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THE R E A D E R

Summer 2001
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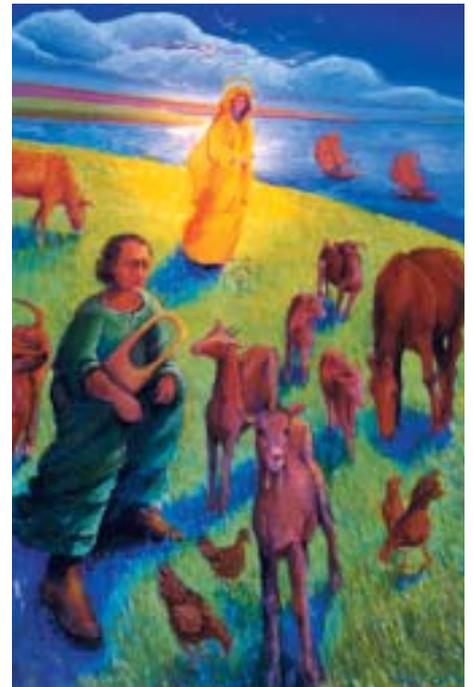
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Cover Painting 'St Hilda and Caedmon'
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Summer 2001 Volume 98 No.2

THE READER

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The evocative words on the front cover of this issue of *The Reader* come from lines traditionally ascribed to King Alfred the Great. Did you know that Alfred was such a theologian? In its complete form the saying reads, 'To see Thee is the end and the beginning, Thou carriest me and Thou goest before, Thou art the journey and the journey's end.' They feel exceptionally appropriate to use in connection with our current theme of spirituality – and with our particular stress this time on the spirituality of place. For at the same time as reminding us of the importance of journeys and pilgrimage, they draw our attention to the fact that the ultimate goal of our pilgrimage must be God himself, who is himself our everlasting 'home'. Indeed in Jewish thought God is sometimes addressed as 'Ha-Maqom' – 'The Place'. He is the place that sanctifies all places and all times. Holy places derive their holiness from him.

That is something with which I have been wrestling in the last few weeks. As part of my work for USPG I recently attended the Sabeel conference in Jerusalem. It was a privilege to be able to be there, and to revisit Jerusalem once again, where I lived for five years before my marriage. Sabeel is an organisation that developed during the 1990s due to the initiative of the Anglican Palestinian priest, Canon Naim Ateek, but it has now become very much a grassroots organisation of Palestinian Christians, working ecumenically and attracting into its membership lay people and clergy from a wide variety of churches in Jerusalem and Palestine. It seeks to present a non-violent case for a just peace in the Holy Land, which meets the aspirations of both Palestinians and Israelis. During the conference we got out and about and saw for ourselves the plight of many Palestinians, who are suffering extensively because of the 'closure' that has been imposed on Palestinian areas, with dire economic and social consequences. As always in Jerusalem I found myself agonising over the tragedy of that city where God was crucified 'through the desires and aspirations and passionately held beliefs of men.'

And then I returned to Britain just as 'closures' of a different sort were being set up here – quarantining the farms and farmers affected by outbreaks of foot and mouth disease. Here too people are experiencing dire social and economic consequences. I am grateful to Nigel Holmes for organising at the eleventh hour a powerful contribution which reflects on the appalling impact of this disease in Cumbria. Somehow it would have seemed very shallow if we had explored 'place' in this issue without also referring to the current devastation of the lives of people in so many places in our land. Blake's vision of 'England's green and pleasant land' in which to build our own Jerusalem seems a very wry aspiration at the present time.

We had chosen the picture of Caedmon and Hilda and the animals for our cover of this issue well before the disease started. But whether by providence or accident it could not have been more fitting. Two saints who famously knew and sung of the beauty of God's world at the holy monastery of Whitby, several young animals that symbolise in themselves the 'goodness' of God. They stand as a challenge and a reminder to us to value 'places', as part of the creation that God sanctified and declared good. We have been granted the awesome role of creation's stewardship; to share the richness of the earth both with our fellow humans and with our fellow creatures. It is a role in which we dare not fail.

Clare Amos, Editor



Spirituality for Outsiders

Revd Angela Tilby is an Anglican priest who teaches spirituality in the Cambridge Theological Federation. For more than 20 years prior to her ordination she worked in BBC Religious Broadcasting. During some of this time she ministered as a Reader at St Albans Abbey. She is the author of several influential books.

In 1979 a book was published which I could not understand. It was Frank Kermode's extraordinary exploration of Mark's Gospel, *The Genesis of Secrecy*. In it, Kermode set out to read Mark as a literary text, in which the ironies and open-ended qualities, even the unfinished end, were considered as though they were thoroughly deliberate, not a mere accident of the process of transmission. The book was dedicated to those outside.

It was the first time I had been alerted to the potential of looking at a Gospel, and perhaps the whole Bible, or even Christianity itself, as though from outside, as though from a place of interested, watchful, non-commitment.

Since then I have given a lot of thought to spirituality, which is the subject I teach in the Cambridge Theological Federation. I have tried to discover what are the features of spirituality which are held in common by everyone, believer and non-believer alike. If we could read this correctly we would find out a great deal about our culture and our deep needs. We would understand better what happens or does not happen in pastoral encounters. We would have a better insight into what happens or doesn't happen in our own prayer lives.

Spirituality for all

Today everyone wants to have a spiritual dimension. You are hardly a viable human being without one. Even the age old enemies of organised religion take spirituality on board. It is, admittedly, a 'pick and mix' spirituality, which operates in a world of complexity, of accepted relativism. No one here is an expert, no one has the whole truth. We all have a capacity for a spiritual life if only we can find the technique to unlock our potential. Inner peace and outer order, personal fulfilment and public morality flow from personal revelation, without the need for a struggle of the will, a choice or a decision. We live in a time

of the death of all great ideologies: Marxism, internationalism, progress. Spirituality flourishes independently of institutions and belief and even many moral judgements and is to do with the management of ourselves and our inner 'economies'.

So in looking at spirituality from the outside let us start with two central assertions. The first is that most people, insiders and outsiders, have a certain ambiguity about religious authority, the second is that there is a hunger for spiritual experience.

Today, those who speak for the Church, whether clergy or lay people have a chance of being trusted if they are seen primarily as being figures of wisdom, people who have spiritual resources which can help with the management of ordinary life.

Spirituality for today

Contemporary souls have to negotiate contemporary issues. We all have to work out how we bring faith to bear on a cultural world and a physical universe

that we increasingly see as a great inter-connected interlinked whole. The issue is not, as it has been for former generations, how we keep ourselves pure and clean and unspotted from 'the world' but more how we cope with individuality without excess, community without loss of identity, and where we find God, the source of transcendence. People demand of us not expository

sermons (for what is the point if they are not based in experience) not moral judgements (for how can we judge when we know ourselves to be compromised and complex) but spiritual skills and tips for negotiating the complexity.

So in this cultural setting we must first reckon with the fact that practice is more important than belief, self-management is more important than metaphysics. When we proclaim the Christian message, or attempt to pass on a form of Christian spirituality it must be with a proper respect for people's desire to achieve something for themselves. They actually want to feel that they've gained in wisdom and understanding; that they are managing their lives better, that the content has grown out of their own experience.

Second, there is a shift from tradition in the sense of what should be the final goal of spirituality. Traditionally, the point was heaven, a life brought into alignment with God's will, a life that was perfected and completed by faith and obedience. Spiritual self-management on earth was intended to produce its rewards not only within this life but beyond it.

It is difficult to understand how to speak to our culture without realising how the significance of death has changed. Death was always the great mystery, the time of judgement, where individuals knew their total preciousness and uniqueness or their utter insignificance. A good evangelical Gospel address always brought in death; the fear of death and what might lie beyond.

For many of us this life is no longer an investment in the life to come. We don't now think so easily about forming the self for resurrection or immortality, squeezing out sinful habits and patterns of thinking in order to become closer to the state in which we can die. It is almost –



The inspirational Angel of the North sculpture, Gateshead



at least superficially – the reverse: living with mortality, living with weakness and vulnerability, setting small, manageable, achievable goals for this life.

Spirituality and identity

We can all say why this is. There is a powerful convergence of those working at the boundaries between neuroscience and artificial intelligence that mental level is basically explicable in terms of chemical or electrical events; that the experience of being an ‘I’ is a by-product of those events and of no significance in itself. This has got into popular awareness. How can I be an ‘I’ when my brain has died?

I wouldn’t go so far as to say that people don’t believe in life after death, but the connection between an after

There is more to life than shopping and television. The possibility of transcendence bursts out in new ways, even in our secular society.

life and conscious identity here has weakened. There may be life after death but it is less important than it once was as a focus for earthly life.

The consequence is not only a loss of the significance of life after death, but a loss of confidence in permanent identities. Now to speak to people as if death mattered, as if the fate of their soul hung in the balance on one’s faith or good works will not so often be heard with any real resonance. What might be heard is the encouragement to deal with death by personalising it; writing one’s own funeral, for example.

Our spiritual concern has a marked ‘this worldly’ quality. What we offer will help if it helps people manage their real lives. We need to respond to

this complexity, aware of a loss of faith in human progress, going alongside a huge aspiration for a better and fairer world; a new humility in the face of nature, accompanying our continual destructive impact on our environment. At the same time there is a sense of mystery: that what really matters cannot be put into words easily, but requires ritual, an evoking of mystery and participation.

Spirituality and self

The problems we have with the meaning of personal identity, that is, knowing what a self actually is – has led to a change in how we invest ourselves in life. The idea of commitment is becoming very difficult for us to engage with.

The attraction of a vowed, lasting relationship to God or to particular ideals or persons remains, but we lack the capacity to stick to our commitments. They were once the very essence of course; a call to conversion, a vocation to the priesthood or to religious life, a vocation to marriage and

to a particular life-partner, the shaping of one’s life around a particular experience of God were the most important things about us. But this is less obviously true for many of our contemporaries and perhaps for ourselves.

Lack of belief in an immortal self means that our only real hope of immortality lies in being a succession of partial selves. Permanent life commitments are difficult. Even those that are viable have to accept change and growth. All we can expect are fragile and changing relationships sustained by small nuggets of wisdom, and accompanied by suitable rites of passage. How can Christians contribute to contemporary spiritual needs?

First, inviting people to recognise

their desire for transcendence. There is more to life than shopping and television. The possibility of transcendence bursts out in new ways, even in our secular society. One thinks of the way the Hindu temple, just off the North Circular road, cascades in white marble over the streets of Neasden in West London. Or how the Angel of the North in Gateshead has become a focus for children, passengers on trains and lovers, a trysting place for the mind and soul under its rusty wings.

Second, and alongside the mystery of transcendence there would be an appreciation of a parallel mystery, that of the infinite significance of the human person. Not as an object but as a fellow subject, a thou, rather than a you or an it. We seek to be recognised as ‘thous’ even when we realise how immensely difficult it can be to recognise the dignity of others.

Then, third, there would be a commitment to reflection. To try to live not as a machine or an animal but as a being with spiritual capacity. In the Christian tradition this would be called re-covering, or remembering the image of God in which we are made.

Spirituality and Trinity

These three aspects of contemporary spirituality arise from our shared experience but they also call us back to fundamental issues of faith. The transcendence, immanence and reflective presence of God are a mirror of Trinitarian faith. Though they are played out in a secular and pluralistic key we can still make connections with the aspirations at their core. In doing so, we will not only be effective and pastoral ministers of the Gospel, we shall also learn something about ourselves and God’s transforming work in our own lives.

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Changing the Subject: Preaching to the converted in a consumer culture

Simon Barrow is an Anglican layman who is Secretary of the Churches' Commission on Mission, part of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. He has a special interest in the interface between spirituality, the Gospel and modern culture. In the following article he is writing in a personal capacity.

What role does preaching have in a world shaped by advertising and consumption? This question could easily turn into a debate about technique, but I wish instead to begin with a discussion about *The McDonaldization of the Church*¹ – the title of an important book by John Drane that was reviewed recently by John Wolffe². Drane, an evangelist and theologian, has a lively interest in new ways of being church for a culture in which (as sociologist Grace Davie has observed) the overall correlation between popular religious belief and belonging to traditional religious institutions appears to have broken down³.

Drane takes this argument further. He says that much church life is infected by a torpifying blend of individual apathy and (often un-named) corporate commercialism. The result is 'a secular Church in a spiritual society'. The ideology of McDonaldization – standardisation, rationalisation and efficiency – is an important feature of this overall consumer consciousness. So even if 'local branches' of major denominations appear diverse to people who attend them, to those on the outside they seem 'much the same' – as someone said to me recently.

Drane says rather more than 'what is wrong is not the product but the packaging'. He says we need a wide variety of ways of presenting a dynamic Gospel message in preaching and worship. Wolffe, however, points out that McDonalds-style standardisation is actually hugely successful. After all, according to recent surveys its golden arch logo is now more widely recog-

nised than the Cross. And the most successful public projection of branded Christianity in recent years has been through the Alpha Course phenomenon. This is a clear example of McDonaldization, though with

better pastoral follow-up. So maybe the church needs to be more, not less, McDonaldized 'if it is to rebuild its mass appeal', suggests Wolffe.

