

CHURCH IN CRISIS?



by Canon Paul Miller

We are about to celebrate the great festival of Easter. The heart of the

Christian faith is focussed on the three great festivals which embrace what we believe: Christmas, Easter and Pentecost.

That God came down to earth is what we celebrate at Christmas in the birth of Jesus. That Jesus grew up, lived, walked about, taught and healed is what we describe as the new way of life he shared and gave to us. That he was crucified for all the bad we have done is what we remember on Good Friday. That he rose again to overcome the power and reality of death is what we celebrate on Easter Day. That he reminded us he is with us for ever in the gift of his presence (we call this the Holy Spirit) is what Pentecost embraces.

It is so very important to remember the reason the church

exists. It is very easy to allow the infighting that currently plagues the Anglican Communion to deflect from the heart of our faith.

I find it deeply distressing that there is talk of splits, alternative churches and divisions. The Church of England has always been, since Elizabethan times and the time of its birth, a church of the Via Media. We are a body of people which, like any organisation, has been created differently, and may have different views, but our strength is in our breadth and diversity, and those who wish to make us into a narrow banded church should think carefully about what we have always been.

In the local scene I find people are not that comfortable with extremes. It is interesting that we are now

seeing, at church services, a good number of people who are uncomfortable with churches that are losing their Anglican identity.

Here in Shortlands we shall endeavour to embrace a Christian faith and worship that engages with people in their daily lives. We believe in traditional and contemporary ways of worship and the Church of England has provided, and continues to provide, the means to do this.

Over the last 2,000 years the Church has needed to face up to many crises. What we must not lose hold of is the faith which is our reason for being. May I wish you all a very happy Easter, and hope that you may be able to join us at some of our Easter services to celebrate this great Festival.

Special Services for April

Palm Sunday - April 1st

10.30am: Procession of Palms and Family Eucharist

- Canon Paul Miller and Reverend Alison Newman

6.30pm: Service of Words & Music - Canon Paul Miller

including choral music by Malcolm Williamson, Ian Brentnall, Philip Moore & William Walton, as well as readings and congregational hymns. Organist: Tony Baldwin; music directed by Ian Brentnall

Mundy Thursday - April 5th

7.30pm: Passover Meal and Holy Communion in the Church Hall, followed by the Watch in the Church

Good Friday - April 6th

10.30am: The Family Service of Good Friday

- Reverend Alison Newman, music led by the Music Group

2.00pm: An Hour at the Cross

- Canon Paul Miller; Anthems: Drop, drop slow tears (Ian Brentnall), God so loved the world (Stainer)

Easter Day - Sunday, April 8th

8.00am: Sunrise Eucharist of Easter Day - Canon Paul Miller

10.30am: Family Eucharist of Easter Day and the Easter Egg Hunt

- Canon Paul Miller; address Reverend Alison Newman

Anthem: This joyful Eastertide (Charles Wood)

6.30pm: Evening Service (Common Worship) - Canon Paul Miller

Sunday, April 22nd

10.30: Family Communion - Reverend Alison Newman

Speaker: The Reverend Canon Jean Kerr, for the Rochester 604 Society

6.30pm: The Annual Friends of St. Mary's Choral Evensong

- Canon Paul Miller

Responses: W. Smith, Setting: Stanford in B flat, Anthem: For the beauty of the earth (Rutter), Organist: Neil Rollings, music directed by Daniel Beach

Sunday, April 29th

6.30pm: Songs of Praise - Canon Paul Miller

New Branch Leaders for Mothers' Union



At the recent Annual General Meeting of the Shortlands Branch of the Mothers' Union, Tricia White (photographed above left) was appointed Branch Leader and Shirley Broughton (above right) her deputy. Sincere thanks were extended to retiring Branch Leader, Gloria Carpenter, who has held the post for the past seven years.

