PCC meetings. Philip Hind then produced an excellent report to send out to applicants for the post of team rector. The interview day went well with many of the congregation helping and meeting the candidates. The panel were unanimous in their decision to offer the post to the Rev Howard Thornton which he accepted.

In February a confirmation service was held and members in our congregations were confirmed.

The new heating system has at last been installed in St Francis Church. There are some damp problems at St Francis which need attention and areas of the church needed decorating.

The quinquennial inspection was carried out at St James Church last year and an inspection will take place at St Francis Church this year. *Florence Park Family Centre* have made some improvements at St Francis which will benefit the church buildings after they leave.

There have been some fundraising events over the year, a very successful Caribbean evening held at St Francis Church raised over £1300 for the new heating system and a very successful therapy afternoon raised over £600 for the centre as well as small amounts be-

ing raised at some enjoyable events. Thank you to all who organised and supported these occasions.

Last year Gwen Ranklin announced she would not accept the nomination as church warden after serving a total of 21 years in that position in the parish. A retirement party was held for Gwen in the church centre which was well supported. Stephen presented Gwen with a cheque, a gift from the congregations of St James and St Francis. We wished her God's blessing in her retirement. However she continues to share her knowledge, time and experience with us in both churches. Alan Howells was elected to serve with me as church wardens for this year. But Alan had to resign his post during the year owing to pressure of work. We thank Alan for his work as churchwarden and for continuing work at St James. We thank Margaret Martin, deputy churchwarden at St James for all her work and to Pat Cheung at St Francis.

On July 8th this year Fr Lorne will be leaving the Cowley Team Ministry to become a full-time priest in a parish in Kent. His dedicated pastoral care and ministry at St Francis has been valued by the congregation and he will be missed in the parish. He will leave with our prayers and thanks for leading us in worship and mission during his time with us and with God's guidance and blessing as he goes forward in full-time ministry.

We now look forward to the coming year as we prepare to welcome and work together as a parish with father Howard, Beth and Michael, as we each try to spread the gospel in Cowley through worship, prayers, care and mission.

The big thank you to George, Gwen, Fr Lorne and for everyone's support to me during the year.

Norah Shallow

Cowley deanery synod report

The synod has met four times this year plus one joint meeting with Oxford deanery synod. The meeting on Wednesday the 8th March 2006 was held at St Clement's Family Centre. The main business was the presentation of accounts for 2005 and a budget for 2006. The Bishop of Ebbsfleet told us of his work as a 'flying bishop'.

On Wednesday 17th May 2006 we met at St Peter and Paul, Botley together with Oxford deanery. Revd Steve Croft gave an interesting talk entitled "Fresh Expressions".

On Wednesday 14th June 2006 we were welcomed at St Mary's Church, Barton. After the agenda business Margot and Martin Hodson gave an inspiring presentation on climate change with an emphasis on the Christian's responsibility towards the environment.

The November meeting took place on Tuesday 28th at St Michael and all Angels Church. The business agenda included the parish share allocation 2007 (Cowley Parish share will be £43,533). Then Dr Peter Steddon led a brilliant talk and discussion called "bricks without mortar", an introduction to the work of the Oxford Industrial Chaplaincy.

Round once again to the annual business meeting held on 28th February 2007 at the Holy Family Blackbird Leys. Members accepted the allocation of the parish share. The amount paid reflects the numbers on the church's electoral rolls. The talk was about Pakistan with a very moving slide presentation. A petition was available for signing asking that charities should be exempt from paying the VAT to the government.

Pat Cheung

Cowley parish mothers' union

The Mothers' Union is an international Christian charity with 3.6 million members dedicated to promoting family life and marriage through projects, fellowship and prayer. It undertakes groundbreaking community work in 76 countries worldwide.

Our 20 members are drawn from both St James and St Francis. We meet on the third Monday of the month at 2:30 p.m. in St James centre.

Our theme for 2006 was "Answering God's Call" and our programme reflects this. We shared many social occasions, prayerful and quiet afternoons. We shared meals together, hosted speakers and visits from our deanery leader and diocesan president. We also met our world leader Trisa Hayward.

