

Do you have a hero? I have lots, some famous, some known in our community, some unknown. Let me tell you about three of them.

The first is Desmond Tutu. In his biography he writes about his conversion to Christianity. It wasn't through a preacher, it wasn't through going to Sunday School, it wasn't through studying Christianity. No. Desmond Tutu was converted to Christianity because in his home township he was walking along the street with his mother when, coming in the opposite direction was Trevor Huddleston, their parish priest. Huddleston greeted Mrs Tutu by raising his hat to her. Little did he know that in that simple gesture of respect every law of apartheid regime was broken - acknowledgement, generosity, equality. And from that time Tutu realised there is something in this Christianity if that is what it really means - that all are worthy of respect, for all are made in the image of God.

My second heroine is a parishioner here in Hampton Hill, now dead, but still much loved. It was unknown to everyone, until I came to take her funeral, that every week for over 20 years she had taken in the washing of an infirm neighbour - and how she would hate anyone to know it.

About my third heroine even I don't know her name - and I guess she wasn't a Christian. I was on a bus journey in the hills in Sri Lanka - a seemingly endless bus journey, tired, squashed, dusty and very thirsty. We stopped at the bus station in a small town to drop passengers. She sat on the pavement with some mangoes on a plastic bag. She obviously caught me looking at them. I couldn't get out of the bus for fear of losing my seat or the bus going without me. She, however, waited till the bus was about to leave, sliced a mango and through the open window, thrust it into my hands. There was no time for me to say thank you or to pay her. I remember only her smile and her refreshing generosity, given from the little she had.

All these three knew the truth that to share the Good News of God you have to live it. That is exactly what Christmas is. God shares the Good News by being prepared to live it in the man Jesus. God takes the initiative, the risky initiative, of being human. Take a risk this Christmas by living the Good News - at home, in the family, at work - the heroic news that God is known - or fails to be known - by how you live. If you want some ideas for presents try giving generosity, giving compassion, giving peaceful, reconciling love this Christmas. You'll be welcome with us at any of our services this Advent and Christmas.

Brian Leathard

CHRISTMAS SERVICES AT ST. JAMES'S

You are very welcome at any of these services

Sunday 21st December	18.30	Parish Carol Service
Christmas Eve	16.30	Children's Crib Service
	23.45	Midnight Eucharist
Christmas Day	08.00	Holy Communion
	09.30	Parish Communion

The Shooting Star Trust Shop

According to the Shooting Star Trust's introductory leaflet there are less than 250 beds in the whole of the UK providing specialist hospice care for children. This makes one despair about the priorities of governments. Thanks to the inspiration of Kate Turner who founded The Shooting Star Appeal Trust in her back bedroom in 1995, to contributions of donors and supporters and not least the dedicated work of numerous volunteers, the Childrens' Hospice in Hampton will open its doors next year. A modern miracle right on our doorstep.

One of its four retail outlets is at 173a Hampton Hill High Street. Previously a printer's, the shop opened in 1998 and is manned entirely by volunteers. The Area Sales Manager visits regularly to offer professional advice. A profit of £71,097.14 was made between Oct.02 and Sept.03 which is phenomenal considering it all comes from what people no longer want for themselves.

Joy Rolfe, who is one of the volunteer managers, explained that prices are kept as low as possible to ensure a quick turnover. There is a coding system so that they know how long items have been out on sale. If any goods are thought to be valuable they are taken to a local auctioneer; old games in pristine condition, jewelry and a Steiff bear have all fetched very good prices. If Joy is puzzled by a strange object, she said she will put it in the shop as someone will know what it is and buy it!

All too often unwashed, stained or broken items are brought in which can make the task of fishing them out of black sacks extremely distasteful. Virtually nothing goes to waste, however, as the ragman comes every week and pays £1 per sack. All clothes have to be pressed and sized. Toys are thoroughly washed. Some volunteers take bags home so as to fulfil these tasks. Sometimes they become so overwhelmed by the amount of sorting that must be done that a notice is put out to say donations cannot be accepted after 2pm . Otherwise they are still in the shop well into the evening.

Volunteers are desperately needed. If you can commit yourself to a specific time each week you would be particularly welcome. If you find you have an hour or two to spare, you could just call in and help - there is bric-a-brac to wash, shelves to clean, books to be checked etc.