The Mothers' Union meets on the first Monday of every month at 8.00pm in the Choir Vestry, and there is usually a speaker, followed by refreshments. All are warmly invited to attend these meetings. Recent

topics for speakers have included aid projects for Tsunami victims, the MU South Africa Project, the Bromley Young Carers Project and the history and development of particular musical styles and themes.

MU members also enjoy evenings out to local restaurants and coffee mornings/cheese and wine evenings. On April 2nd the talk will be by a representative of the Friends of Kelsey Park, and will obviously have a local theme. If this is of interest to you, please feel very welcome to come along. If you would like further details, please phone 8460 1953.



From the Registers

At Rest:

We extend our sympathy to those who loved:

- 22 Feb Alice Ridgwell, aged 93
- 23 Feb Douglas Newton, aged 84
- 27 Feb Philip Wood, aged 84
- 7 Mar Lyndsey Boothroyd, aged 60
- 7 Mar Leslie Leach, aged 91



Remembering

Alice (Peggy) Ridgwell

Peggy was born locally in Farnborough, and at 14 went to work at Cedars Laundry. It was in Farnborough that Peggy was to meet her future husband, Jack, and in 1932 they began a marriage which was to last happily for almost 70 years.

Coming to live in Queen Anne Avenue, Peggy was to suffer and cope with the horrors of the Second World War, and later with the onset of leukaemia. On her recovery she worked tirelessly for the Leukaemia Fund (ELF), and with Jack's help raised many thousands of pounds on its behalf. A self-effacing, loving and loveable lady, Peggy was a real homemaker, and a great support for her family.

Her funeral, conducted by Ann Gimson, took place at Beckenham Crematorium, attended by her sons Ted and Peter and her grandchildren and great-grandchildren, together with neighbours and friends.

Philip Wood

Phil was born and brought up in Devonport, one of three children. In Devonport he met Joan, to whom he was married for 62 years. He began work as an engine fitter, but in due course moved to London, to work first in banking, and then as an Area Sales Manager for British Telecom.

Phil was an immensely practical

and gifted man, who also loved photography and painting, and was a member of the Queensmead Bowling Club. He and Joan had lived in Shortlands for 31 years.

A Service of Thanksgiving, conducted by Canon Paul Miller, took place at Beckenham Crematorium, where his wife Joan was joined by her sons Chris and Steven and grandchildren Christopher, Laura, Charlotte and Francesca.

Douglas Newton

Doug, born in Cardiff, was the youngest of 12 children. Sadly his parents died when he was young. He served with the R.A.F. as a mechanic, and in the R.A.F. he met his future wife, Rose. After the war he became a driver, eventually working as a chauffeur with Shell.

For the past 14 years he has lived at Franklin House, a much loved member of the community there. He played and loved many sports.

A Service of Thanksgiving, conducted by Canon Paul Miller, was held at Beckenham Crematorium, where many friends joined Kevin, Wayne and Linda, his children, together with representatives of his two surviving sisters, Vera and Rose, who were unable to be present.

Leslie (Jack) Leach

Jack was born in Bromley, and attended Raglan Road School, Bromley. He was one of three. In the war he served in the R.A.F., and was based at Biggin Hill during the Battle of Britain. A carpenter by profession, he had sometimes worked at St. Mary's Church!

He married Hilda in 1936, and has two daughters, Jackie, who lives in Orpington, and Sandra, who lives in New Zealand.

A Service of Thanksgiving took place at Beckenham Crematorium, conducted by Canon Paul Miller, attended by family and friends who celebrated the 91 years of Jack's life.

Calling all youth!



St Mary's Youth Group meets in the church hall on Sunday evenings from 7.30 - 9pm and all year 9 upwards are welcome. We have a varied programme - this term some of our activities have included bowling, pancake making, games evenings, quizzes and the golf range. If you would like more info., please contact Alison Newman on 8658 7784.