Our average attendance has been 16 people. All our meetings are open to friends and non-members, sometimes our numbers are 20 plus. We are committee led. Through our subscriptions we support projects at home and abroad.

Our theme for 2007 is "Faith in Action". Our branch project this year will be to collect toiletries and foodstuffs for the Cherwell Refuge.

We hope to engage more with local young mothers and children. Some of our members already help at Seashells. Watch this space!

Pat Cheung for Cowley Parish mother's Union

St James

St James church centre

Over the year the centre has been used for many church activities and community groups. The Fellowship of Reconciliation charity who rent the two offices upstairs are excellent tenants. Their director, Chris Coles and staff have become friends of many of us. The PCC have agreed to their request to extend their contract which we welcome.

Due to the firm H. E. Edwards going into liquidation just after the centre was finished the snagging list has been delayed and the final bill for building and legal fees has not yet been received. The diocese has taken on the responsibility for the work to be done, a building firm has taken on the work, which we look forward to being completed soon.

The garden around the centre is looking beautiful this spring. Catherine and John Gawn-Cain have spent many days working to achieve this, Catherine planting the layout and organising the three working parties held to plant bulbs and move and erect the shed from the hut site. Thank you to all who have helped them and donated bulbs. We have bought a leaf blower to clear the leaves from the gravel. The outside seating area and bank at the side of the hall have been greatly improved by the building of a very impressive wall and garden and has not involved us spending any money. Our sincere thanks to Catherine and John for their dedication and hard work in all they have done to make the garden surrounding the centre so beautiful for us all to enjoy.

Our thanks to Pat Chambers who has kept the centre cleaned with great care and shared the task of opening and closing the centre for bookings since we moved in. Pat has now been strongly advised by her doctor to cut back physical activities and has reluctantly had to resign from her work at the centre. She will be greatly missed. We are now looking for someone to take her place.

Our thanks to Pat Sansom, the voluntary booking officer, for her work in arranging all bookings, receiving payments for bookings and sharing the task with Pat, Christine and Gwen, of opening the centre for bookings.

The church centre committee is accountable to the PCC and report is given at both St

James Church committee and PCC meetings.

Our centre has given us opportunities to develop work with the local community as well as church activities and we need to continue looking at ways to continue this in mind both as a mission project and for financial returns. We now know our costs for running the centre and the committee will be looking at ways to increase bookings especially during the day. We also have to have a financial plan to save money for future decorations as our contract requires us to decorate the interior every five years (every seven years outside) and we already see signs of wear and tear. The prices for hire have been increased a little from January 1 for all new bookings.

Thank you for all those who help in the running of the centre which involves quite a lot of time to honour fee basis and to John Gawne-Cain for doing lots of maintenance tasks.

St James Warden's report from Margaret Martin

At last year's APCM Alan Howell was elected churchwarden for St James Church. He found however that with pressures at work he could not continue in this post so it falls to me as deputy warden to compile this report. I should like year to thank Alan for his time in office, for his hard work in the period before the interviews for team Rector and for his support in his new role coordinating the Sunday rota.

There are many people to thank for their work over the past year which has been dominated by Stephen's resignation and the subsequent interregnum. Our thanks are due to our clergy: Beth, Michael, Tony and Mark for their lead in our worship and for their pastoral care. An extra thank you to Beth for undertaking some of the churchwarden's work.

We have a good representation of the congregation as sidespersons, readers, intercessions and coffee makers at our Sunday services. They are all very reliable, flexible and cooperative. A mention here for the sidespersons who count the collection and for Frank Butler for doing the banking each week. Brian Tidy continues to provide the music at 10 a.m. service; an ad hoc singing group occasionally provide additional music. Trudy Jones acts as a vergers at weddings and funerals.

We were sorry to say goodbye to Tony Olley as an altar server and thank Peter Hunter for continuing in this role. Also Eric and Una for the addresses they had given at Sunday services.

