

Vicar's Notes

INTRODUCING 'THE SPIRE'

At last the first issue of our magazine in its new form appears! It is late—but better late than never! At one time, it seemed impossible that the magazine should survive, but a great deal of co-operative planning has been done, and now we not only hope to continue it, but to make it better than ever.

And what more appropriate name could we have for the magazine of a church with such a splendid architectural feature than "The Spire"? The spire of St. James's can be seen for miles around; it is a prominent landmark, looked for and loved by many as they go about their business in the district or return home from London after a day's work in the city. It stands for homely, familiar things; it makes us feel that this is where we belong, in a community which has its roots firmly fixed in the best traditions of the past, and which therefore can face the future hopefully. It also reminds us of things far greater than this world, yet meant to find expression in this world: it is at the same time an inspiration and a challenge. It calls upon us both to seek God in His glory, and to serve men in their need. We hope that some of the things which it symbolizes and represents will find embodiment in various ways in the pages of this magazine as the months go by.

As this first issue becomes an actuality, and no longer just a dream, we must render our most grateful thanks to those who made the new cover possible—Mr. Webb, who seized his opportunity on one of the few days of sunshine since Christmas, and took twelve photographs of the spire from different angles, refusing to be deterred by the cold; and Mr. J. H. R. Danes, who used some of these excellent photographs in making the actual design from which the block has been made. Both put in hours of work, and gave freely of their great skill and knowledge—and though they had been asked to do this as a purely business proposition, both have refused to make any charge at all—"We do it for the Church," they say, and all we can do is to say how grateful we are.

Our printer, Mr. Rosam, the Manager of the Hampton Press, has also been most interested in the whole of this new venture. After consulting his directors, he not only reduced the printing-charge to the level of the highest estimate we could afford to pay, thus making it possible for us to continue with a local firm—which of course we much prefer to do on all grounds—but he also went out of his way to help with suggestions and advice.

By the way, Mr. Webb's magnificent photographs—which I am sure many of us would like to have—may now be seen in proof on the table in church, and there will be an opportunity given for those who wish to order copies.

SOME BRIEF COMMENTS

If I were sure of the amount of space available, there is much that I should like to write at length about: but to be on the safe side I must compress it.

First, the Gift Day: a grand result, over £57 altogether. We are not thanking anyone especially by name, even though we are bound to know the names of some, and the amounts they gave, but we know that all who gave would want their giving to be part of a great co-operative enterprise, in which the individual gifts remain anonymous. Then—the Play—another grand effort of team-work, as is made clear on a later page. It sprang spontaneously from a group which had come into existence to provide stewards for the Missionary Exhibition, and which, through studying and working together, had become really a team. Others were then invited in to help; Mrs. Crabb most kindly came in to undertake the production, guiding with patience the efforts of the many people to whom acting was an entirely new experience, and soon won the respect and admiration of everybody. The choir put in many extra nights of practice so that the music might fit in as perfectly as possible; and others put in many hours of hard manual work. And there was Miss Stanton, guiding, directing, and co-ordinating the whole project. Many prayers were said for the venture, and people felt that as a result the message did come through. We are all very thankful.

By the time this appears, Mr. Thomas will in all probability have received his licence to serve as a Parochial Reader in this diocese, and have been presented with his badge of office. I should like him to feel that this latter is a real gift from us all, and I have already received a number of small donations towards its cost, and should be glad to receive more.

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THE CHRISTMAS PLAY
In the Background

The production of the "Mystery of Christmas" would not have been possible without considerable help in the background, and our thanks are due to many people for their support.

Dr. Leonard Sayce was at the root of our staging and lighting effects. Through him the Amateur Dramatic Club of the National Physical Laboratory agreed to provide our stage, our star and our lights. To Mr. John Shearer, the A.D.C. Stage Manager, our most sincere thanks are due; he and Mr. A. I. Williams surveyed the site for the stage and the available electrical facilities and announced that it would be a challenge to their ingenuity! With what determination they triumphed over the difficulties was evident by the results. Mr. Blake, Mr. Alway and Mr. Wilkinson from the N.P.L. also helped; and we are most grateful.

To Dr. Sayce we also owe our "aeronautics": he modelled the framework of the angel's wings most expertly, as if he had had years of experience. The mosaic of St. Michael in the church was earnestly studied by a number of people to appreciate the exact angle of the upward boney curve which an angel's wings should undoubtedly have.