The 604 Society

Rochester Cathedral is the spiritual centre for many people of Northwest Kent and Southeast London, the Mother Church of our Diocese. It is the second oldest Cathedral in England, having been a place of Christian worship since 604 AD.

Soon after The Very Rev'd. Adrian Newman arrived in Rochester as Dean (two years ago), he launched a fundraising campaign to raise £10 million for Cathedral Developments at this very exciting time for the Medway area. Chief areas for which funds are sought are £5 million for a music endowment fund, £2,500,000 to develop Cathedral buildings for the 21st century, including modern

disability access, and £2,500,000 for facilities for visitors and for enhancing the on-going education programme.

Recently, all parishes in the Diocese have been invited to join 'The 604 Society', to help with the fundraising. St Mary's, Shortlands has joined the Society, and the PCC has designated 'The 604 Society' Mission for the Month in April, in order to afford the community of Shortlands the opportunity of supporting the campaign. There will be a display at the back of the church during the month, as well as a visit by Canon Jean Kerr from the Cathedral to speak at our 10.30am service on Sunday, April 22nd.

A THANK YOU: The following note was received by St. Mary's in acknowledgement of the contribution of £915.32 raised for The Children's Society by the Christingle Service in 2006:
"Tina, the mother of a former young runaway, would like to thank you for the support you helped provide for her family: "Without The Children's Society, my child was angry, confused and unhappy. They instantly put her at her ease, giving her the confidence to relax and talk about her problems. Fantastic! We're a family again now, and we'll always be grateful."

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We record our thanks for donations during the month of March of £22.81

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May Talks

During May there will be three talks on subjects which we hope will attract interest. All are welcome, and all the talks will be held in the Chapel at 8.00pm.

Wednesday, 2nd May: 'Telling Your Story'
Help and hints on sharing your faith.

Wednesday, 9th May: 'Who's Who?'
Meet the leaders of our Church and find out what they do.

Wednesday, 23rd May: 'The History of the Church of England'
How have we arrived at where we are?

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THE HISTORY OF EASTER

As with almost all 'Christian' festivals, Easter has gradually been secularised and commercialised. The dual nature of Easter and its symbols, however, is not necessarily a modern fabrication.

Since its conception as a holy celebration in the second century, Easter has had its non-religious side. In fact, Easter was originally a pagan festival. The ancient Saxons celebrated the return of spring with an uproarious festival commemorating their goddess of fertility and of springtime, Eastre. When the second-century Christian missionaries encountered the tribes of the north with their pagan celebrations,

they attempted to convert them to Christianity. They did this, however, in a covert manner.

It would have been suicide if the very early Christians' observances had not coincided with celebrations that already existed. In order to avoid suffering and save lives, the missionaries decided to spread their religious message slowly throughout the populations by allowing them to continue to celebrate pagan feasts, but to do so in the Christian way.

As it happened, the pagan festival of Eastre occurred at the same time of year as the Christian observance of the Resurrection of Christ. It made sense, therefore, to alter the festival

itself, to make it a Christian celebration as converts were slowly won over. The early name, Eastre, was eventually changed to its modern spelling, Easter.

Prior to AD 325, Easter was variously celebrated on different days of the week, including Friday, Saturday and Sunday. In that year, the council of Nicaea was convened by Emperor Constantine. It issued the Easter Rule, which states that Easter shall be celebrated on the first Sunday that occurs after the first full moon on or after the vernal equinox. However, a caveat must be introduced here. The 'full moon' in the rule is the ecclesiastical full moon, which is defined as the fourteenth day of a lunar tabulation, where day one corresponds to the ecclesiastical new moon. It does not always occur on the same date as the astronomical full moon. The ecclesiastical 'vernal equinox' is always on March 21st. Therefore, Easter must be celebrated on a Sunday between the dates of March 22nd and April 25th.

The Cross is the symbol of the Crucifixion, as opposed to the Resurrection. However, at the council of Nicaea in AD 325,

Constantine decreed that the Cross would be the official symbol of Christianity.