Junior Church has a dedicated band of leaders and caters for a lively group of children ranging in age from 2 to 15 years. More volunteers to help with the younger children would be appreciated.

Bellringing practice is held in the tower on some Monday evenings and the team rings for weddings but unfortunately there is no team to ring for Sunday worship.

John Gawne-Cain has offered to be responsible for the maintenance of the church building and overseeing the work necessary following the quinquennial survey. St James committee appointed a group to liaise with John and it is hoped to get a band of people to assist with this vital work. Catherine Gawne-Cain together with John has cleared overgrown shrubs from the churchyard and it is hoped that with the help of working parties more clearance can take place. Grace Richards tends the memorial garden and Phil Thomas cares for the other flower bed. The city council continue to cut the grass.

The social life of our church continues to be enhanced by the church centre as our venue for Sunday breakfast and occasional evening dinners as well as giving an opportunity to engage with the community through Tuesday lunches, bingo and Seashells. Thanks are due to Gwen, chair of the church centre committee, and to all who work so extremely hard for the success of these activities.

A hard-working team keep the church looking clean and cared for and the brass shining. Unfortunately their numbers have been depleted by illness and the care of the main body of the church falls on just two people—more volunteers needed! Thank you to those who have worked so hard in the past and to our current cleaning team.

Thank you to Una for producing the prayer diary each month, and since Stephen left, to Lesley Williams for the Link and to Philip Hind for the Chronicle.

In April 2006 and again this year a group from the church enjoyed a holiday together. Thanks to Gwen and Barbara Brown for organising these events giving people a chance of relaxation and fellowship.

As the accounts show our financial situation is very precarious. We need to do some serious fundraising both for our own financial stability and to give to charities and missions. Ideas, help and support for this please. It has been impossible to name everyone deserving thanks but I hope that everyone who assists in the organisation of our church feels that they have been acknowledged.

Thank you to all in the congregation for making my year as deputy warden so enjoyable.

Margaret Martin

Seashells

The noisiest hour and a half in the life of the Church Centre is between 10.00 and 11.30 on Tuesday mornings when the Seashells baby and toddler group takes place. The group started in January 2006 with 8 children, and numbers increased very rapidly—30 children and their parents or carers came this week. We aim to provide a welcoming place for parents to enjoy playing with their children and to find support and friendship. Five or six Dads regularly attend the group, as well as grandparents, great-grandparents and child-minders. We currently do not charge an entrance fee, but ask for donations towards the cost of providing refreshments and the running costs of the Church Centre.

We are extremely grateful to the catering team of Rosanne, Frank, Sylvia, Bob and Sarah who provide a very warm welcome to all who come through the doors; and to Cyril and Audrey who gave donations to start the group and have continued to support us. We are also very pleased to welcome Rosemary to the team, who greets parents and children as they arrive.

Beth, Chris and Lorna

Tuesday lunch club

2006 was a very successful and enjoyable year for the lunch club. Numbers increased very encouragingly throughout the year. The club met every Tuesday without a break which gave continuous social enjoyment to all. While managing to keep the cost of meals at a reasonable level a considerable profit was made which was very rewarding.

The lunch club welcomes not only our own parishioners but also other members of the community and all who come enjoy a very happy hour or so with friends and neighbours, long may it continue.

Sunday breakfast club

After the eight o'clock service a simple breakfast is served in the church centre. All those who call in enjoy this informal get-together and a small donation of 50p per person covers the cost of the breakfast. If attendance at the eight o'clock service is not possible friends of St James can still call in and enjoy a cup of coffee and something to eat.

Christine Woodman

Bingo

The bingo sessions have continued throughout this year providing an opportunity for people to share friendship and fun among church members and from the community. Our thanks to Phil McLaren and who coordinates the sessions, to all who help her, to Cyril Room and Norman Alderson our callers, to Cyril for his generous donations of prizes, and to Enid for doing the Teas.

During the year we had a three course Christmas dinner, thanks to Doreen and helpers who cooked and served this and an Easter and summer tea party.

We have celebrated special birthdays and anniversaries of members and sent cards to those who are ill.