Consumerism as spiritual formation

The issues here are complex. But what should really make all of us sit up and take notice is not the rightness or

wrongness of a particular thesis, but the inescapable fact that, whether we think there should be more or less McDonaldization, this discussion remains wholly captive to the overwhelming power of consumerism. So do other debates about the future development of the Church, both inherited and emergent – especially when they are couched uncritically in terms of 'growth'.

The difficulty is that when we talk like this we are trapped in limiting arguments about the pros and cons of 'products' (things that have to be standardised or differentiated) and 'messages' (ways of selling products that emphasise some suitable combination of sameness or difference, depending on whether it is thought the consumers want to stand in or apart from the crowd).

The key theological issue here is to recognise that consumerism and commercialism are the overwhelming *spiritual* forces of our age. Super-

markets are the cathedrals of this new religion, parking lots are the sites of its pilgrimages, call centres are its monasteries, and (most important of all) advertising agencies are the theological colleges of its arcane disciplines. They are the places where people are taught what to say and do – what to preach, how to accomplish 'formation'. And they are much better at it than their ecclesial counterparts, not least because the 'bottom line' is clearer and the spirituality of wealth is totally manifest.

My point here is not to advocate simplistic anti-capitalism or turn the sermon into a crusade against commerce. I am far too implicated and compromised to be unaware of the benefits of consumerism, as is everyone reading this. There is also no Garden of Eden for any of us safely to retreat to. But we are surely in real spiritual danger if we cannot recognise that element of profound contradiction between the Gospel of Christ and consumer culture, and if we can speak of no other Way.

The problem with McDonaldization – versus – anti-McDonaldization as a means of positing 'strategic choices' for the church is that it ends up representing two poles of a single ideology of 'success'. But the Gospel is not about success, it is about faithfulness – which, in reality, is often much closer to what the world terms 'failure'. The truth of God does not come to us as a corporate strategy. Rather, it 'dwells among us' (to use St John's evocative phrase) in the vulnerable flesh of an insignificant Palestinian Jew caught up in the uncertainties of history as experienced by fallible human beings located on the powerless margins of a now-obsolete Empire. The only thing it indisputably guarantees, this side of eternity, is the Cross – an anti-logo logo!

Vulnerability, marginality, uncertainty, fallibility, insignificance, obsolescence: when we declare for Christ, as we are bound to do in our proclamation, we are saying that these are the materials that God chooses to use in showing us what really matters in (and about) the world. Try advertising that. The truth beyond selling that will set us free, if we want, is that with God we human beings are 'mysteries to be loved' (*TS Eliot*) not objects to be manipulated in a game of commercial convenience. Love and forgiveness, rather than possession and power, is what makes fulfilment possible. Relationship not ownership and



communion rather than comparative market advantage are the basis of God's economy of love.

Living beyond our means

Now all this 'takes some believing' as they say. Which is why we need the church. Only a community nourished by such vision, sustained by prayer and formed to resist absorption by what St Paul calls 'principalities and powers' can truly 'live beyond its means' (in defiance of standard commercial principles) in a consumer culture. And humble old preaching is a vital part of developing that process.

I once asked a successful advertising executive who had, as she put it, 'been forced to attend the local C of E to get my oldest kid into the church school' what she made of the experience. 'Boy, they come out with some nonsense,' she replied, good suburban atheist that she is. 'What's the dumbest thing you've heard?' I asked. 'Oh, that's easy,' she answered. 'The other day the vicar said that the church spends too much time "preaching to the converted". He obviously hasn't got the foggiest idea what good advertising is about⁴.'

If you think about it you will see that she is quite right. Advertising takes people who are already consumers, confirms their faith in consumer goods, modifies and strengthens their choices, and subtly fights off the idea that non-consumption is possible. It moulds the way life is portrayed and enlarges the communication channels through which market permeation takes place. It is, as I have said, all about spiritual formation (the formation of a people who will offer praise) – though it naturally has no place for sound bites such as 'blessed are the poor', or 'those who seek to save their lives will lose them'.

Having said that, the increasing prominence of religious iconography and language in modern advertising is fascinating. 'Loving your neighbour is useless', says one finance company,

helping us to see that we can only afford to spend time with family and friends once we have enough money set aside. 'Keep the faith' in us, pleads a bank. 'Now who do you believe?' asks a mobile phone company, as a pretty nun tells us what a good talk-time deal she's just got.

A medium message and fries to go?

So we need to understand that advertising, not the Bible, provides the nearest to a common, normative text in post-modern, consumer society. We may say we hate it or ignore it, but it pays. The reason it pays is that it works. And the reason it works is that it both creates and feeds on dominant assumptions about life, fulfilment and meaning. This is also why the Alpha Course is so successful. It uses the best media to get its message across, but it also makes sure that the message itself addresses none of the issues about Mammon that might make its City backers blush. Consumerism is about individual salvation. And so is Alpha. This is how the circle is squared. Provided you think that is an adequate Gospel, there is no problem. One-nil to St McDonalds.

Am I exaggerating all this? Marshall McLuhan may be dated, but his aphorism that 'the medium is the message' still surely holds. For, as Naomi Klein's provocative, best-selling *No Logo*⁵ points out (note that even anti-commerce is commercial!), big companies are selling a way of life well before they are selling a product.

Let's look at that life. With McDonalds the product is the same, but the people who consume it are portrayed as incredibly varied. With other companies samey people are differentiated only when they get to own something different. Viewed from a Gospel perspective the ideology here is enslaving choice, not free servanthood. Poor beleaguered Brian, the anti-hero of Monty Python's controversial movie *Life of Brian*, discovers

what this means pre-advertising. Desperate to fight off a crowd who crave a messiah (any messiah), Brian finally shouts exasperatedly: 'Look, you don't have to follow me, we're all individuals!' There is a silence. Then they cry back as one, 'Yes! We're all individuals!' To which one awkward malcontent retorts, 'I'm not!'

The delicious humour and irony in this profoundly theological film sums up the dilemma exactly. The true Gospel reminds us (not in an advert, a product or a campaign, but in a person, a community and an event) that we are not what we think we are. We are not at all free. But we can be – if we can be rescued from false freedoms, false promises, and false hopes. In short, the world as advertised.

The task of the preacher in this situation is to invite Christian people into a serious consideration of what it requires faithfully to live out the subversive message of the Gospel at a time when society is being collapsed into consumption, the self is being submerged into its material furnishing, and 'the least of these my brothers and sisters' are being branded losers. But whereas Karl Barth recommended Christians to pray with the Bible in one hand and a newspaper in the other, maybe what is also needed now is a critical encounter between the Word and the advert.

One final thought as I type this into my palmtop and sip coffee in a leading brand outlet. A marketing strategist once said that the aim of advertising is 'to change the subject'. That is, to reshape a person's way of seeing things by 'inviting them into a new world'. What better definition of preaching could there be? The difference, of course, is that the subject is an earthly citizen of heaven, not a consumer, and the 'new world' is the coming kingdom of God.

¹ John Drane, *The McDonaldization of the Church: Spirituality, Creativity and the Future of the Church*, DLT, 2000

² 'Too like fast-food chain or not enough?' by John Wolffe, Church Times, 9 March 2001

³ Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain Since 1945: Believing without Belonging*, Blackwell, 1994

⁴ See also: William Willimon, *Peculiar Speech: Preaching to the Baptised*, Eerdmans, 1992

⁵ Naomi Klein, *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*, Picador 2000

Simon Barrow co-edited recently published book 'Christian Mission in Western Society' (CTBI, 2001, edited by Simon Barrow and Graeme Smith) which explores what has happened to the 'Christian West' and asks if it was ever more than a fable. With contributions from a number of well known writers it explores what is the future of the Christian message and of the churches in an increasingly plural, fragmented, postmodern and apparently secularized society.





The City as a Place of the Spirit

Revd Mark Pryce is Dean of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. He is particularly interested in the interface between spirituality and the concerns of modern life. He is the author of 'Finding a Voice: Men, Women and the Community of the Church' (SCM, 1996). These reflections on 'the City' are timely in view of the use of the Book of Revelation in the Common Worship Lectionary in May 2001.

'After his suffering, Jesus presented himself alive to his disciples by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father.' (Acts 1.3-4)

In our European culture, at least since Rousseau and the Romantics, there has been a tendency to locate goodness and health and harmony outside the city, in the countryside – in the mountains or the wilderness – in the 'natural' un-peopled places rather than in the built environment or the human settlement. There is a strong flavour of this in Anglican spirituality and English church culture; in a superficial way we like our church buildings and church grounds to seem reminiscent of the rural village church, and at a deeper level, the images we have for the spiritual tend towards the organic.

For example, a common sense of earthly paradise is a desert island or an empty beach: 'hell is other people', as Sartre said, and so paradise seems to be the absence of large crowds. It is interesting that when attention is focused on near-death experiences in which people describe a glimpse of the after-life, what they so often describe is a garden or a rural scene in which a few close friends or relatives are awaiting them. Yet in Revelation, that book that concludes our New Testament, the abiding presence of God in the heavenly paradise is described as a city, as a New Jerusalem. This heavenly paradise is not a tiny hamlet, nor even a market town, certainly not a National Trust estate or a countryside retreat house, but as a vast city with twelve routes in and out:

'The angel who talked to me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. The city lies four-square, its length the same as its width; and he measured the city with his rod, fifteen hundred miles...' (Revelation 21.15-16)

This vision of paradise is as a megapopolis, a towering, teeming, sprawling city in which God resides with human beings in enormous numbers. The city is God's chosen place of residence.

Remaining in the city

Recently I spent time with an Anglican church in the very heart of Sydney. I had gone to Australia anticipating spending time in the outback because I had imagined that this would be my special opportunity to experience true wilderness, a desert without human noise or settlement, without artificial light – a place in the desert where God would be profoundly present in solitude and silence. But I did not make my way into the outback; I stayed in the city, praying with this

church day by day amidst the noise of the motor traffic and the steady traffic of human need which passes into a city church which is open for regular daily prayer. I spent time with pastors and people in other city churches, and with Christian groups such as the Jesuits who were building, in the very centre of the run-down city area, a retreat centre for people to come close to God in the midst of the fluorescent light and the noise of sirens day and night, surrounded by people and by the problems and exuberance of people.

To remain in the city came as a surprise to me. My inclination has always been to 'find God' away from populated places. This is why retreat houses and religious communities are

When we retreat for prayer, it is not so much that we are retreating *away from others* but *towards ourselves*.

so important for the church, offering places for peace and reflection, where the mind and the spirit as well as the body can be undisturbed, where one may go into the wilderness and rest for a while. Yet the praying Christians of Sydney taught me that the desert place is not necessarily the deserted place. The city is as much the place where God is to be found as is the place of emptiness and quiet. When we retreat for prayer, it is not so much that we are retreating *away from others* but *towards ourselves*. We are not so much avoiding crowds as seeking to recover the sense of self which can be so easily swamped by the demands and needs of other people, and by the garrulousness of our responses to others. God is as present in the city as he is in the wilderness if he is present to the self which turns to him in penitence and hope, longing for love and restoration.

Jesus withdrew to be by himself to pray (see, for example, Mark 1.12 and 1.35; 6.46; 14.32ff). It is little wonder that he did so: the gospels give a strong sense of the relentless pace of his teaching and healing ministry and the pressing demands that this brought. Yet in the busyness of this work, with its continual encounters and conversations, God is present to Jesus always and in all places. It is astonishing that the crowds of people, sometimes whole populations of towns, do not seem to harass him or wear him away or launch him onto an uncontrol-



'The Two Cities'. Embroidery by Renate Melinsky picturing Manchester transfigured into the city of God

lable 'high' of adulation or a defensive 'low' of frustration and irritability. Take, for example, the time when Jesus is jostled by a mass of people on his way to heal the daughter of Jairus (*see Mark 5.21-34*). The synagogue leader has implored Jesus to come with him, drawing Jesus into his need and anxiety at the serious illness of his daughter. Jesus goes with him, and as he does he is pushed and pulled in all directions by the crowd. Yet such is the integrity and presence of mind of Jesus, so fully 'centred within himself' is he, so at home in his own body, that in the midst of the chaos of people around him he is aware of a particular need which is present and drawing on his power. The crowds do not dismantle his sense of self or disturb his spiritual equilibrium. For Jesus, God is not confined to moments or places of stillness and inactivity, but is present always.

The reality of God

To withdraw then, if we do, to places of beauty or quiet in the countryside for prayer, or to the more profound silences of the wilderness deserted places, is not because God is more present in them than in the cities. God is not more present in the absence of obligations and duties and worries than in the place or the experiences where demand is placed upon us, wherever it is that our own particular demand presses in on us – at work, or in the family, in the course of our ministry, in the pain of loneliness. If we withdraw to a place of stillness and reflection then we do so in order that we can be still to know the reality of God more powerfully – the reality of God who is always and everywhere present, within

the city and in the wilderness place too.