Go to this bright and attractive shop where you will find not just a fine selection of clothes, books and toys, but a plethora of goodies: shoelaces, porcelain ladies, knitting needles, wool, tennis balls, jewelry, wallpaper, bikes, prams, bedspreads, Marlene Dietrich's fur collar (well, it might have been), boxes of lace and linens, egg cups, cards, bags, shoes, lampshades, a sewing machine, a purple teddy bear (I nearly succumbed), a cross-eyed leopard, Christmas decorations and even a complete kit for hangovers. But hurry - it may be sold by now.



World AIDS day is on 1 December. HIV/AIDS, a pandemic in Southern Africa, is becoming a growing concern in Asia. Here is an Asian perspective.

The Road from Mandalay?

On a recent trip inside Burma, I found myself in the midst of lush, but untended green landscape, away from the buzz and faded colonial grandeur of Rangoon and a far cry from Rudyard Kipling's visions of where flying fishes play. The road from Mandalay to the State of Kachin, which lies in the north and borders India and China, is not an easy one. The Ayeyarwady River, which is akin to a main artery, flows south from its source approximately 27 km from Mytkyina, the capital city of Kachin, nourishing and providing for the rural population. Most of the country's agriculture is centred along the flood plains of its 2000 km course.

Kachin was, until 1994, closed to foreigners but with the cease-fire between the Kachin Independence Army and the government, foreigners/outsideers?? are now permitted to visit Mytkyina and the surrounding region. However, the State still considers Kachin a 'sensitive' area and the movements of both foreigners and Burmese are closely monitored. The jade trade for which the Chinese form the largest market, may also have something to do with the nature of movement within the state. The incidence of HIV infection rates is very high especially in the areas around the jade mines as a result of both drug addiction and prostitution. Christian Aid's partner, the Myamnar Council of Churches (MCC) works unstintingly along with local communities to combat the very real threat of HIV/AIDS.

Dr. Beatrice Lu Ja, has been working as the MCC's HIV co-ordinator in Mytkyina and was responsible for setting up the programme. A quietly spoken petite woman with great commitment and passion for her work, Beatrice is a qualified vet and she manages to put these skills to use when she is not working for the MCC. Her dedication and commitment to her people, and the work she does, is evident from the regard with which she is held within the community. As we travelled through the countryside, we encountered a number of people whose lives have been touched and improved as a result of the work carried out by Beatrice on behalf of the MCC. She is an example of a local hero - an inspiration to her people. Twenty eight year old Brang Di is one of hundreds who has benefited from MCC's care in the community programme. He used to work in the jade mines and admits to having been an Injecting drug user (IDU). He is HIV positive and was referred through the local HIV Committee attached to one of five MCC supported clinics in Kachin. Today he is cared for by Beatrice, who says "he had no relatives in the area, so I offered him a place to stay and I try to ensure that he has a nutritious diet. We all have to play our part and the MCC network often strives to step in when home-based care is not available."

The UN Drug Control Program estimates the number of IDUs in the country to be between 400,000 and 500,000 people. In 1994, the World Health Organisation and

the National AIDS Program measured HIV prevalence among IDUs and found that it was the world's highest. Results showed that 91 percent of IDUs were infected with HIV in the city of Mytkyina in Kachin state, as were 84 percent in Mandalay and 74 percent in Rangoon. Burma is one of the world's largest heroin producing and exporting countries. However, a sharp increase in transmission rates has been recorded among sex workers, from 26 percent in 1999 to 38 percent in 2000.

La Doi, is a member of the HIV Committee in Waimaw village, near Mytkyina. Last year he discovered that he was HIV positive, but is determined to live a full life. Today he carries out pre-test counselling within the community. His zest for life has enabled many people to emerge out of depression and begin to interact with others. The day I met him he said "Today I met a friend with whom I had shared a needle previously and I am encouraging him to be tested. But he is very scared, and I will keep seeing him to try and persuade him. It is important not to increase the incidence of HIV and he also needs to be informed of the risks involved." La Doi went on to say "God loves us no matter who we are or what our status. I have learned that I need to change my behaviour if I am to extend God's love to my neighbour.

Beatrice says "Almost every family in Mytkyina has at least one drug user. Until 1998 transmission of HIV was largely through injected drug use, but since then there has been an increase in prostitution and today the highest mode of transmission is through heterosexual activity." Two years ago, 42 year old Hawng Naw presented symptoms of diarrhoea and fever. She was advised by the local MCC HIV Committee to have a blood test and subsequently tested positive. Her first husband was a drug user. Along with Pawm Ki, her second husband, who is a village headman, she is working with MCC's health workers and volunteers to raise awareness. As community leaders they feel that the village needs to become a drug free area.