Our numbers have decreased over the year through ill-health and we would welcome new members to join us on a regular or occasional basis.

Gwen Ranklin

St Francis

Florence Park Family Centre

Hello from Norma, Lynda, Cristina and Phil, the staff at Florence Park Family Centre. Since January we have been settling in at St Francis Church and are providing some of our regular services: drop-in where adults come with their children to play, socialise and receive information and support; groups for women, with a creche: and we are developing a group for very young parents.

We have been pleased to see families from the local community using the service at the church and they have told us how good it is for them to have the facility 'on their doorstep'. Some families that used to attend our building in the park continue to use us at St Francis Church.

We would like to thank the committee and all involved at St Francis for the warm welcome we have received and the continual goodwill which is forthcoming as we strive to provide a children's centre service from the church. If you would like to see what we do with all the equipment we have stored in the various corners of the church and how we set it all up for families please call in and see us when we run our drop-in: Monday 12 – 2.30 p.m., Thursday and Friday 10.30 – 2.30 p.m.

Tea break

Tea break has once again proved its appeal to regular attendees, and numbers have remained strong. It is always held on the first Wednesday of the month-starting at 2:30 p.m. until approx 4:30 p.m.

A fairly low key event, it gives people a chance to have a good chat over a cup of tea and some homemade cakes into the bargain.

No charge is made for this, but people can give a small contribution if they wish. This is open to everyone-not just church members, we welcome new faces. If you are on your own this is a chance to meet new people in a friendly atmosphere.

John Shreeve

Saturday morning praise

By the nature of its early morning start, our Saturday service will always only attract small numbers, especially during winter months. However, it does have a quiet appeal all of its own, and regular attendees find it uplifting and peaceful.

Lorne has once again offered the opportunity for lay volunteers to practice their skills at giving short homilies on biblical texts. This we know is greatly valued by those brave enough to have a go.

The breakfast that follows gives us a chance to socialise a bit, and is usually accompanied by cheerful conversation.

During the short prayer section in the service we have the chance to mention things of particular concern to us, and remember any who are ill from our congregations.

This service is open to anyone who wishes to attend and new people are always welcome.

John Shreeve

Tyndale Singers at St Francis

On 18th April a small audience gathered for a concert by the Tyndale Singers.

We were promised Music from the English Renaissance, but many of us had no idea of the treat in store for us.

We enjoyed madrigals and sacred music from William Byrd, Henry Purcell, John Sheppard, John Taverner, John Blow, John Dowland and Orlando Gibbons.

Much of the music was lively and the choir sang with great expressions and obvious enjoyment.

Only 6 singers were needed, and the conducting was shared by the group. The acoustics are lovely in St. Francis Church so we could really hear our building full of 'a joyous noise!' The singers also received pleasure from the sounds reverberating around the church.

We are greatly indebted to Sara —our organist, for arranging this concert to raise money for music for St.Francis' fledgling choir. Few people were able to come and enjoy the hour, but we hope that there will be another concert later in the year. So if you get another chance, do join us and enjoy a really nice evening of music.

Diana Pope

Schools

Church Cowley St James School

The Parish is represented by Foundation Governors Lesley Williams & Christine Woodman. Lesley took over the role of Chair of Governors when Stephen moved in summer 2006; he has not yet been replaced as a Foundation Governor and the school has missed the regular input of a member of the clergy for assemblies and RE, and for staff chaplaincy.

We hope either Howard or Michael will soon take his place and help us establish closer

links between the church & the school staff & families. We have also been without Community, Teacher & 2 Parent Governors, so shared governance and involvement in school life has been difficult..

The school is now developing well under Tom Walker's able leadership, having lived through a period of rapid expansion & staff turbulence. It was recently given a 'Satisfactory' OFSTED assessment and has today (26/04/07) been inspected under Section 48 – the Diocesan inspection.

Discussion with the Inspector focussed on developing and evaluating worship and on a more confident declaration of our Christian status and mission.

We hope for further training for all the Governors and staff soon and then look forward to celebrating the 50th anniversary of the combined school and the centenary of Cowley St James foundation, in 2008.