Carlo Carretto, a member of the contemplative order of monks 'The Little Brothers of Jesus', spent many years in the desert in solitude and prayer. Christians in the busiest and most crowded of cities, Hong Kong, asked him to teach them about contemplative prayer. They felt that they were too busy to pray, and too overwhelmed by the many demands of the activity of the place in which they lived. Carretto taught them that they could find 'the desert in the city' because *the desert does not mean the absence of people, it means the presence of God*. Our prayer, in the quiet of the country or the busyness of the city, is about becoming still within ourselves so that we may enjoy the presence of God among us, within us, all around us – prayer as accepting the reality of God's presence in all things and all places, a presence which is already given, which need not be sought-out or chased-after by us. To be still in whatever circumstances we find ourselves and to trust in God's

presence is to see signs of him in all things – as much in the lights of the city as the shining of the stars, as much in the motion of the traffic as the flow of wind through trees.

I shall tell you something which is very important for busy people who say they have no time to

pray. Try to look at the reality in which you live – your work, your commitments, your relationships, your meetings, your walks, the shopping, the newspapers, the children – as a single whole from which you cannot disengage yourself, a whole which you have to think about...a whole by means of which God speaks to you and through which He guides you.

So it is not by fleeing that you will find God more easily, but it is by changing your heart that you will see things differently.

The desert in the city is only possible on these terms: that you see things with a new eye, touch them with a new spirit, love them with a new heart...So there is no need to flee, to alienate yourself, to get caught up between dream and reality, torn between what you think and what you do, no need to go and pray and then kill yourself with work, to swing back and forth between Martha and Mary, to be permanently in chaos, to have a divided heart, not to know where to lay your head.

Yes, reality is highly instructive! Reality is the true vehicle in which God moves towards us.' (*The Desert in the City*, Carlo Carretto, Collins 1979, p.21)

Note from the Editor: You may be interested to know that the Methodist Church has published a resource booklet 'Working out our calling in towns and cities', which is intended to provide a Christian response to the government's urban white paper and help town and city dwellers reflect on the future of the area in which they live. A downloadable version is available via the Methodist Church website at www.methodist.org.uk/information/urban.pdf

A similar resource booklet, dealing with rural issues is scheduled to be available in late May 2001.

BRINGING COMMON WORSHIP TO LIFE

TRAINING DAYS

How to encourage the Holy Spirit to work through the liturgy, using symbol and action

10am - 5.30pm - Eucharist at 4pm

Saturday 8th September - St Albans, Herts

Saturday 6th October - Sale, Cheshire

Saturday 3rd November - Cranham, Essex

Saturday 1st December - Sheffield

Details from Anglican Renewal Ministries,
4 Bramble Street, Derby DE1 1HU - 01332 200175



Seeking Holy Ground

Anne Parr has been a Reader since 1992 in the Team Ministry of Penistone and Thurlstone, Diocese of Wakefield. Here she offers a personal reflection of her encounter with the world of the Celtic saints, which complements the article on Celtic spirituality by Kathleen Kinder in our previous issue.

A handful of years ago I bought *Footprints of the Northern Saints*, a book by the late Cardinal Basil Hume. One of the churches in our team ministry is dedicated to St Aidan, and I had been asked to preach at their forthcoming patronal festival. The book was being used in my preparation and research. A few days after its purchase, I saw in a national daily newspaper a snippet of information which sent my husband and I hot-footing to Holy Island. That 'snippet' had told me where and when the launch of the book would take place, and I had a yearning to be present.

Being there was not easy. I had just retired from teaching, and I needed a rest. Yet the reason for taking early retirement was not simply that I needed rest, but rather so that I could help more with my father-in-law whose health was failing. Because I was able to arrange respite care for him it became possible to have a few days away on Holy Island.

Friends had told me of the blissful peace to be experienced when the tourists have gone and Holy Island (Lindisfarne) is once again surrounded by the mantle of the sea. Their words came to me often in those few brief days as I lingered, walked, listened, prayed and worshipped on that holy ground which is steeped in God's presence. Aidan had chosen thoughtfully and wisely when he had asked King Oswald for that island as his base for mission. King Oswald had wanted the mission to succeed, and he encouraged Aidan in all that he did. The support of the King of the secular kingdom was vital for the success of the work which Aidan was able to accomplish for the Kingdom of God.



Left: Anne Parr and Sister Hilary OHP at Sneaton Castle Centre, Whitby. In the background one of the five paintings by Juliet McMichael

Almost at the end of the second millennium of the Christian era, I stood where saints of the mid-first millennium had lived and worked for Christ. On that ground Aidan and his disciples had listened to God, prayed, worshipped, built and toiled – and lived the Gospel in very difficult circumstances. It is no great wonder that today we seek to be 'where the Saints had trod.' Even though we know that God is everywhere, and as we read in Acts 17.28 that in him 'we live and move and have our being,' we somehow need to seek places made holy by those who have sought his presence in times past.

Whilst soaking up the beauty of the holy island of Lindisfarne, listening to Cardinal Hume and the Reverend David Adam, or reading *Footprints of the Northern Saints*, I realised among other things that Hilda of Whitby had been one of Aidan's students. I was able to 'catch up' with Hilda's story last year on our ministry team weekend.

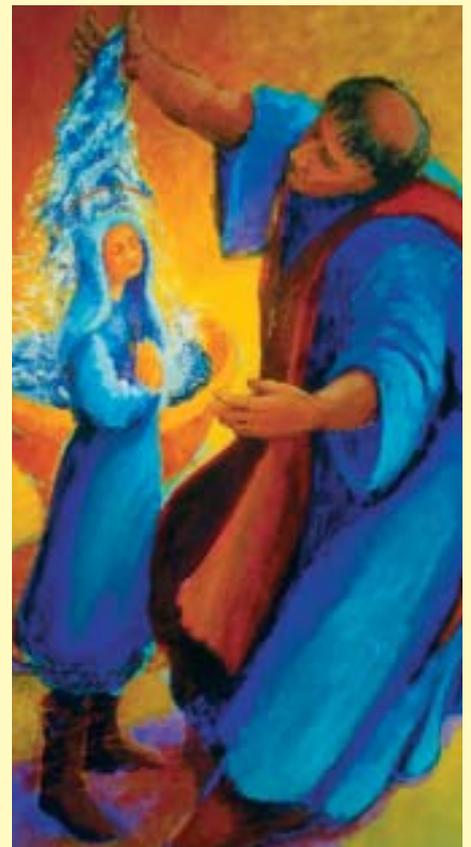
We stayed at Sneaton Castle. Until a few years ago this was a school for girls, owned and run by the Sisters of the Order of the Holy Paraclete (an Anglican order of nuns). The Sisters live in the Priory, adjoining the 'castle', and the old school is now a field-study and conference centre.

During our weekend there some of our group listened to a lecture, by Sister Hilary, which concentrated on the highlights of the life of St Hilda. Five large, brilliantly coloured, beautiful modern paintings by the artist Juliet McMichael, who had been a teacher at the school, provided a perfect backdrop to the talk. Sister Hilary's enthusiasm brought a sense of reality to the story

of St Hilda, who was a princess, niece of King Edwin, and baptised by Paulinus in York at the same time as her uncle. She was Abbess at Hartlepool and then at Whitby. She encouraged the nervous cowherd Caedmon to sing the Gospel stories (the pop music of the day!) and she was present at the Synod of Whitby with King Oswiu, James the Deacon and Wilfrid in 664 AD. The lasting memorial to her saintliness though is not the Synod, or the paintings, but the life and witness of the sisters of the Holy Paraclete. They daily continue the work and worship of monastic life through the Divine Office. Being present at their services is like listening to the heart of God, the pulsing of the rhythm of time – where earth and heaven meet – and where ground is made holy by the constant prayers of those who follow in the 'footprints of the saints'.

These times of refreshment, peace and renewal, confirm our faith and give us grace to continue our ministry for the Kingdom of God.

**If you want to find out more about Whitby and the painting of Juliet McMichael you can contact Anne at 7 Rydal Close, Penistone, Sheffield S36 8HN
Tel: 01226-764490
email: ap.parr@virgin.net**





Springs from the Living Well

Anne Bowes explains her unique ministry based on her home in Leighton Buzzard, which has become 'Wellsprings', a holistic spirituality centre where people can come for relaxation, refreshment and renewal.

Healing is happening through a combination of prayer, physical therapies, counselling, eating together, being listened to and heard.



WELLSPRINGS

With my family, five years ago, I decided to surrender my full-time paid hospital lay chaplaincy, take a leap in the dark and try to make Christian ministry available and accessible to those of any faith, or none from our family home. It was as a Reader, half-way through the Decade of Evangelism, that I reflected with others on the gospel model with which Jesus Christ left us. He went out from the temple, amongst the people and preached, taught and healed in the homes, on the road, from a boat, beside the well. We began to question the church's model of mission; attempting to draw people into buildings and practices which have become alien to so many; often with a variety of hoops through which to jump in order to fully belong. After eighteen months, supported in prayer, I also left my parish team ministry to become Deanery Reader, to be freer to focus on the work which was evolving at 'Wellsprings'.

'Go out to the roads and country lanes... so that my house will be full.' (Luke 14.23)

Emerging strongly is the healing nature of good home-cooked food eaten around an open table. This resonates with Jesus' ministry centred upon food. The bereavement support has been especially fruitful, offering a supper on the last Saturday of every month. About eighteen attend, men and women. ('Men always go to the pubs which have the best food!' one of them told me.) I don't fully understand how it works here against all the odds. I only know that I have become aware of a theology of sharing good food around a table, sometimes with a bizarre combination of people, being in some way Eucharistic.

Other activities include, complementary therapies,



counselling and spiritual support; yoga; relaxation group; library lunch. There is opportunity for groups or individuals to benefit from quiet days, eg the local district nurses, cancer support group or hospital management teams. There is a weekly night prayer and reflection and professionally-led workshops in spirituality, health, the arts etc. In conjunction with the village church, we have held Songs of Praise times in the local pub!

The majority of our 20 volunteers are those who have themselves benefited from being part of the community... no expectations... no conditions. Healing is happening through a combination of prayer, physical therapies, counselling, eating together, being listened to and heard. It is interesting that we don't have inappropriate dependencies. About half those who come are not churchgoers or are 'on the edge', yet all share this vision of Christian ministry.

In order to better understand the emerging theology the diocese is part-funding me to undertake an MA in Practical and Contextual Theology. This will enable us to reflect more critically on the work and to inform our practice theologically. We will see how traditional theology, our own context and ourselves, interact so that all can be transformed. Diocesan funding speaks of their watching and listening to what is emerging. We are visited twice yearly by a bishop's advisor as a further acknowledgement of support, and also a way of keeping a cautious eye on developments!

I continue preaching in the deanery, and more widely on an ecumenical basis. My 'Wellsprings' work is underpinned by income I receive from various forms of church related self-employment. I account for this income to my

management committee.

Yet it also raises a 'philosophical' issue which cannot be ducked. The church structures seem to want me to define what is my Reader work and what is my self-employment. Yet for me it is difficult to sharply distinguish between the two. Working in the holistic way which is the vision of Wellsprings, precludes any compartmentalisation.

At 'Wellsprings' we are experiencing a growing sense of the value of movement, in part and where appropriate, from the church building to the home. Of the meeting of a huge variety of people where they are, not where we feel they ought to be. There seems to be a sense here, on the site of what was a hospice for the poor and travellers or pilgrims of 1,000 years ago, of history coming full circle from the early church. It has become a place which unencumbered with ponderous structure is free to respond, whilst remaining firmly rooted in the Christian gospel.

'Unless the church can make a radical shift in direction, unless it can take risks becoming immersed in the ecstasy and despair; the ordinary and momentous moments of people's lives, it is in danger of increasingly becoming an irrelevance.' (Daniel O'Leary, 'Lost Soul')

The church in order to survive may have to face such movement. I wonder if Readers and lay people especially will have a crucial part to play in pioneering that future of renewal of Christ's kingdom on earth.

So, maybe we here at Wellsprings (12 miles north of St Albans) are like those pilgrims of old: The early pilgrim did not always know where he was going. He did not know what to expect when he got there. He did not necessarily expect to return.



O Worship the Lord

Margaret Sedgwick has worked as a deputy headteacher and as Assistant Diocesan Education Officer for Coventry Diocese. She was also on the General Synod revision committee for the Cathedrals Measure, and has just been appointed as a lay canon of Coventry Cathedral to which she is licensed as Reader. Here she shares her thoughts on her ministry in this unique cathedral.



In the Beauty of Holiness

There was a larger than usual congregation in Coventry Cathedral for Saturday Evensong on 6 January. A number of people had seen the notice in the local paper about the service for the Feast of the Epiphany. Gifts of gold, incense and myrrh were brought by lay people into the cathedral and offered at the high altar during the processional hymn. Later, after the anthem, they became focal points of three processions intended to symbolise the wanderings of the magi. As ministers and congregation converged on a large candlelit star at the west end, we offered our gifts in prayer to the Lord Jesus for the coming year.