The MCC has recognised the urgent challenge posed by the spread of HIV/AIDS. Their work in Kachin is sensitive not only because it borders China but because the population is largely from vulnerable ethnic communities. MCC is one of the few institutions with access to these marginalised communities. It is working to develop the capacity of future church leaders to counter the stigma and discrimination in the churches and develop the church as a caring and healing community in relation to HIV/AIDS. MCC also works with traditional medicine practitioners who make up the majority of health workers in Burma.

Despite the scant health facilities in the state of Kachin, local people are taking initiatives to do whatever they can to tackle the increasing incidence of HIV/AIDS. Beatrice Lu Ja says "a great deal of education and awareness raising needs to be carried out, not just within the local communities but also among Church Leaders. Many feel it is a problem that will not touch their lives". From Mandalay to Kachin we learn that whenever the road is travelled together, each bearing responsibility for the other, transformation does occur. The journey may be long and hard but with action, information and prayer through the work of partner organisations like the MCC, the road to empowerment lies open.

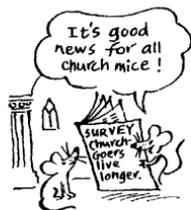
Ramani Leathard



"Have you not heard about
Equal Opportunities?"

GORDON STOWELL

Gordon was born and brought up in Manchester. He knew from an early age that he wanted to make his living through drawing but had no formal art training. He moved to London at the age of 23 and started work doing publicity - what we would now call graphic design. He had premises in Covent Garden and took on two assistants; he sacked one and married Janet, the other one!



Gordon and Janet moved to their house in St. James's Avenue on their marriage and their daughters Charlotte and Ingrid were brought up there. Gordon worked from home for magazines and organisations as diverse as Punch, the Oldie, a children's book publisher and Christian Aid. He had a great talent for putting across a serious message in a humorous way. He was

very involved in the local community and his drawings could be seen in the library, the Community Care Association newsletter and, of course, the Spire.



Although his cartoons were seen all over the world, Gordon was not a traveller. His life centred round his home, his family and his local community and his pleasures were simple: baking home-made bread, growing vegetables on his allotment and plants in his garden, many of which were given to friends and neighbours. Gordon loved the natural world and was a very familiar figure in Hampton Hill, cycling slowly round, greeting passers-by and carefully observing all he saw. Returning to his house after the funeral, Gordon's young grandson, Finlay, not quite four years old, was to be seen earnestly contemplating an autumn leaf with great interest. Gordon's spirit lives on! Thank you, Gordon, for your friendship, your help and for making us see the brighter side of life. We shall not forget you.



HAMPTON FUEL ALLOTMENT CHARITY

Grants towards fuel costs are available from the Charity for people on low incomes who are resident in Hampton and the London Borough of Richmond north of the river. Application forms are available from Social Services, Citizens Advice Bureaux and the Charity Office (Tel: 8941 7866). All Applications are treated in strictest confidence. Please apply if you need help with fuel costs.

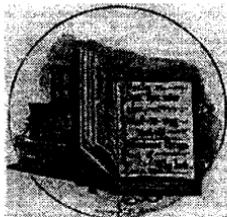


St. James's Chronicles

The Hampton Hill Parish Magazine 1903 Extracts from the December Issue

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

The Church History Lectures, in connection with the Church Reading Union, are fairly well attended. I am sure that if our people were thoroughly acquainted with the history of their Church and Prayer Book, their enthusiasm for both would be very much increased. Our privileges have only been won by great devotion and sacrifice and labour in the past.



The Day Schools have just been inspected both by the Government Inspector and also by the Inspectors in Religious Knowledge. The Reports have not yet been received, but from the verbal remarks of the Inspectors, I feel sure that they will be satisfactory. I am glad to say that at the inspection in Religious Knowledge the attendance was higher than I have ever known it before, 484 children being present.

I have no doubt that many will have noticed the great improvement in the Churchyard, especially by means of the asphalt paths. The Churchwardens will be very glad to receive any contributions towards the cost.



I am very glad to say that we are to have some further improvement in the Church. A member of the congregation has most kindly promised to give £50 for the insertion of windows in the place of the ventilators on the north side. These will add very much to the light and greatly improve the appearance of the Church.

I am, my dear friends, Yours very sincerely,

CHARLES R. JOB.