St Christopher's C. of E. primary school has had a year of change and progress on a number of important fronts. In July 06 the OFSTED inspectors found the overall standard of education, care and community links satisfactory to good and set challenges to raise attainment in maths and to stretch the more able pupils.

The diocesan SIAS inspection was very complimentary finding a strong Christian ethic in the school coupled with excellent understanding of pupils from other faith backgrounds. A new deputy head was appointed in September 06. His special role is to provide challenges for gifted and talented pupils. The head is in the final stages of her headteacher qualification certificate having passed all stages so far with excellent results. In December 06 the school received validation as a "healthy school".

The school caretaker of many years standing retired the new caretaker being voted a "ray of sunshine" as well as a most competent person.

Within the community the group Dhol Drummers have appeared on TV and also performed at several local fairs and parades. They will be leading the parade at this year's Cowley Road Carnival. Plans are well underway to expand the foundation stage building with a new classroom, cloakrooms and laundry facility. The next stage in the building programme is a new school library, sickbay and administration block.

Healing Ministry in the Parish

We have a healing prayer ministry in the parish. There are monthly healing services, usually the first Thursday, alternately at St James' and St Francis', these are evening Eucharists where healing team members offer personal prayer. Healing ministry is available at St James' on Sunday mornings. The prayer ministry is confidential and relies totally on God's healing power.

The next healing service is on June 7th at St Francis.

Traidcraft

at St James

During the past year sales of fairly traded goods on the stall have remained at about £10 to £12 per week. The basic stock is muesli, chocolate, coffee, tea, sugar and dried fruit. Thanks to Pat for her help in serving on the stall and to loyal customers in promoting Fair-trade and helping to improve the lives of those in the third world producing these goods.

at St Francis

This is the third year Traidcraft has run at St Francis Church, Lyn Lord and Shirley Costar have done a good job in raising people's awareness of Fairtrade. We continue on the first and third Sunday of the month to sell Traidcraft's excellent produce and would like to thank all who support us.

Flower arranging

at St James

This has been another busy year for the flower arranging team. As well as weekly decoration of the church we arranged flowers for 11 weddings. It is hard work but while we endeavour to enhance the beauty of our church we enjoy friendship and mutual support. Thanks to the regular team and to those who have helped at harvest, Christmas and Easter. Thanks to members of the congregation who have made such generous donations to the flower fund. Apart from wedding fees donations are the only source of income.

at St Francis

The flower rota has a dedicated group of ladies who weekly make our church pretty and feel much loved. It never fails to impress on special occasions such as St Francis day, Christmas and Easter. How all this group transform our lovely church into a place of beauty. Just as a footnote we privately call ourselves the "plonkers"-that's those of us who are not so gifted and "plonk" our arrangement in vases!!

Rainbows, Brownies, Scouts

Rainbows

Since moving into the new hall Rainbows has progressed nicely our numbers are slowly growing. We have several different activities including cooking, art and craft and badge work.

Fourth Cowley rainbows

For girls aged five to seven years who enjoy making friends and having lots of fun. Our programme rainbow jigsaw works on the topics: Look, learn, laugh, love. We have worked for the following badges: Rainbow roundabout festivals and roundabout rainbows. And also for the rights to be me and right to be happy badges. We have taken part in a sponsored event for a leukaemia charity and joined the Brownies for a party. At our meetings on Wednesdays 4.45 to 5:45 p.m. we enjoy making things, doing artwork, singing, playing games and talking. In all we have a very busy hour of laughter and fun.

Brownies

Since moving our pack has developed. Our numbers have stayed the same but the bigger space has allowed us to do different things. We held a thinking day for the Division that was well received.

Fourth Cowley Brownies

Four girls aged seven to 10 years every Wednesday six to 7:30 p.m. Brownies have lots of fun whilst making things, playing games and working for interest badges. Now have a new badge called right to be badges. So far we have completed the: *Right to be me, The right to learn The right to be happy, Right to be heard.*

Doing these we have learnt about ourselves and the children of the world comparing our lives to the poorer countries. These are hard but interesting badges.