The Easter Bunny is not a modern symbol. It also originated with the pagan festival of Eastre, when that goddess was worshipped by the Anglo-Saxons through her earthly incarnation, the rabbit. The Germans took the symbol of the Easter rabbit to America. It was widely ignored by other Christians until shortly after the Civil War. In fact, Easter itself was not widely celebrated in America until after this time.

As with the Easter Bunny and the festival itself, the Easter Egg predates the Christian holiday of Easter. The exchange of eggs in the springtime is a custom that was centuries old when Easter was first celebrated by Christians. From the earliest times, the egg was a symbol of rebirth in most cultures. Eggs were often wrapped in gold leaf, or, by the less well off, coloured brightly by boiling them with the leaves or petals of certain flowers. Today, children hunt coloured eggs, and on Easter Day at St. Mary's we always have an Easter Egg hunt at the end of the main morning service.

Award for Scout Leader



At its annual Christmas Tree Dinner, when the Beckenham Rotary Club distributes to local Children's Charities the funds collected during its December drive, a special award was presented to a member of St. Mary's, Shortlands. Rotarian Canon Doug Redman presented Charles Wood with the Rotary International

award for Community and Service, in recognition of the 18 years he has dedicated to the Bromley Scouts based at St. Mary's.

The dinner was held at the Langley Park Golf Club, and had as its guest of honour Jacqui Lait, M.P. for Beckenham, who is photographed with Charles, above.

Holiday Club News:

20th - 24th August, 2007, 10am-3pm each day. All primary school children, infants and juniors welcome. £28 for the week or £6 for each day. Bookings from 1st Feb, closing date 15th July.

Theme - Waste watchers!

Explore the wonder of God's creation!

Think about how we should look after what God has made! Learn more about Jesus! Crafts, games, and lots of fun! Visits from 'Eagle Heights', 'Mini beasts' and much more!!!! Information from Reverend Alison Newman (8658 7784).



All holidays abroad suspended ! ...

... until 15th July



'The Oyster' will be staged at St. Mary's in July, when you will be able to experience nothing less than - the world! The Oyster exhibition will be open to the general public on Saturday 14th July.

The exhibition will comprise five displays, one for each continent. The displays will show a selection of countries illustrating how people live, what they eat and wear, their music and their landmarks. In addition, Beckenham Photographic Society will be mounting its own selection of shots from around the world, and we will also be showing the work of the charity World Vision.

Pupils from Highfield School are being invited on the Friday, while on the Saturday the exhibition will be open to the whole community, when there will be a craft fair, some musical

performances and refreshments.

At the heart of the exhibition we are stating the Christian understanding that, whatever the damage we may be doing to the planet, let alone to each other, this is God's world. We read in John's gospel: 'God so loved the world...'

So why an oyster? When 'the world is your oyster', you are getting everything you want from life. That may be true for a few people, some of the time. But some oysters, of course, produce pearls. Jesus told a story about a pearl of great price: a man was prepared to sell everything he'd got to obtain a precious pearl. We will be unpacking both of these truths as part of 'The Oyster'.

So, if you plan on going abroad this summer to see the real thing, see the world first with us!

There will be a

MEN'S TEN PIN BOWLING EVENING

at Croydon City Limits on Friday, 27th April.

All men connected with St. Mary's are welcome, and if you would like further information or to book a place please contact Graham Leech on 8650 5476.

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- 08.00 Holy Communion
- 10.30 Family Communion, except the first Sunday in the month in term time. During term time there are separate groups in the Church Hall for children aged 4-14.
- 10.30 All Age Eucharist or Parade Service (1st Sunday in the month, term time).
- 18.30 Evening Service

Every Monday

- 17.00 Evening Prayers

Every Wednesday

- 10.00 Holy Communion

Every Friday

- 20.00 Night Prayers

Further information about all services can be obtained from the Parish Office.

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