Afterwards, over a glass of mulled

wine and mince pies, I learned something about some of the people who were there, and why they had come. One, the wife of a church organist, welcomed the opportunity of experiencing a special liturgy in the cathedral on a day when she need not be in her own church. Two members of a local Christian Fellowship church said they had come because they felt the need for more contemplative worship than they would normally experience. Then there was a former regular member of the Cathedral community whom we had not seen for some time, and who was clearly glad to be there amongst old friends. Two homeless young men were glad of the mulled wine and the mince pies, but had sat quietly throughout the service.

Tourists... or pilgrims

The Cathedral Information Department frequently receives requests from students – GCSE to post-graduate – seeking statistics on the numbers of visitors and asking why people visit the cathedral. Are they pilgrims or tourists? It is an impossible question to answer with any accuracy. It is too easy to assume those who arrive in coaches on their way to Warwick Castle, Stratford-on-Avon – here today and off to York tomorrow – are tourists. Yet, it may be that by moving from the ruins of the old Cathedral, bombed in November 1940, and then into the new one, now not so new, they grasp something of the gospel story of death and resurrection.

Pilgrimage is a journey, and if these so-called tourists have stood in those ruins, looked at the charred cross in the sanctuary and reflected on the words inscribed there: 'Father, forgive', then how can we not describe them also as pilgrims. The ruins, open to the sky, are like a place of martyrdom, to quote Nikolaus Pevsner, a place in which to ponder life's ultimate questions. If they happen to arrive on a Friday at midday some will be drawn into saying the Coventry Litany of Reconciliation. This is a space where the Queen, Bishops, visiting dignitaries from overseas, parties of schoolchildren, and people of all denominations have paused to say 'Father, forgive.' It is a place where city

workers joined tourists to watch the solar eclipse and, perhaps, marvelled at God's universe. It is a place where members of the public, whether Christian or of another faith in our multi-cultural city, as well as those of no faith, came and laid their flowers in the days after Princess Diana's death. This is the sacred space used for the performances of the Coventry Mystery Plays in which the citizens of Coventry, like their medieval forbears, act out the story of creation and redemption.

The story of faith

For those who continue their journey through the great glass west screen into the twentieth century building designed by Basil Spence, we hope they will realise that the old and the new are not separate places, but one cathedral. Ultimate questions are there to be explored: whether through John Piper's magnificent Baptistry stained-glass window, or the nave windows which represent the same human and religious journey encountered before, telling the story of human growth from birth through maturity and death to fulfilment, epitomised in the life of Jesus. Looking beyond the high altar there is the great tapestry of Christ 'blessing, helping... drawing humankind up into himself' as Provost Howard put it, the same Provost who saw his cathedral burn and rise again from the ashes and began Coventry's ministry of reconciliation which continues today.

Some visitors, often years later, write of their experiences of their first visit, describing how their lives changed, affecting their personal relationships and in some cases the direction of their working lives. An Anglican priest and monk from Canada recently wrote of his first time visit to Coventry in 1973 – 'whilst praying in the Chapel of Gethsemane I had a deeply moving experience which highlighted the powerful message of the need to be forgiven and to accept forgiveness.' Nineteen years later he returned and went back to the Chapel where he renewed his commitment to our Lord. A moving letter from an American in a military prison wrote requesting the Coventry Litany of Reconciliation as he remembered his visit when stationed in this country. He, too,

The ruins, open to the sky, are like a place of martyrdom... a place in which to ponder life's ultimate questions.





would have been counted as a tourist at the time, like the many others who come to this and other cathedrals.

The privilege of ministry

It is often the comments of visitors which remind me what a great privilege it is to be a Reader here. Some may assume Reader ministry here is limited. It is true that there are far fewer opportunities to preach than is the case in a parish church, but you do know when you have made some impact upon regular members of the congregation when they ask you for a copy of your sermon! There are, however, other opportunities for communicating the word. A couple of sentences drawing upon the eternal truths contained in the lessons at Evensong to introduce the prayers demands discipline and careful thought.

The very first cathedral in Coventry was founded as a Benedictine community by Leofric and his famous wife, Godiva, in 1043. We continue in the Benedictine tradition by coming together each day to celebrate the offices of morning, midday and evening prayer. It is in the Offices that Cathedral Readers regularly exercise their ministry, both liturgically and pastorally. One day you may be leading midday prayer with only two people present, but on another day the Chapel of Unity is full of visitors who appreciate the opportunity to attend a short act of worship. It may be a group of German pilgrims who have just seen the audio-visual presentation of Coventry's story and message of reconciliation. Afterwards they present us with their own candle of reconciliation which we immediately place on the high altar. Visitors often wish to talk, and some of them request prayers.

One of the roles of a cathedral is

that of the mother church to its diocese, and the active involvement of Readers from the Coventry diocese in the Sunday Eucharist reflects this. Almost every Sunday of the year two Readers from the parishes assist with the administration of the communion. Their names and their parish are included in the printed information about the service. They frequently tell me, as the Cathedral Reader who arranges the rota, how privileged they feel to be able to participate while we, in turn, feel privileged that they are prepared to travel, in some cases a considerable number of miles, to help us. Many are now welcomed as old friends by the regular members of the congregation but, like all cathedrals, the Sunday morning Eucharist is attended by visitors, a significant number coming from outside the British Isles and so the visiting Readers like the other ministers and those of the cathedral community contribute to the welcome ministry. During the week some Readers from other parishes give their time as Honorary Chaplains meeting visitors and providing pastoral and spiritual support.

On Bible Sunday we invite those who have been admitted and licensed that year to be the delegates representing all Readers in the diocese. Also present are the Warden, who is a Reader, and the Registrar. The preacher, too, is usually a Reader. Our ministry is thus given a high profile now also supported by leaflets produced by the Central Readers' Council.

All three Cathedral Readers are members of the Liturgical Group which supports the Precentor in the planning and reviewing of worship

and, in the last year, the introducing of Common Worship. Under our new Constitution and Statutes this group will become an official sub-committee of the Chapter. We are fortunate to have this opportunity to develop our own understanding of liturgy aware that cathedrals are the liturgical laboratories of the church. Nevertheless, as a parish church cathedral our involvement in the life of this church is the same as for any parish and we contribute to the pastoral and educational work of the community.

It is a centre of worship and outreach which exists for the glory of God.

To the glory of God

Since the publication in 1994 of *Heritage and Renewal*, the report of the Archbishops' Commission on Cathedrals which resulted in new legislation, the Cathedrals Measure 1999, there has been much debate about the role of cathedrals and how such complex institutions can be managed. Coventry has for a long time recognised the value of lay participation, but the new structures are providing greater opportunities to serve God and his Church. The Readers are no more or no less important than other lay members. They are part of the collaborative ministry which, in the words of the first clause of our Constitution in accordance with the 1999 Measure, recognises that 'the Cathedral Church is the seat of the Bishop. It is the home of the community of Christian faith from which the episcopal ministry and mission to the Diocese proceed. It is a centre of worship and outreach which exists for the glory of God.'



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A 21st Century Plague

Nigel Holmes, Reader in the Diocese of Carlisle, reports on the crisis in Cumbria and hears from some fellow Readers who have attempted to meet the needs.

Will lift up mine eyes unto the hills: from whence cometh my help. Psalm 121 is regarded in Cumbria as the county's psalm, sung on civic occasions. Normally when we look at the fells, as we call them in these parts, we expect to see sheep. This spring, just as the lambing season began, foot and mouth disease struck. Word reached the county on Ash Wednesday that the Auction Mart at Longtown, literally within a couple of miles of the Scottish border at Gretna, was the hub of the distribution of the disease. Within days hundreds of cattle and thousands of sheep were being turned to ash in great funeral pyres which burnt for a month. By the end of that first month close to a million animals had been slaughtered.

With the incessant acrid smoke Cumbria also saw the decline of its tourist industry for the summer season. Tourism is worth much more to the county than agriculture, though the sheep keep the grass on the mountains smooth. Without them the brush and scrub would regenerate, so the fells would not appear as attractive to the eye. What is more, many of the sheep, especially the traditional tough native breed, the Herdwick, know their own part of the fell and do not stray. Reintroducing that sheep folk memory will not be easy, even if the breed itself survives.

Survival is at stake for many local businesses. The tea rooms, gift shops and bed and breakfasts are deserted. Even before Easter the county was said to be losing £8 million and 350 jobs a week in tourism. That figure is much higher now that the season proper would normally be underway. And, of course, the losses are not restricted to Cumbria. At the end of March the London *Evening Standard* billboards proclaimed, 'London Tourism hit by Foot and Mouth' – the foreign visitors were not arriving.

The fear of the farmers over the disease has been caught with a vengeance by those who depend on visitors. Many have sizeable loans to repay and they will not receive the compensation provided for the farmers. Some, certainly, will not be in business

when the tourists return. Foot and mouth disappears in the warmer weather, so it is likely that stock will be sourced from overseas to bring the farms alive again in the autumn. Meanwhile many in the county are offering help, amongst them the churches.

The new Bishop of Carlisle, Graham Dow, whose wife Molly is a Reader, moved into Rose Castle just three months before the outbreak. Rose Castle's own Church Commissioners' farm contracted the disease. He shared the hurt of so many when he preached during a studio-based service broadcast live on BBC Radio Cumbria on Mothering Sunday. The lessons were read over the telephone by Christian farmers who had lost their stock just days before and the service was led by the Chairman of the Methodist District.

With the disease spreading rapidly both sides of the border, it was noticeable how much more quickly ministers of the Scottish Parliament appeared in Dumfriesshire than British Government ministers came to Cumbria. However in the fourth week of the crisis the Chief Veterinary Officer arrived on the Monday and the Prime Minister on the Thursday. The latter flew in, for an hour and a half, on his way to Sweden, to be followed by his Agriculture Minister four days later and that week the Army appeared to dig the massive graves.

**FORTY YEARS
A SHEPHERD**
Dick Davidson,
Reader in the
Benefice of
Bewcastle and
Stapleton, and
Kirklington with
Hethersgill



I was away on holiday in February and came back to deep snow drifts and foot and mouth. To be honest at first the snow seemed worst. The border with Scotland was blocked and my 200 sheep were out on the fells at Stapleton some sixteen miles north north east of Carlisle.

My grandfather was churchwarden at Hethersgill half the life of the

church ago. It's 125 years old this year – built as the congregation was too big for the school hall! The workers went there, the posher place was

Kirklington. I followed the family into farming in 1963 and was one of the first to diversify when I became a postman in 1970. Now the earnings on hill farms are so poor virtually everyone has another job or takes in bed and breakfast. When the four churches came together people wanted services at the same time, so I trained as a Reader. I say that both as a postman and as a Reader in different ways I'm a 'man of letters'.

The two roles combine as I'm out meeting people all the time. Now though with foot and mouth I just have to leave the post in a wooden box at the farm gate or speak across a disinfectant pad. I've found a lot of fear. I'd say the trouble has brought out the best in most people but the worst in a few. And two of our churches are closed, Bewcastle with its world-renowned Celtic cross which usually draws many visitors, and Stapleton, as they can only be reached by passing through farmland.

On those whose animals have been killed, the strain and depression shows. It really is like a bereavement; you have to learn to be a good listener. Some do fear for the future. Some of the older folk won't start again. The compensation won't pay for new stock – stock will be at a premium after all this. One of the ladies at the top end, at Bewcastle, said when I was delivering the parish magazine, 'Where's God this weekend?' The fear had got to her.

Some are talking of going organic after this is over. They can't believe it when I tell them that when I was at school everyone farmed organically. In the late 1940s I first saw tractors and fertiliser and there were no subsidies then. Being close to the land, watching





the seasons, helps me in my ministry. I see creation all around – you can't interfere with nature. We've been raping our countryside but it'll cleanse.

I start at 6 o'clock, so I see the sun rise. My last delivery is at half past two at

the home of Maddy Prior, the folk singer from Steeleye Span. Maddy's church-warden at Bewcastle, where she's known as Mrs. Kemp. If the organist doesn't turn up Maddy can really get the singing going unaccompanied!

SMOKE OVER ARTHURET

Melvyn Redgers, Reader since 1958

Ours is the ancient church well outside Longtown and some claim the name links us to the legends of King Arthur. It's been a terrible time with huge fires of animal carcasses all around. The closest is the farm of Julia Fisher, who is churchwarden of the next parish. Her 4,000 sheep and milking herd of cattle have been burning for three weeks. The acrid smoke, permeates the area and can even be smelt inside the church.

Most of our worshippers are affected one way or another and before long there won't be a single beast in Arthuret parish. It was really hard on one of our people as the Ministry lost the first test results, new tests had to be done and it was a week before he knew they had to go. Even then they were lying around dead for days. It's all been so slow.

Our task as a church has been made more difficult as we're in an interregnum. The NSM, John Smith, the

former County Librarian, has been working all hours and has appeared on network television several times. We've been giving telephone support to people and buying groceries for those marooned on their farms. We've wanted to show that the church is not just praying, so we've been sending cards and offering encouragement.

But still it's a very sombre mood. It seems so eerie that in spring the fields are empty; there are no lambs. The countryside is strangely silent.