We have partied with Rainbows and had a sponsor event for a leukaemia charity.

We would like some more new friends especially some from different cultures so we could learn about other countries and religions.

5th Cowley (St. Lukes) Guides

We moved into the Church Centre at the beginning of April last year after celebrating 60 years of continuous Guiding. We have a regular number of 20 girls, sometimes increasing to 25. There are 4 Qualified Leaders and a Young Leader.

As a unit we have taken part in the Guide Anglia Arts Challenge, First Things First, and now working on the Rights Badges. So far, The Right to be Me, The Right to be Happy. The girls also chose their own Go for its, and work at these in their patrols.

In August we camped for a week at Cowley in Gloucester, taking with us Guides from 1st Blackbird Leys. We had a lovely day out at Bristol Zoo during the week. This February the two units had a successful weekend away at the newly rebuilt Jubilee House.

Laura Sherwood one of the older Guides gained the top award in the Guide Section, the Baden-Powell Award. We celebrated this achievement on the 22nd March, and Laura will also have it presented again, at the Oxfordshire Guiding A.G.M. in June.

We are currently collecting Sainsbury's Active Kids vouchers to buy some activity equipment.

Leaders: Cynthia Retter, Alison Retter, Gemma Richmond, Becky Wiggins
Young Leader: Aimee Harbison

37th Oxford Scout Group

The Group has run regular weekly meetings of Scouts aged 12 to 15 on Tuesdays and Cubs aged 8 to 11 on Wednesdays providing a wide range of activities for the 20 – 30 boys and girls involved, supported by 6 Adult leaders and helpers. These have included first aid training, cooking, cycle rides, walking, handicrafts, district competitions, water activities, making maps and of course camping at local scout campsites. Parents and supporters have raised funds by providing refreshments at local events using the Group's marquee and equipment. New heating and electrical refurbishments have been completed in the Hall thanks to help from the Doris Field Trust. The Group AGM is on May 10th at 7 p.m. in the Hall – come along and find out more.

Scout Leader : Leo Catney : 01993 864944

Sunday Services

ST JAMES' CHURCH, BEAUCHAMP LANE

8.00 am	Holy Communion
10.00 am	Sung Eucharist (<i>exc 2nd Sunday</i>)
	All Age Eucharist (<i>2nd Sunday</i>)

ST FRANCIS' CHURCH, HOLLOW WAY

10.30 am	Parish Eucharist
	[<i>Family Eucharist – 2nd Sunday of the month</i>]

Mid-Week Services & Meetings

Monday	9.00 am	Morning Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	10.00 am	Toddler Group – <i>St Francis</i>
	2.30 pm	Parish Mothers' Union – <i>St James (3rd Mon)</i>
	5.00 pm	Evening Prayer – <i>St James</i>
Tuesday	9.00 am	Morning Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	10.00 am	Seashells Toddler Group – <i>Church Centre</i>
	10.00 am	Toddler Service – <i>St Francis</i>
	12.00 pm	Eucharist – <i>St James</i>
	12.30 pm	Tuesday Lunch Club – <i>St James</i>
	2.30 pm	Friends of <i>St Francis</i> – <i>St Francis (2nd & 4th)</i>
	5.00 pm	Evening Prayer – <i>St James</i>
Wednesday	9.00 am	Morning Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	2.30 pm	Tea Break – <i>St Francis (1st Wed)</i>
	5.00 pm	Evening Prayer – <i>St James</i>
Thursday	9.00 am	Morning Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	11.00 am	St Francis Prayer Group
	5.00 pm	Evening Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	7.00 pm	Eucharist – <i>St Francis</i>
Friday	9.00 am	Morning Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	5.00 pm	Evening Prayer – <i>St James</i>
Saturday	9.15 am	Morning Prayer & Breakfast – <i>St Francis</i>

Day Off

Lorne and Michael can be contacted in the evenings and at weekends. Beth can be contacted during the day as well.

PARISH DIRECTORY

TEAM RECTOR

(DESIGNATE):

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