Mrs. and Miss Cox worked devotedly in the covering of these wings, and their feathery results were much admired. Mrs. Moakson also was closely connected with our "aeronautical devices."

Mr. North, Mr. Roberts, Mr. Williams, Mr. Harry Beckett and Mr. Strawson were our strong men, who helped erect and dismantle the stage twice. They spent many long hours of hard and heavy work in the church, and deserve our most sincere thanks.

Great enjoyment was given both to the performers as well as to the aud-

ience by the make-up, and we are very grateful to have had Major Crabb, Mrs. Whitton and Mr. Yardley with us.

On the publicity side, most sincere thanks are due to Mr. Rosam, who most kindly provided our handbills free of charge. He also advised on hand-drawn posters, and Janet Barrell, John Bruce, Margaret Christelow and Hugh Virgo all designed attractive and striking posters.

We were very fortunate in that Mrs. Crabb, our producer, was able to lend us her grand collection of costumes. These needed supplementing for so large a cast, and Mrs. Bassett, our wardrobe mistress, worked indefatigably at dressing everybody. Several churches locally lent us robes, and albs were sent to us from as far away as Mirfield in Yorkshire. Joan Bassett and Mrs. Offord must also be thanked for their work on the costumes.

Our thanks are due to many others in the background: those who sewed, cut out, painted, made crowns, stencils and lent many and various properties. The complete list of people who helped would be a very long one, and we can only say here how very grateful indeed we are to have had such whole-hearted support behind the scenes.

A last thank-you we feel we must include—to one member of the cast who deserves a special mention:—our Black King. To our great sorrow Mr. Cornish, who was to have played Caspar, was taken ill on the Friday before the play, the day before the dress rehearsal. Roger Grayer took his place at once: his first rehearsal was the dress rehearsal, and he was word perfect in his part, having been given it less than 24 hours before. We were all very proud of our Black King.
H.S.

In the Foreground

Yes—but they are not there because they like the limelight, or want to receive praise! Certain people had to appear on the stage, as others worked so hard unseen, and in future years they may like to look back and refresh their memory concerning those who took part with them in this pioneer effort, and it is for this reason, and not because anyone desires his or her name to be blazoned forth as a great actor or

actress, that we include a list of the names of those taking part in the production itself.

Characters in order of appearance:

A Pilgrim	Hannah Stanton
Gabriel	John Greig
Angels	Betty Brown
	Janice Castle
	Ann Cooling
	Mary Hutchins
	Jill Lawrence
	Janet Offord
Zacharias	The Rev. R. H. Brunt
Elisabeth	Mrs. Rockliffe
A Levite	John Sumner
Worshippers and Relatives	1st. Mrs. Beckett
	2nd. Mrs. Bassett
	3rd. Mrs. Casey
	4th. Joan Bassett
	Valerie Castle
	Miss Chamberlain
	Judith Cudmore
	Christine Giles
	Barbara Rockliffe
	Sylvia Smith
	Joan Virgo
	Janice West
Tablet Boy	Anthony Galler
Mary	Dorothy Tarrant
Joseph	Mr. Casey
Innkeeper	Michael Futter
	Shepherds
Isaac	Lawrence Weedon
Reuben	Gerald Holmes
Benjamin	Michael Childs
Shepherd boy	Michael Smith
	Kings
Bathasar	Mrs. Orton
Melchior	Cyril Tarrant
Caspar	Roger Grayer
Children	
Leaders	{ Jennifer Beckett
	{ Daphne Whitley
	{ Jennifer Alexander
	{ Judith Browning
	{ James French
	{ Robert French
	{ Ruth Mills
	{ Daphne Smith
	{ Joyce West
Simeon	Mr. Forrow
Anna	Mrs. Childs
Young Man	John Sumner
Pages	Clive Rowlands
	James West
	John Offord
Violinist	Mrs. Wolf
Prompter	Pauline Rockliffe
Wardrobe	
Mistress	Mrs. Bassett

Property	
Mistress	Mrs. Virgo
Organist and	
Choirmaster	Mr. C. Haydn Bull
Producer	Mrs. F. J. Crabb

CAN YOU GIVE A REASON?