SUPPORTING A COUNTY IN CRISIS

John Fryer-Spedding, Reader since 1976

I'm the Chairman of the Cumbria

Community Foundation, one of thirty or more county charitable bodies around the country. We were inaugurated 18 months ago. The late Viscount Whitelaw was our Patron as is his widow now. The Lord-Lieutenant is our President and we have great support from the councils and some of the major industries.

We've been building up an endowment fund and in the first year making relatively small grants to mainly voluntary community groups. The foot and mouth outbreak presented us with a challenge. Initially we thought we were too new and not sufficiently well resourced, but soon we discovered that funding bodies saw the need and wanted a channel to distribute funds. The local authorities established a Task Force and asked us to coordinate a wide-ranging fund. The national church fund, in contrast, is earmarked for farmers alone. The needs here, we could see, would be much wider.

The livelihood of many hauliers, those in the livestock markets and meat trade are at risk. Tourism businesses have already spent on advertising for a season which will not bring



an income. My ancestral home and grounds on the shores of Bassenthwaite will not open to the public for fear of infecting my four farms. I usually employ more than 25 people, part-time, during the season. That income is important and they count on it.

The Community Foundation first and foremost aims to help maintain community spirit. Village halls are suffering through lack of use and income, Citizens' Advice Bureaux struggle to meet the greatly increased demand, which is running up telephone bills they can't afford. So our priorities for grant-making will be to community 'rebuilding' projects and to charities providing direct support to individuals suffering financial hardship and we will continue to work closely with voluntary and statutory bodies.

If you would like to help a county in economic distress our charity registration number is 1075120. You can send charity payroll giving, and other, cheques to CCF, Derwent Mill, Wakefield Road, Cockermouth, Cumbria, CA13 0HT. If you have a CAF Card, you can use our telephone number: 01900 325801 or our email: Enquiries@CumbriaFoundation.org Our website is : www.cumbriafoundation.org

WEB AID FROM FARMLINE

Geoff Dodgson, Reader in Fen Drayton, Conington, Lolworth and Swavesey, in the Diocese of Ely

I have been in agriculture for most of my half century. My public relations company specialises in communications to and with the farming agribusiness, food chain and countryside sectors. I myself keep a small flock of rare breed Norfolk Horn sheep.

Farming Online was established six years ago as the first portal dedicated to British agriculture and is today the most used with a membership of 26,000. Since foot and mouth the usage has more than doubled and all information on this subject is available free of charge. In my view, following the disease, the industry will never be the same in my lifetime.

If you minister to those in farming you can pass useful information to farmers who are not on the internet. You will find us at www.farmline.com

If you would like to share your experiences of the outbreak with us in the next issue, write or email. We are also planning a themed issue of 'The Reader' next year on Creation and Rural issues.



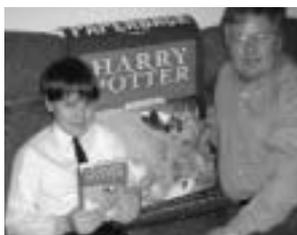


Harry Potter and the church under siege

It is not every week that a Reader finds that a service he has planned becomes 'national news.' In September 2000 that happened to **Mike Truman**, Reader at All Saints' Church, Guildford.

A Wizard Idea!

It seemed such a straightforward idea at the time... Like many churches, All Saints has an informal service aimed at families on the first Sunday of the month. Normally I plan the service, and the children from the Sunday School take a large part in it. But September's service is before the Sunday School has restarted, so the vicar, Brian Coleman, and I often do that month as a 'two hander'.



So what was the theme to be for 3 September 2000? One of the lectionary passages set was James 1.17-27 – solid advice on how to live a good Christian life. JK Rowling's fourth Harry Potter book had recently come out and would be a topical 'hook'; but could we make a genuine connection between what the books said and the Christian message?

On the surface, Harry Potter is about wizards. But go deeper, and you find that the books are about honesty, loyalty, courage, fidelity – all themes that seemed to chime with James.

So I planned the service, wrote some dialogue for myself as a teacher and Brian as the headmaster of Hogwarts, and started to put together some props. We borrowed a couple of pantomime costumes from the local amateur dramatic society, and I used lining paper and poster paint to transform the inner door of the church into platform 9 and 3/4. Then on the Wednesday before the service I took one fateful decision...

Pressed into service

I subscribe to an email list for preachers run by Christians on the Internet (www.coin.org.uk). On Wednesday night I put up a brief outline of the service. Soon I had requests from several ministers for copies of the service, and one from Ruth Gledhill, religion correspondent of *The Times*,

who wanted to do a story about it.

It appeared on Friday morning, and the sky fell in... My phone number was not immediately accessible to journalists, but my incumbent's was. I don't know what Brian had intended to do that day, but he spent it talking to the media. He turned down five offers to film the service (everyone from Channel 5 to a German cable TV company) although both he and I spoke on radio programmes.

Opposition to the service came from the Evangelical Alliance, but seemed to become more muted as the two days wore on, when they heard our explanation of what the service actually involved. The central complaint was that seeing a vicar and a Reader taking a service dressed in 'wizards' robes could confuse children into thinking that the occult was acceptable. If only we could have shown them our Ali Baba pantomime costumes I'm sure they would not have worried...

God's generous gift

Our explanation was simple; we were not putting on a service about Harry Potter with some Christian bits thrown in. We were putting on a service which used ideas from the Harry Potter books to put across the Christian message.

In the first 'short talk' of the service, we picked up on the phrase 'generous acts of giving' in the reading from James, and looked at some of the gifts in the Harry Potter books – a 'Firebolt' broomstick, Ton-tongue toffee, a cloak of invisibility – and then talked about the gifts we receive from God and how they can be used wisely or irresponsibly.

Another talk used the image in the reading of those who look into a mirror and forget who they are as soon as they walk away. The Harry Potter books describe a mirror of Erised, which shows you your deepest desire, so we had a cardboard 'mirror' that showed the congregation what desires people might see – for money, power, courage, family – all of them desires that could be used for both good and evil.

Then, after a Sorting Hat sketch and just before Hunt the Snitch, we talked about the desire of Harry's mother in the stories to protect her son, a desire so strong that she died saving his life. In a way which is not yet clear, this has given Harry protection against the power of evil. What

better cue could a preacher have? Producing our own Harry Potter, we explained that God has a very deep desire too – that we should all have eternal life. And that to show us the way to overcome sin and death he sent his Son, Jesus, into the world, even though he knew that would mean death on the cross.

Did the service work? It seemed to. We had a full church, with many people attending who we had not seen before, even at our family services. We held their attention throughout, and I believe we preached a clear and sound gospel message that morning. Since then, I have had requests from many people for copies of the scripts, including one recently from a liturgical library in Sweden! And later this year the fifth Harry Potter book will be published. Do we dare to try it all again...?

Copies of the script can be obtained from Mike direct at 4a West Meads, Onslow Village, Guildford, GU2 7ST. Please enclose a stamped addressed envelope; and a small donation to 'All Saints Church PCC' towards their current building works would be welcomed – £2.50 suggested.

THE READER MISSIONARY STUDENTSHIP ASSOCIATION

Registered charity no: 1049012

President:

The Revd Professor Owen Chadwick OM

The Association, a registered charity, was founded in 1904 to provide grants to Readers who are training for the priesthood and who intend to serve the Church overseas.

The majority of these grants are made to Readers based overseas.

Further enquiries and donations should be sent to:

Mr Hugh Morley

Hon Secretary,
6 Kilworth Drive,
Lostock,
Bolton,
Lancs BL6 4RP

Miss Monica Brown

Hon Treasurer,
115 Cambridge Road,
West Wimbledon,
London SW20 0PU

Space and Time, History and Now

Joanne Cummings is an American citizen who has lived in the Middle East for much of her life. She is a Reader at the church of St John the Baptist, Maadi, Cairo.

A desert retreat

Last month I was in the mountains of the Sinai, looking at the massive walls of the Monastery of St Catherine, which sits at the base of Mt. Sinai. Behind the monastery, the path rises to the top of the mountain, and hundreds of visitors make the climb early each morning to greet the sun and remember the gift of the commandments. The mountains here are wild and rugged, some streaked with sand and others banded in diagonals of red and black intrusions. The land speaks to me of struggle, and also of the presence of God.

Deserts are the places I go for peace, for meditation, for renewal. It's not for all, I suppose, but I've lived most of my life in the Middle East (Lebanon, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt – as well as Ethiopia and Cyprus) and both mountain and desert are symbolic in their own ways. The monasteries dotting the mountains of Lebanon and the Eastern Desert of Egypt, the hills and valleys of the Land of the Holy One, all speak of a rich confidence in their Christian heritage and faith.

An airport reflection

But now I'm sitting in Terminal A of Newark Airport, and I reflect on being a (Lay) Reader in the Diocese of Egypt with North Africa and the Horn of Africa. The diocese is one of four in the Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East, and this region has formed my life in many ways – but I am still not of the region, and I remain forever an American, a woman, an expatriate. The greatest issues for me have been those of identity. Although we are one church, there are different views – Egyptian/expatriate; Anglo-catholic/evangelical; and urban/rural. Some of these differences are found in many parts of the world, and the strength of our church is in its ability to absorb and draw inspiration from the range of energies represented in it. Cultural differences can be more divisive, because they are more difficult to discuss – or even recognize. In this



diocese we have a large Sudanese and Ethiopian refugee population, a scattering of largely western expatriate congregations, and local congregations worshipping in both Arabic and English. Egyptian Anglicans

may have backgrounds in the Anglican Church, but often come from Presbyterian or Orthodox roots. Deep-seated assumptions about worship, lay participation, gender roles, hierarchy and authority all create a need for lengthy discussion in synod and committee meetings. Unfortunately, time is not always made for this, yet there is a need to identify and articulate these attitudes if we are to reach a deeper consensus.

Bishop Mouneer, consecrated in 2000, has been very active in encouraging lay participation in the church. This year he licensed Egyptian women as Readers, which is a first for the diocese and is a step toward broadening the acceptance of women in a range of roles. He is also developing ways to train people in both leadership and team-building, which will help Readers have a fuller role.

Although Readers are licensed for a particular church, we are occasionally invited to participate in various special services in the Cathedral at which Christian leaders of other denominations are also present. As Cairo has a wide range of Christian denominations – RC (and Greek, Syrian, Armenian and other Catholic); Coptic Orthodox (and Greek, Syrian, Armenian, and other Orthodox); and Protestant (Presbyterian, Lutheran, and others) – these services are sights to behold, with the leaders of each church processing together in full regalia.

When I first took part in these, I was concerned about the reaction of more conservative churches to the presence of women in the sanctuary. To my delight, many of the Orthodox and Catholic participants made a point of greeting each of the women present. Although the Coptic Orthodox, with some 6 million worshippers in Egypt,

are conservative on this issue, on a visit of the Executive Committee to a Coptic retreat centre in Wadi Natrun, Bishop Thomas assured us that licensed and ordained women of other traditions were welcome.

The Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East is opening discussion concerning the ordination of women, which has been raised periodically in Synod but only last year accepted for evaluation by each of our dioceses prior to our Provincial Synod. The discussion has been useful in raising the question in the minds of many who had not previously given much thought to the role of women in the church.

A challenge for the church

The presence of the Anglican church in the region carries its own history, and the leaders of the church have been very active in acting as a bridge among Christian denominations and with the Muslim authorities. Often the church has had to overcome the stigma of being a foreign church. In Egypt, for example, with an Egyptian Coptic Orthodox Church dating to the earliest days of Christianity, the Anglican church has needed to establish a working relationship that was complementary rather than focused on 'poaching' – a practice the Coptic church is very sensitive about.

But such wider concerns often have to be subsumed by the demands of the present. For much of the past eight months, we have had no resident priest at the Church of St John the Baptist in Maadi, a southern suburb of Cairo, Egypt. It has sometimes seemed that church activities and the preparation for them have dominated all else. After all, who else would do it? There had to be service sheets, hymns chosen, scheduling – and then the sermon, followed by scheduling and planning for the following week! Looking back, from the vantage point of being away and having for a while left the responsibilities to others, it is clear that there were flaws in the system. There should have been a greater division of the labour and responsibility, more participation by others in the Vestry (PCC) and from the congregation as a whole. The greatest cost to me has been the replacement of the times for prayer, reading, and preparation by work that enabled this in others but disabled it in me. I suspect that it is a feeling that Readers in other parts of the world can often identify with!



Prayers of place, and prayers of peace

The Coventry Litany of Reconciliation

All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.
The hatred which divides nation from nation, race from race, class from class,

Father forgive.

The covetous desires of people and nations
to possess what is not their own

Father forgive

The greed which exploits the work of human hands
and lays waste the earth

Father forgive

Our envy of the welfare and happiness of others

Father forgive

Our indifference to the plight of the imprisoned,
the homeless, the refugee

Father forgive

The lust which dishonours the bodies of men, women
and children

Father forgive

The pride which leads us to trust in ourselves and not in God

Father forgive

Be kind to one another, tender-hearted,
forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

(© Coventry Cathedral)

The Durham Springboard Prayer

Heavenly Father, as you reach out to us
through the love of your Son, Jesus Christ,
and the engagement of your Holy Spirit:

Make us a holy people
who sing your praises,

Make us a learning people
who think like you,

Make us a witnessing people
who, by the stories of our lives,

win others to be your friends and followers. Amen

A prayer from the Middle East

O Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen the love and commitment
of your people in Jerusalem and the Middle East
in this time of uncertainty and challenge.