Christmas Day Help Request

The Churches Together in Teddington are helping to provide lunch on Christmas Day for lonely and elderly people at Elleray Hall. Help is needed for:-

1. Transport for the guests to arrive from about 10.30 and leave at about 3.30
2. Kitchen help from 9.00am onwards. An hour would be useful.
3. Greeting and chatting to guests, and waiting at tables.
4. Providing Christmas cakes, small presents and cards for distribution at the end.
5. Serving teas, washing up and preparing bags of food and presents.

Please give your name to Brian or Julie or telephone Stella or Trevor King on 020 8977 3891 or 020 8977 8000, before 13th December if possible.

Thank you for any help that you can give.



Reviews

Next year the Spire intends to feature a monthly section called 'Reviews'. This will include descriptions or comments on books, films, TV programmes, exhibitions, holidays, walks - anything you have enjoyed. We shall be looking closely among members of the congregation and other readers of the Spire for contributions; they may even include an account of something you haven't enjoyed! To make your contributions - please get in



touch with one of the editors or Brian, who will be interested to read and publish your thoughts.





We are glad to be able to report that the sale of Charity Christmas Cards was, as usual, very well supported.

There has been much birthday rejoicing this month: Dorothy Edmonds reached the age of 90 as did Jean O'Sullivan. Ruth Gostling became 80, so did Roma Bridges and Matthew Horner, now in his final year at York University, celebrated his 21st. Congratulations to you all. Are there any more birthdays to celebrate?

Margaret Bramall is now living in Ashfield House, Isleworth.

The Young Church invited us to coffee and cakes on 23 November to show us what they do on Sunday mornings. They have been actively fund raising to buy goats through Christian Aid and have worked very hard on this project. They will tell you more in next months Spire.

Our good wishes go to those who will be confirmed by Bishop Michael at All Saints on December 14th.

You may have noticed that the local authority made a splendid job of cleaning the War Memorial in the churchyard. As usual it was at the centre of a wreath laying on 10 November to mark Remembrance Day.

We have great pleasure in welcoming our new Director of Music, Ash Charles, whom we shall hear on the organ every Sunday. Ash began his musical career as a chorister at Westminster Abbey, going on to study at the Guildhall School of Music, Cambridge and the Moscow Conservatoire. Happy organ playing and singing to you, Ash.

We also welcome the Adelaja family, who have recently joined our congregation; we look forward to getting to know them.

Autumn Abundance in the Churchyard

Have you noticed this year, especially after our arid summer, the wonderful colours of the trees in the Churchyard? The sun shining on the mellow yellows, oranges, browns and many shades of green has shown us the true splendour of autumn. Not only that, but several churchgoers have been seen picking the blackberries, which have been so plentiful around the graves this year! Even if autumn gives way to a cold and dreary winter, we can look back on this amazing abundance and carry the memory of it with us until the arrival of the spring.

FROM THE OCTOBER REGISTERS

Baptisms

- 12 Daniel Oliver Taylor, Haslemere, Surrey
Mollie Jane Welland, Feltham
Lily May Imi, Hampton Hill
- 19 Yolanda Marie Parkes, Hampton
Rose Mary Segal, Hampton
Jack George Phillip Jelbert, Teddington
Peter William Eyles, Sunbury
Christopher James Eyles, Sunbury

Funerals

- 21 Gordon Stowell, Hampton Hill

Burial of Ashes

- 26 David Nunn, Hampton Hill

Weddings

- 18 Mark Jonathan Morrell and Diane Mary Lark
William Duncan Day and Julia Heather Kemp

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DATES TO NOTE

- 1 Andrew the Apostle, transferred
- 3 Frances Xavier, Missionary and Apostle 1552
- 4 Nicholas Ferrar, deacon and founder of the Little Gidding community 1637
- 6 Nicholas, Bishop of Myra, 326
09.30 onwards annual gutter clean and leaf sweep - all volunteers welcome
- 7 **Advent 2**
09.30 Christingle Service
- 13 Lucy, Martyr at Syracuse, 304
- 14 **Advent 3**
18.30 Confirmation Service at St Mary's Hampton
- 21 **Advent 4**
18.30 Parish Carol Service - all welcome
- 24 **Christmas Eve**
16.30 Children's Crib Service
23.45 Midnight Eucharist
- 25 **Christmas Day**
08.00 Holy Communion
09.30 Parish Communion
- 26 Stephen, deacon and martyr
10.00 Holy Communion
- 27 John the Apostle and Evangelist
- 28 **Christmas 1**
- 29 The Holy Innocents
- 30 Thomas Beckett, Archbishop of Canterbury and martyr 1170
- 31 John Wycliffe, reformer, 1384