There is hardly a churchman today who has not grasped from personal experience how urgent it is, in a world of conflicting ideas and ideals, to know what the Church is and what she teaches and to be able to give an adequate reason for his Christian allegiance. The intelligent pagan is more frequently than ever coming to the churchman in a spirit of sincere enquiry and only too often his questions remain unanswered. The churchman is tongue-tied because he has either never had the opportunity, or has never taken the trouble, to make a systematic study of the Christian Faith. Our Lord's command was to love God with the whole of our being; with the intellect as well as with the affections. Without something in the nature of disciplined study we cannot be built up into the character of Christ nor present the faith effectively to the world. There is no saying what might happen if every churchman in the London Diocese were thoroughly instructed and grounded in the Christian faith and its application to 20th century life.

The Mission to London Council has been instructed by the Bishop of the Diocese to make an attempt to meet this need, and, because it realises that the churchmen of the Diocese are prepared to consider very seriously a course of instruction, has worked out what is called "A School of Religion" on the scale of the Mission to London and which will be available to every parish in the Diocese during the first five weeks of Lent, 1952. It will be possible for the parishes to arrange four separate courses of instruction, each to be of five lectures, and it is aimed to give one lecture in each subject each week. The sessions may take the form of sermons or lectures on Sundays or during the week. Though it will, in some parishes, be impossible to run all four of these courses, the Bishop hopes that every churchman will commit himself quite definitely to attending at least the whole of two courses and the reading of

one recommended book — more if possible — and it is hoped that every “student” will make a point of attending Holy Communion at least once each week during Lent. It will surely be a thrilling experience to be joining with the whole Diocese in studying the same vital subjects at the same time. To bring this great diocesan effort to a close, on 8th May, 1952, that is soon after Easter, a final Service for the people of the Diocese will be held in S. Paul’s Cathedral at which the Bishop of London will preach and at which he will present signed cards to those who have completed the courses as a recognition of the self-sacrifice that will have been made and the hard work done.

The syllabus and the lecture notes have been compiled by a panel of scholars and parish priests and cover a very important range of subjects. Course I. is a study of the “Great Words of the Bible” and will teach of the Christian scheme of salvation embodied in the words “Faith,” “Grace,” “Atonement,” “Forgiveness,” “Sanctification,” etc. Course II. under the title “The Sacraments” will give teaching on the sacraments of the Church and the sacramental view of life. Course III. on “Life in the Church” will be about the meaning of the Church and the necessity and relevance of prayer and worship, and Course IV. under the title “The Christian in Action” will show how the Christian faith meets the needs and conditions of the present day. In five weeks it is impossible to cover the whole ground of what should be known, but this Lent series of courses will be for many people, the beginning of a new understanding and it may lay the foundations of a life-long enthusiasm for, and joy in, the knowledge of the Christian Faith.

Mowbrays, the Church publishers, are showing great interest in the School of Religion and are printing

the notes on which the lectures will be based. They will be available to the general public some time towards the end of Lent. The B.B.C. are also interested and are running a course during Lent, 1952, parallel to the lectures to be given in the Diocese under the title “Life in the Church.”

For those who feel ready for a more specialised study, four courses have been arranged in the centre of the Diocese as follows:—

“The Christian Scheme of Salvation” by the Bishop of London, at S. Martin-in-the-Fields, at 6 p.m., on Thursdays, beginning 6th March.

“Problems of Christian Belief” by the Dean of S. Paul’s, in the Crypt of S. Paul’s Cathedral, at 6 p.m., on Mondays, beginning 3rd March.

“Man and the Social Order,” by the Reverend Professor V. A. Demant in Westminster Abbey, at 6 p.m. on Fridays, beginning 7th March.

“Personality and Human Relations” by the Reverend Canon L. Dewar, in the Crypt of S. Paul’s Cathedral, at 6.30 p.m., on Wednesdays, beginning 5th March.

In the City of London there will be several series of four courses held during the lunch-hours.

A Prospectus and Enrolment Form is being printed and copies will be available before Lent. To enrol in the School of Religion it will be necessary to indicate which courses will be attended and which books will be read by signing the Enrolment Form and paying a fee of 1/-. The qualification for the Bishop’s Card of Recognition is attendance at two full courses of lectures and the reading of one recommended book.

We at St. James’s hope to be able to take part in this scheme, and the local arrangements will be outlined in next month’s magazine.

AROUND THE SPIRE

being notes and news, about people, activities & organisations

The February magazine will appear hard on the heels of this issue, on February 1st and will include much matter unavoidably held over from

this number, including the list of Baptisms, Burials, etc., and all the news that should have appeared under this heading.