Let them never forget your promise:

'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you,' and

'Do not let your hearts be troubled,
and do not let them be afraid.'

We pray for peace, with justice, healing for the wounded
and broken hearted, and dignity to be restored to all.

Pray not for Arab or Jew,
for Palestinian or Israeli.

But pray for yourselves,
that you may not divide them

in your prayers,

but keep them together
in your hearts.

(*Palestinian Christian prayer*)

Blessing

God of the Sabbath,

God of the Easter mysteries,

God of the new city,

May our travelling be with you.

(© Robin Green, *'Hasten the Time'*, USPG)

A Prayer of Special Places

O God, we praise you
because we glimpse your glory
in special places, in the beauty of nature,
in times of worship,
and also in our down-to-earth lives,
in the faces of those we love and who love us
as well as in strangers and unexpected moments.

We confess our willingness
to share the wonder of what we have seen,
and to believe that it can change our lives,
that you can change the world,
and that you are calling us to do your work.

We remember
those whose lives are deep in shadow,
who are lonely, depressed, bereaved, ill or afraid,
the people of former Yugoslavia (*for example*)
and those we name in our hearts.
May we and they be renewed in hope,
and give glory to you all our lives long. Amen



(© Jan S Pickard, *'Discovering Christ: Ascension and Pentecost'*, IBRA/NCEC)

God of the city

Come, God of the city, into my city.
Put up a sign, 'Danger – God at work'.
Build places of welcome... places to play –
riotous sound and colour;
Build homes of celebration with friend and stranger;
Build places of worship... places to pray –
spaces to listen and rest in quietness;
Illuminate with your energy,
Add your wine to my parties,
Your generosity to my economy,
And offer hospitality through my openness. Amen



(© Janet Corlett, *Methodist Minister, London, from 'A Touching Place, Methodist Church Prayer Handbook, 2000-2001'*)

A Farmer's Lament

A cry to the sky. O Lord Most High
My fields are bare. No sheep are there.
Gone now the baaiings with the cawings
of turbulent rooks, topping the tallest trees.
Is there no end to this foul disease?
– so pitiless, so cruelly blind to the innocence
of unsteady lambs, newly born,
proud rams and meek ewes unshorn.
All to be rounded up, trucked away without ceremony
to a pile of death and a hideous tomb of clay.
Did not your Son cry out – 'Why have you forsaken me?'
Father God, may he and you be with me in my agony.
Come alongside, Holy Spirit, brood like the dove,
Dissolve my gnawing despair and bring back joy and love.
(*Charles Pople, Reader, York Diocese*)



Heart in Pilgrimage, Soul in Paraphrase – Jesus at Prayer in the Gospel of Luke

On 29 July the Common Worship lectionary suggests Luke 11.1-13 as the Gospel reading, which focuses on Jesus' teaching about prayer. The following thoughts were written to help Readers reflect on the centrality of prayer in Luke's Gospel.

In Luke's gospel Jesus prays a lot! Throughout his ministry we hear how key events seem to take place while he was praying. These include his anointing by the Holy Spirit during his baptism (3.21) the calling of the apostles (6.12) the recognition of his Messiahship (9.18), and his transfiguration (9.28). Not surprisingly it also includes the moment when he taught the disciples to pray. It is significant that in this gospel, the teaching of the Lord's prayer is prefaced by the comment 'He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, 'Lord teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples' (11.1) This differs from the picture we are given by Matthew, where the same prayer is taught in the context of the Sermon on the Mount. (*Matthew 6.9ff*) Nor is it simply Jesus' own ministry that is suffused by prayer, for the account of Jesus' birth and infancy is undergirded by the prayers of Zechariah (*Luke 1.10*), Simeon (2.28) and Anna (2.37), while after his resurrection and ascension the final thing we are told about the disciples is that 'they were continually in the temple blessing God' (24.53).

Prayer is the lifeblood which vivifies this gospel and those whose stories are told in it. It is, as the poet George Herbert once wrote, 'The church's banquet, angel's age... God's breath in man returning to his birth'.

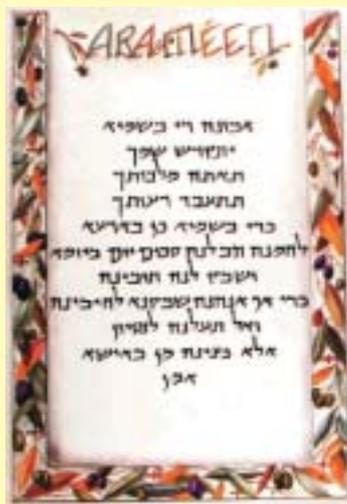
Within this panorama of prayer that special prayer of Jesus which we traditionally call 'The Lord's Prayer' seems to have a particular importance. Although it is given in a somewhat more abbreviated form than in Matthew, it introduces a quite lengthy reflection that Jesus shares with the disciples on the nature and importance of prayer in our lives. (11.5-13)

Not only with our lips

But prayer in the New Testament is never simply

a matter of words. True prayer requires an appropriate attitude – of trustful confidence in the goodness of God – and it must also be lived out not only with people's lips but in their lives. It is intriguing therefore to notice some features of Luke's presentation of the second half of the ministry of Jesus leading up to, and including, the events of his passion.

First of all there is, in chapters 15-17, a key series of parables and reflections that seem designed to illustrate in sequence what the various clauses of the Lord's prayer might mean in the lives and spirituality of the disciples. It is remarkable how this works out. The sequence begins in 15.11-32 where we see son – which could equally be described as the parable of the forgiving Father. We can have few better illustrations than this story of what it means to call God 'father' the very word with which Jesus' prayer opens. The parable is then immediately followed by the story of the unjust steward which is concluded with a comment by Jesus about the proclamation of the Kingdom of God. We could link this with the clause in Jesus' prayer 'Your kingdom come' – and perhaps even with the petition which we expect to follow it 'Your will be done, on earth as in heaven' although curiously, this clause is missing from the



The Lord's Prayer in Aramaic

The Lord's Prayer is not simply a formula of language to be uttered in church or temple, but rather it is to be worked out in the attitudes and dynamics of daily life.

At the beginning of chapter 17 (17.4) the instruction to forgive those who wrong us echoes almost verbatim the comparable clause of Jesus' prayer. Finally the sequence ends with the second half of Luke 17, (17.22-37) whose harsh and cryptic language illustrates only too graphically what may be meant by the plea 'Do not put us to the test'.

Putting all these elements together it seems as though the Jesus we

encounter in Luke's Gospel is seeking to show us through his words and his stories how 'The Lord's Prayer' is not simply a formula of language to be uttered in church or temple, but rather it is to be worked out in the attitudes and dynamics of daily life.

In life... in death

But there is still something else. For Jesus did not only teach his disciples to pray and show them by stories what it meant for them. He lived out his own prayer – in his life and supremely in his death. Each of the four gospel writers emphasises different elements in the events surrounding the death of Jesus. What is remarkable is that the features of the passion narrative that are special to Luke do seem to take us directly into the heart of Jesus' own special prayer. In Luke's Gospel Jesus is quite unlike the figure we meet in Mark or Matthew where his sense of abandonment is shrieked out in the great cry 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me'. Here throughout his passion he holds to a confident expectation of the coming of God's kingdom (22.18, 28-30, 23.42-43), offers words of compassion for those in Jerusalem who will be 'put to the test' (23.28-31), shows a startling and powerful willingness to forgive those who are crucifying him (23.34), and actually dies with a statement of trust in his Father on his lips (23.46). In some memorable lines TS Eliot once spoke of prayer being made 'valid'. In his final words and gestures the Jesus of Luke's Gospel validates the prayer that he gave us for time and for eternity. This is why we can and must still pray it today.

Clare Amos



Fishing in the Net

One of the features of 'surfing' the Internet – and something that makes it so richly enjoyable, is the way in which one website can act as a 'gateway' opening a path to a great number of others. I am sure that lots of Readers would find it helpful to be pointed in the direction of websites that offer resources for biblical and theological study. But there are now so many resources available that it can be difficult to know where to start! That is where an excellent 'gateway' site can come in useful. It is called New Testament Gateway.



www.ntgateway.com It was devised and is maintained by Dr Mark Goodacre a lecturer in New Testament Studies at the University of Birmingham. It was first set up to provide study support for his students – but now has a far wider circle of users. It exemplifies the spirit in which many academics have come to regard the Internet – as a tool to encourage the dissemination of knowledge as freely as possible. As its title suggests, New Testament Gateway focuses on biblical and specifically New Testament studies. But within these parameters (which are in any case interpreted fairly loosely) there is an embarrassment of riches, which are organised logically in a way that makes the site very user-friendly. There is also a 'search' facility on the site – you type in a word or phrase and get directed to references on the site that meet your criteria. It is certainly a site whose academic credibility is indisputable, and as someone who myself teaches biblical studies I would have no qualms about recommending it to my students. To give you a taste of the areas that the New Testament Gateway points you in the direction of – these include a variety of Bible translations, sections on all the major New Testament books, as well as information on websites that focus on Early Church history and the non-canonical

books such as the Gospel of Thomas and other works from Nag Hammadi. There is even a section which explores 'Jesus on film' – pointing you in the direction of articles which review the wealth of films that have been generated based on the life of Christ. Several of you have mentioned to me how useful you have found it – and I am sure it would be a rich resource for any Reader or Reader in training.

The next three sites can be reached via the New Testament Gateway, but they are also worth highlighting independently. I have found a useful 'Bible Browser' at



http://www.stg.brown.edu/webs/bible_browser Essentially this is a sort of internet concordance. You can type in a word, a phrase, or a verse reference, click the search button and retrieve your Bible passage. Restrictions of copyright mean that it is tied to particular Bible translations – these are RSV, King James Version and (for the Latinists among you!) the Vulgate.

Roger Payne, a Reader in Bushey, Hertfordshire, points us towards the 'Christian Classics Ethereal Library'. Writings of Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, Luther *etc* can be viewed and downloaded. It includes all the material in the Anti-Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers volumes. Roger comments that the site is particularly useful for those who need primary resource material for essays. The address of this site is pleasantly brief as <http://www.ccel.org>



There is also a marvellous site called 'The Ecole Initiative'. This describes itself as a 'Hypertext Encyclopedia of Early Church History on the Web'. It is an expanding resource, based at a US University, which includes not only primary texts, but also articles linked

to the patristic period. This is interpreted generously as meaning up to 1500AD, though the site is stronger on the earlier periods. But for me, the highlight of the site is its index to a wonderful list of links to religious images on the web, such pictures and icons. Via this site I have come across icons of the saints, pictures of the nativity *etc*. On several occasions already *The Reader* has been the beneficiary of my finds – though I am always careful to check copyright restrictions on the reproduction of the material. But if you want a picture of your church patronal saint to decorate a service sheet, for example, this would be an excellent place to look. The 'Ecole Initiative' is found at



<http://cedar.evansville.edu/~ecoleweb/images.html>

One final site to draw to your attention is a recent find of my own. It has the very logical address of



<http://www.theologywebsite.com/> This contains a range of information linking to various branches of theology – fairly short articles and links to New Testament and Early Church topics and a wide selection of original texts. They are not purely Christian texts so if you want a copy of Aristotle's 'Nicomachean Ethics' or the Babylonian 'Enuma Elish' or 'Epic of Gilgamesh' here is the place to go! It also contains an 'online' journal called 'Quodlibet' which invites people to contribute articles they have written on theological topics, and publishes them on the site. And finally, it includes a 'Sermon Database' which also invites contributions from the readership. There is a wealth of sermon outlines, indexed by Bible passage. So if you need help with preaching a sermon on a few verses of the Book of Joshua – here's a resource for you!

The Editor



For your bookshelf

B W

Introduction to the lessons

Mike Stone

Columba press £11.99 pbk.

1 85607 304 1

W

Companion to Common Worship Volume 1

Edited by Paul Bradshaw

SPCK £19.99 pbk

0 281 05266 2

W H

The saints of the Anglican calendar

Kathleen Jones

Canterbury £16.99 pbk

1 85311 375 1

'Of making many books there is no end', wrote the author of Ecclesiastes, that most realistic of Old Testament writers. He might have had in mind the plethora of books inspired by *Common Worship (CW)* and its accompanying lectionary (*CWL*) which are still pouring off the presses. Here however are three books which any Reader would be glad to possess and use.

CWL, and the Revised Common Lectionary (*RCL*), of which it is the Anglican version, draw on a broader selection of scripture than *ASB* and have no themes to suggest connections between the appointed lessons. As a result we are now reading more unfamiliar passages than previously and from unconnected scriptures. Mike Stone provides introductions to the readings for the principal service for Years A, B and C for both *CWL* and *RCL*. He describes his introductions accurately but inelegantly as *incipits*. He provides three types of *incipit* for each lesson – context, ideas and a few sentences explaining the reading. The latter could be read out by the reader or, better, printed on the Pew sheet for the congregation to study before the service begins. We are indebted to the author for a book whose usefulness is immediately self-evident.

Companion to Common Worship is the successor to and incorporates material from *A Companion to the Alternative Service Book* which appeared in 1985. Volume 1, now published, covers broadly the material included in the main volume of *Common Worship* whilst volume 2 will deal with 'other liturgical material which forms part of the Common

Worship family.' The first volume includes a brief history of liturgical development from its Jewish origins via medieval liturgies to BCP and so to the work of the liturgical commissions of 1991-2001 which produced *Common Worship*. It then considers each element of the central services in the weekly worship of the church including a chapter on preaching. This is a book for clergy and Readers who wish to understand at some depth the new services and prayers with which we are all gradually becoming familiar.

The Church of England now has a more complex sanctorale than ever before in its history. There are 232 names of individuals in the list as well as some collective saints for example English Saints and Martyrs of the Reformation or Martyrs of Papua New Guinea. They are arranged in four divisions, likened by my Rector to the divisions of the football league – it is even possible to be relegated or promoted from lesser festival to commemoration of vice versa! Kathleen Jones provides authoritative introductions to the life and work of each together with a brief bibliography for those who want fuller information. Some entries are inevitably short, the saints commemorated sometimes wrapped in impenetrable obscurity: even the 20 lines devoted to Ethelburga of Barking who died in 675, for example, are mostly about her brother Bishop Erconwold and the foundation of which she was abbess. The book contains nevertheless a fund of fascinating detail and will be a useful source of reference for anybody preparing a brief homily for a saint's day.

PETER WATKINS

W P

New handbook of pastoral liturgy

Michael Perham

SPCK £17.50 pbk

0 281 05252 2

The Dean of Derby provides in this fascinating book both a good introduction to the study of liturgy and a valuable companion to *Common Worship*. It will open the minds of worship leaders and ministry teams to the opportunities for making the new services exciting and meaningful. Older Readers who, like me, found their way into *ASB* made easier by Michael Perham's *Liturgy pastoral and parochial*, published in 1984 will discover in this new work evidence of the author's experience and develop-

ment. This book is readable and a valuable source of reference for service planning and for finding answers to those awkward questions about liturgy which come our way. Dean Perham takes Reader ministry very seriously, realising that the deacon's traditional role is these days often carried out by Readers. Helpful advice for those of us who are used in this way is provided.

PHIL WILLIAMS

W P

Heaven is like...

Joy Cormier

Sheed & Ward £9.99 pbk.

1 58051 072 8

This is an excellent book, described as a gospel model for writing, preparing and delivering the Sunday homily. By an American author, it is one of the clearest book on preaching I have read. New Readers especially will find it a tremendous help and for the experienced Reader it will provide a welcome refresher course. Today's homilist, says the writer, must mirror Jesus the preacher. Your words on Sunday should help the parish see how God is present in their Monday to Saturday world. Jesus employs images and pictures and this is a pattern we should emulate by story, connection, invitation. Each chapter includes examples and advice on conceiving, writing and preaching sermons. There is a chapter on body language and communication. 'Preaching' says the writer 'is a form of foot-washing. It is a ministry of love.' I recommend this book to all Readers.

ANGELA TIPPETTS

W J

Preaching creation

Jennifer M Phillips

Cowley publications £13.50 pbk

1 56101 174 6

This book is intended for those who want to preach about environmental issues with a wealth of scientific information. It whets the reader's appetite for delving into ways of keeping the care of creation constantly in mind. However it seems overkill to publish a book divided into years A, B & C and progressing from Advent to Proper 29, apparently expecting preachers to bring creation into every sermon. Congregations recognise bandwagons and experienced preachers try to avoid them by suiting the message they give to the occasion. The writer admits that the connections between biblical texts and the



environment are sometimes tenuous. She raises thought provoking questions and provides an interesting, if not comprehensive, bibliography. Although these questions could be posed at the end of a sermon to provoke thought some are more suited for discussion groups. This is an ingenious book with curiosity and dip-in value for Readers. CYNTHIA WHITTLE

W S

Praying twice

Brian Wren
Westminster John Knox press
£12.99 pbk
0 664 25670 8

‘He who sings to God in worship prays twice’ said Augustine. This hefty book – 422 pages including appendices, indices, and a huge bibliography – is a lively celebration of Christian song – chants, hymns and choruses. Brian Wren, English author of *I come with joy to meet my Lord* and *There’s a spirit in the air*, is Professor of Worship in Columbia, USA. Song, he says, is an indispensable ingredient in worship and, for many people, their sole source of theology, an alarming but well argued point. His book covers a vast range, including how hymns do theology, assessing lyrics, and how words may be updated. For Readers there is a gem of a chapter on encouraging people to sing. One caveat: Wren’s American outlook makes him nervous of sexist language and even of addressing God as King or Lord – a point he argues at tedious length.

DEREK WOOD

B

The New Testament, which way in?

Kenneth Grayston
DLT £8.99 pbk
0 232 552388 6

This is not a commentary, nor did the author intend it to be; his intention is to produce a primer for those wishing to read the New Testament in a more complete manner than is normally available through the Sunday lectionary readings. He opens with a discussion of the importance of reading the whole New Testament, the merits of the original language and some thoughts on the comparative value of modern translations. This is of course an expression of the author’s personal preference with which not everyone will agree. There then follows a section comprising nearly half of the total text in which he gives short

summaries of the subject matter contained in the epistles, gospels and other New Testament books. In conclusion there is a section discussing how the New Testament should be read and in what sequence. This is a useful book for those involved in leading study groups. It contains thought provoking and challenging suggestions on how to embark on this.

RALPH H CRAMPHORN

B

First Corinthians

Bruce N Fisk
Westminster John Knox £5.99 pbk
0 664 50074 9

If your study group wants to tackle a meaty piece of St Paul offer them this ten chapter course on 1 Corinthians. Ten excerpts from the letter representing about 40% of the book are analysed quite thoroughly from a moderately liberal point of view. The group is given rather over simple questions to frame their discussion. Fisk finds a nice balance between restating familiar ideas and giving us something fresh to work on. He steps delicately round St Paul’s injunctions against females leading worship in chapter 14 and is specially insightful on the context of the famous passage on love in chapter 13. There is also a study guide for group leaders and a link to the IBS web site. This is the best website I have seen for Christian teaching – <http://www.gospelcom.net/ibs/>

PETER THORNTON

B

The letters of John

Colin G Cruse
0 85111 776 7

The letter of James

Douglas J Moo
0 85111 977 8

Apollos, each £14.99 hbk
The Pillar New Testament commentaries are clear, comprehensive and scholarly but not too technical. Both commentaries could be used for Bible study at a variety of levels. Colin Kruse deals in his introduction with the widely differing views on the authorship of the letters, the Johannine community and the background of early heretical tendencies; there are extensive and helpful quotations from the Fathers. The commentary brings to life the purpose of the author(s) and there are useful notes on theological themes such as koinonia.

Douglas Moo has enlarged his earli-

er treatment of the letter of James published in the Tyndale series in 1985. He here pursues issues of background and theology at greater length and illustrates James’s use of Hellenistic Jewish traditions. Moo writes clearly and has particularly useful sections on faith and works, and on prayer, faith and healing. There is a wealth of academic background but he writes with pastoral needs in mind. Both are valuable and readable commentaries.

DAVID BONE

H

Not angels but Anglicans

Edited by Henry Chadwick
Canterbury press £19.99 pbk
1 85311 352 2

Each of the thirty contributions to this book appeared as weekly articles in *The Church Times* between October 1999 and April 2000. They were written by prominent scholars and historians and relate the story of Christianity in the British Isles from its Celtic beginnings to the present day. Fresh insights are hewn from the scholarly coal face and each contribution is admirably concise and informative. For the non-historian this book will provide an invaluable resource whilst even historians reading it are likely to find areas with which they are unfamiliar. Imaginatively illustrated and with helpful chronological tables included in each chapter and lists of further reading, this book is not only a fascinating read but a useful reminder that many of our current concerns as Anglicans are deeply rooted in history. I cannot imagine a Reader who would not find this book enjoyable and informative.

ROBERT BEVAN

P E

Dynamic local ministry

Andrew Bowden & Michael West
Continuum £14.99 pbk
0 8264 4996 4

Readers will know that the growing practice of local ministry is a grass roots movement towards an indigenous ministry. Local Ministry – variously described as ‘all member’, ‘collaborative’, ‘mutual’, or ‘total’ ministry – is a new pattern which has emerged in part in response to the church’s contemporary situation. It also marks a return to the model of the early church, indeed the authors take us further back into the exilic period. This excellent account of Local Ministry is authored by two dual role parish clergy and is a well



written and wide ranging record examining many related issues. Particular emphasis is given to the subject of selection and training of ordained local ministers and the consequent impact on Reader, NSM and stipendiary priest. The hierarchical shape of present day ministry changes to a team pattern where local people are selected for office, appropriately trained, validated, and authorised at diocesan level to proclaim a dynamic ministry to the local community, parish or benefice. The authors also examine local ministry as currently practised by other denominations and include experiential accounts of local ministry in other countries together with the personal experience of various bishops. This is a significant and timely account of local ministry and its development which does not ignore the difficulties and acknowledges that change is painful.

S JOHN HAZEL

S P W

The spark of God

James More-Molyneux

Eagle £6.99 pbk

0 86347 317 7

My appetite was whetted by Lord Weatherill's warm, witty foreword and the author's ground laying introduction. He shows how the divine spark within us is rekindled by prayer, led by the Holy Spirit, into a personal, loving relationship with God and our fellows. His own encounter is described explicitly and movingly, leading him to a healing ministry; and later receiving in an extraordinary way the power of the Holy Spirit to minister to cancer sufferers. It is full of honest instances at the cutting edge, exploring Biblical texts, prayer, death, bereavement, reconciliation and healing, ending with a splendid rallying call to seize our great opportunity for effective work to feed the flame. This book is a wonderful resource for Readers.

JOAN SMITH

J

Poverty and Christianity

Michael Taylor

SCM £10.95 pbk

0334 0 28140

This book is a painfully honest attempt to tackle a number of uncomfortable questions for Christians concerned for the developing nations. What can Christian theology contribute in such situations? Which theology are we to follow? Does

Christianity fail the world by reducing its message to a purely spiritual plane? Is Christianity's claim to change the world for good false? How can scepticism about the relevance of Christian doctrine to concern for social and economic divisions and human rights be countered? What are the characteristics of the struggle to replace poverty and injustice with a fairer world?

Michael Taylor, a Baptist minister and formerly Director of Christian Aid discusses these and other questions. He is both concise and precise, well organised, clear and demanding. He is open to truths from whichever quarter they come but he makes a doughty defence of the Christian faith understood in part in terms of W.H.Vanstone's *Love's endeavour, love's expense*. This discussion was originally for students of social theology and might not be easily accessible to the average congregation but Readers preaching on aspects of Christian aid to the world will find here a mine of challenging exposition and comment.

HOWARD SAINSBURY

P

A question of healing

Gareth Tuckwell &

David Flagg

Eagle £6.99 pbk

0 86347 393 8

The simple style of this book makes it easy to read but it tackles some difficult issues including anger, bereavement and AIDS.

Written by a doctor and a priest who worked together at Burrswood, it takes the form of questions and answers which appeared over a period of years in a magazine. Although the book acknowledges the part the charismatic movement has played in healing ministries, it is not written from that standpoint and is at times gently critical. Readers active in

pastoral ministry might find this a helpful book to share with a congregation exploring the healing ministry.

HILARY UNWIN

J

The care of creation

Edited by RJ Berry

IVP £9.99 pbk

0 85111 657 4

'God intends ... our care of creation to reflect our love of the Creator', writes John Stott in the foreword. Creation care is increasingly, though belatedly, a mainline Christian concern. The book has 21 contributors mostly from UK and USA, theologians and scientists, with a majority of professors. It takes as its starting point *An evangelical declaration on the care of creation* issued in 1994. It is mainly a theological commentary on that document and the commentators are united in their Bible-based understanding of the environment as God's creation entrusted to our care and wonder. It is explicitly an evangelical volume stemming from concern that evangelicals, as no doubt many other Christians, have neglected the environment for too long. How long do we stand and ➤



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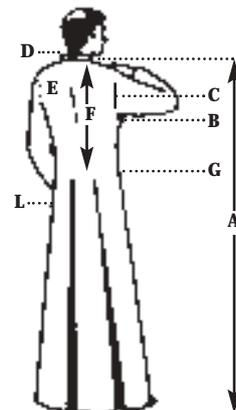
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watch whilst 'a child born in the USA consumes about 100 times the resources of one born in Bangladesh?'

WILLIAM KEARNS

W P

The prodigal project

Mike Riddell, Mark Pearson & Cathy Kirkpatrick
SPCK £12.99 pbk

0 281 05250 6

This book is not for the faint-hearted. It claims that significant numbers in our mainstream churches are disenfranchised and numbed by traditional worship patterns. The answer is alternative worship, a term not clearly defined, though many examples are given. Definitions do not fit into the culture which alternative worshippers want to express. Beginning with some personal stories, the book moves through a helpful summary of post-modern culture, into a wide range of ideas for alternative worship, backed by numerous resources (including an accompanying CD-ROM), ending with a series of real life accounts of alternative worship groups. The Prodigal project cannot be accused of being theoretical. It answers its own

questions and very practically too. But let each one be convinced in his or her own mind. Personally I am left questioning how we can express the oneness of the body of Christ across the generations if members group themselves according to the worship style they prefer. This book tells us how some we live alongside view the church – and we need to know.

DAVID AGER

T

When science meets religion

Ian Barbour
SPCK £12.99 pbk

0 281 05364 2

This is an unusual and fascinating book, relevant to Readers wanting to think deeply about the interaction of science and religion. It is not easy reading – its comprehensiveness and scientific depth are too challenging and its structure is too formal for that. Ian Barbour works through historical and modern scientific theories of creation, cosmology, quantum physics, evolution, genetics, neuroscience and nature, managing to make them comprehensible and enabling the reader to assess them in a variety of religious contexts.

He views each topic from four standpoints – those of conflict, independence, dialogue and integration between science and religion – which makes the book hard to follow, but the journey is worthwhile. This is a book to read slowly and dip into regularly.

ED WICKE

And finally...

Percy Dearmer was responsible for the *Parson's Handbook*, 1899, *English Hymnal*, 1906, and *Songs of Praise* (1925) – the hymnbook, not the television programme – all of which influenced the Church of England in the first half of the twentieth century. Donald Gray, formerly Canon of Westminster has written a biography, *Percy Dearmer* (Canterbury press £12.99 pbk 1 85311 335 2). *Panorama of the Bible lands* (Jon Arnold & Stephen Sizer Eagle £17.50 hbk 0 86347 353 9) combines text and magnificent photographs and is designed to introduce New Testament places – Athens, Corinth, Rome and Sardis as well as Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Capernaum.

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Gazette of newly admitted and licensed Readers

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Isabel Coles, St Peter, Bishopsworth and St Oswald, Bedminster Down

Linda Culling, Lacock with Bowden Hill

Joyce Griffin, Bedminster

Patrick Hine, Holy Trinity, Horfield

Lesley Hooper, St Peter, Bishopsworth and St Oswald, Bedminster Down

Emma Langley, Bishopston and St Andrews

Judith Lee, Frampton Cotterell, and Iron Acton

Hugh Milsom, The Blunsdons, Broad Blunsdon and Blunsdon St Andrew

Brenda Munden, St Christopher and St Cuthbert, Brislington

Licensed

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Stephen Mark Sharples, St Philip and St Jacob with Emmanuel, Bristol

Timothy Southwood, Christ Church with Emmanuel, Clifton

CHESTER

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James Burgin, St Paul, Sale

Joy Birch, St John the Baptist, Knutsford

Stephen Cook, Christchurch, Tintwistle

Janet Critchley, St Matthew, Edgeley

June Hargreaves, St Peter, Waverton

Patrick Heaps, St John the Baptist, Godley cum Newton Green

Christine Keay, St Chad, Over

Roy McWhan, St Paul, Hooton

Peter Pownall-Jones, St Mary, Nantwich

Marjorie Pratt, St Mary, Hollingsworth

Dorothy Roxby, St John the Evangelist, Sandiway

Jane Stephenson, St Mary, Tilston

Helen Thomas, St Andrew, Bebington

Judith Williams, St George, Altrincham

Elizabeth Woode, St John the Baptist, Hartford

Licensed

John Atkins, All Saints, Church Lawton

Eileen Delight, Holy Trinity, Hurdsfield

Lynne Marsh, St Mary, Nantwich

John Millington, St John the Evangelist, Buglawton

Sheila Thacker, St Peter, Oughtrington

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23 SEPTEMBER 2000

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Christopher Thomas, St John, Kenilworth (correction)

OXFORD

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Juliette Day, St Michael and All Angels, New Marston

Margaret Ellis, St Barnabas and St Paul, Oxford

Teresa Kennard, St Mary the Virgin, Hurley and Stubbins

John Leach, St John the Baptist, Burford

Christopher Leslie, St Mary, Shinfield

Dennis Parker, Greyfriars, Reading

Robert Peters, St Andrew, Sonning

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John Best, Southborough Team Ministry

Ailsa Brooke, St Peter and St Paul, Edenbridge

Mandy Brown, St Alban, Dartford

Tina Chattington, Northumberland Heath

John Cox, St Mary, Bromley

Sharon Copestake, St Augustine, Gillingham

Carolyn Croft, St Lawrence, Bidborough

Roger Cusdin, St Mark, Tunbridge Wells

Mike Evershed, Holy Trinity, Bromley Common

David Garland, St John, Bexley

David George, St Aidan, Gravesend

George Gilbert-Smith, St Peter and St Paul, Tonbridge

Nikkii Griffith, Christ the King, Princes Park

Ian Hamilton, St Margaret, Rainham

Michael Harper, Burrswood

Jean Holl, St Philip and St James, Chatham

Susan Midha, Christ Church, Chislehurst

Elaine Northern, Istead Rise

Julie Offord, St Giles, Farnborough

Elizabeth Robertson, Fawkham and Hartley

Morwenna Semos, Holy Trinity, Lamorbey

Elizabeth Simpson, St Paul, Swanley

Freda Skillman, Christ Church, Orpington

Alan Thomas, Southborough Team Ministry

Derek Tompsett, Snodland

Verena Walder, Holy Trinity, Bromley Common

Peter Waterman, St Philip and St James, Chatham

Rodney Webber, St Stephen, Tonbridge

Michael Wells, St Peter and St Paul, Tonbridge

Licensed

David Barnes, Coxheath with East Farleigh, Hunton and Linton

Ronald Bewsey, Hoo St Werburgh

Anne Bourne, Chevening

David Plummer, St John, Beckenham

Neil Scantlebury, Paddock Wood

In Memoriam

The deaths of the following Readers have been notified to us:

Birmingham

Mr IGH Cooke

Mr GAF Rees

Mr R Thorp

Blackburn

Mrs J Fish

Bradford

Mrs M Gledhill

Canterbury

Mrs MJ Ainscough

Mr K Dale

Carlisle

Mr J Rothwell

Mr H F Dain

Mr W R Graham

Chester

Mr L Wakefield

Chichester

Mr DH Bennett

Ely

Mr J Whitehead

Liverpool

Mr SJ Moore

Mr WH Cranshaw

Mr OG Jones

Mr AT Davis

Peterborough

Mr D Fitzhugh

Mr C M Morgan

Miss OBJ Campbell

Ripon and Leeds

Mr G Green

Rochester

Mrs J G Offord

His Hon Judge K

Cook

Mr C Moore

Mr E Felgate

St Albans

TA Benger

Salisbury

Mr J Crabbe

Southwark

Mr HS Groome

We give thanks for their work and witness and remember those who grieve



Gleanings

Resources on Revelation. Following on from the selection of books on the Book of Revelation that we listed in the February 2001 issue, Professor Ken Bakewell has written to suggest that he has found two other books particularly helpful. They are *The Book of Revelation*, an introduction and commentary by Leon Morris (IVP, 1987, 085111 889 5) and *The church overcomes*, a guided tour through the Book of Revelation by Richard Bewes (Mowbray, 1984, 0264 66886 3)

It's not who you are it's how you say it!

Dr Trevor Burch, a retired College Head and now a Reader and part-time hospital chaplain in the Diocese of Derby has



discovered that his lifetime passion of ventriloquism has become a wonderful and fulfilling part of his Reader ministry. He uses his puppets Sparky, Snowdrop and Tommy to bring some fun and humour into people's lives as well as being a means to impart important Gospel messages. You can see Trevor and Sparky at work in the picture above. (In case you were wondering that is Trevor on the right!)

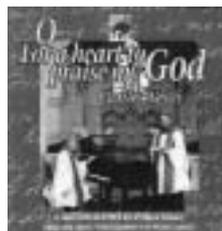
Peter Gedge

Although we do not normally carry detailed obituaries of Readers a special mention of the work of Peter Gedge, Reader in Blackburn Diocese, feels appropriate. Peter died suddenly from pneumonia on 28 February 2001, just hours after the birth of his third grandchild. Among his other roles Peter had been Head of the Department of Religious Studies at St

Martin's College, Lancaster, and later Dean of Academic Studies. He was also a Bishops' Chief Inspector of Theological Colleges. In Lancaster he became the first lay chairman of the Lancaster Council of Churches. He was also a talented musician and much involved in the Scouting movement.

A Heart to Praise My God

Christine Lewis and Jeremy Key-Pugh, both Readers in the Diocese of Bath and Wells, have



combined to produce a tape/CD featuring the hymns of Charles Wesley. Jeremy sings tenor and Christine accompanies on the piano. Copies of the recording can be obtained from Charles Wesley CD/Tape, St Bartholomew's Church Office, 5 Oldfield Road, Bath, BA2 3ND. Please enclose a cheque payable to 'Christine Lewis', for £6.00 (*Tape*) or £9.00 (*CD*).

Apology

In the last issue we reported on Mary Jackson who received the Archbishops' Diploma for her thesis on the importance of music in worship shortly before she died. We are very sorry that in that note Mary was wrongly referred to as Margaret. A heartfelt apology to Mary's family.

Common Worship

A reminder that in the November 2001 issue we are intending to devote space to 'Postings' from Readers who have something they want to say about their experience of *Common Worship* during its first year of use. In view of our publication deadline we will need any contributions from you by the end of August.

And finally... Editorial musings

I want briefly to share one or two comments that I have received with you and seek your feedback. One issue that has been raised by several people is whether or not we should have a regular letters page. I can see that this could be very helpful – although I also have some qualms. Since we are a quarterly journal for which the editorial deadline needs to be at least two months prior to publication it would be very easy for letters quickly to feel 'out of date'. I also wish to put on record that I would not be willing to publish letters that could be construed as a personal attack on other correspondents or were particularly aggressive in tone – that seems to me to be inappropriate in a journal of this nature. But with these caveats, what do people think?

Another point that was eloquently made in a letter from Liba Taconis of Shrewsbury Diocese is that she feels somewhat marginalised because she is not an Internet or email user. She wonders if other older Readers feel the same. She was specifically referring to the fact that we had mentioned that copies of 'Arthur's Story' would be available on the Readers' Internet site. My partial response to that would be that in view of the resources of CRC and *The Reader*, the choice in that particular instance was either website or nothing *ie* we do not have the personnel to handle phone or postal enquiries relating to a particular feature. I also know that many older people do use the Internet – indeed Dot Hooker sent me her article on 'older people' via email! But the point Liba makes is still a valid one.

Comments on this topic either by snail mail or email are welcome and we will try to print a selection in our next issue.



The Last Word – from Church House

One of the most enjoyable aspects of the Annual General Meeting each year is the opportunity that it provides of meeting Readers from around the country and being able to put faces to names and to the voices of those that I have spoken to on the phone. This year virtually all the Dioceses were represented including the Diocese in Europe as well as the Church in Wales and the Army and Royal Air Force. The Council is composed of the Wardens, Secretaries and a representative of each Diocese who discuss matters of concern to them. This year, topics discussed included the initial training of Readers as well as Continuing Ministerial Training, the Data Protection Act, *The Reader*, ethnic monitoring, information for new Wardens and other topics.

We are not a Trade Union!! The work of CRC is described on the web site, which is informative and useful. General information of use to Readers and to NSMs is set out on the gazette page of the Church of England web site and is updated regularly.

By the time this issue reaches you, Easter, the highlight of the Christian year will be over and I hope it will have been a time of renewal for each one of us. I cannot help but recall the moving scenes in the Passion Play at Oberammergau which aided my understanding of the final week in the life of Jesus. I am personally looking forward to the retreat in the Sinai Desert which I am joining at the end of April. I am immensely excited at the thought of being in the desert, sleeping under the stars and of having the time and space to be alone with God – but I am apprehensive at the thought of the camel rides!!

Deacons... and Readers?

I am about to join a forty-eight hour conference on the 'Renewed Diaconate'. A conference composed mainly of the ordained with just two lay people amongst its members. It will be interesting to discover where, if at all, Reader ministry appears in the thinking. This will be a precursor to the Working Party report due out at the end of the year. I look forward to the opportunity of discussing the issue with those who are Deacons amongst others.

Work on the introductory book on Reader Ministry continues, as does the planning for the Conference in 2002. Details and application forms will be available in the next issue. The Reader Diary for 2002 should be published at the end of May. I hope you will let us know if you feel it is useful as we hope to expand it in 2003 if sales are satisfactory.

And finally! An apology to all of you who received the February issue late. Staff sickness meant that we were unable to complete the updating of the database in time and so some copies have had to be sent out late from the office. We are working hard to ensure that it does not happen again. Our experience of using the database during the last year has shown us that we need to have it tweaked in places and this will be done shortly.

With best wishes to you all,

Pat Nappin, *Honorary Secretary*

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