

VICAR'S NOTES

Shortly after last month's magazine came out, the following item appeared in a Church newspaper—'A recent challenge by the editor of a magazine inset has been taken up by the Sheffield housing estate parish of St. Hilda. The editor wrote that, in a church where the congregation really understood religion, half-a-crown would be the minimum for the collection, except for pensioners and school children.

'The half-crown standard of giving has been adopted at St. Hilda's, at least for families. The plate is not now circulated during the hymn after the sermon, but stays at the back of the church for the use of visitors. Those who belong to the half-crown scheme receive an attractive box with coloured envelopes.

'A hundred families have joined the scheme so far. Only twenty or thirty more are needed to pay for the entire cost of the church's upkeep.'

This shows that what was suggested in these notes is not an idle dream, but can be done when people are in earnest and mean business. Critics may say that what is possible in the bracing air of the North or Harrow is not possible in areas such as this, but I refuse to believe it. I know T.V.A. is a force to be reckoned with, but it is not as powerful as all that. Anyway, let's have a good try, and not admit defeat before we have started!

Good Friday

Some months ago the Men's Society at St. Mary's, Hampton, decided that it was time the church went out into the street in a procession of witness, and that Good Friday was the day for this. Their idea has now been enthusiastically endorsed by the newly-formed Hampton Council of Churches. The full details have not yet been worked out, but the basic plan is that each congregation should leave its own place of worship at 5.0 p.m. and make its way in solemn procession to a central meeting spot—most likely Carlisle Park, where a short out-door service would be held. An excellent idea, if carried out in strength, but a few people straggling along behind a cross can give to the outsider an impression of pathetic

weakness, rather than the strength of a victory that overcomes the world.

Here is an attempt by all the churches in the district to remind some of those for whom Good Friday is only a day for sport or pleasure, of its deeper significance.

For the next few Sundays there will be a paper in church for names of those who will join us in this venture, so that we may know how many we can rely on, and whether we can carry it through in some strength or not. It means a sacrifice of time and leisure, and perhaps a certain amount of weariness and even of ridicule, but Good Friday is specially suitable for such things. So let the people of St. James, who are not ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, turn out in force to bear witness to their belief.

Operation Firm Faith

An attempt is being made this year to rouse the members of the Church to the great need for the recruitment and training of voluntary teachers and leaders of children and young people; and with this the need to bring families as families into the full life of that greater family, the Church. Far too many parents still only send their children to Sunday School and other organizations, themselves keeping as clear as they can from any possible involvement, and sometimes even adding to their aloofness a hostility towards the church which is doing so much for their youngsters.

About the need for extra helpers there is unfortunately no doubt. It has been calculated that the number of Sunday School teachers has dropped from 163,000 to 100,000 in the last twenty-five years, and in the same period we have lost from our Sunday Schools half-a-million children. It is the same with the older children too. The real weakness in all work amongst young people, says the Bishop of Portsmouth, is that we are not getting hold of the sort of people who have it in them to do the job.

What is true throughout the Church as a whole applies in our own parish too. At the moment the most urgent need is the strengthening of the leadership of the Church Lads' Brigade Comp-

any on the Rectory Estate, where Mr. Holt is doing a magnificent job despite all the frustrations that being almost entirely single-handed brings. This Company has now rightly become our responsibility, but attempts to find help for Mr. Holt have so far been unavailing, and there are other similar needs, only slightly less urgent. Let us pray that this year the Church in England as whole, and in our own parish, may become less inadequate for such tasks and opportunities.

And it is not only young people's

work that needs strengthening. Other societies that serve the Church often need it too. A case in point is our own Drama Group, which has established such a high reputation in the four years of its existence. Its scope and range are now greatly limited by its decreased membership, and the new Passion Play which it was hoped to present on Good Friday—in line with "The Centurion" which made such an impression three years ago—has now had to be abandoned because of inability to complete the cast.

AROUND THE SPIRE

being notes and news about
people, activities & organisations

THE MOTHERS' UNION

In spite of bad weather the Annual General Meeting on Feb. 8th was well attended and we were able to get through the agenda in good time.

Mrs. Brunt reported that although we had had a year of good meetings, the arrangement of changing the Enrolling Member every month—which had in any case only been intended as a temporary expedient—had caused a certain lack of continuity. This had been particularly unfortunate over the year's appeal from the central chairman to prepare for the movement's eightieth birthday, and over the London Wave of Prayer. It had still been impossible to find anyone willing to take on the job of Enrolling Member and Mrs. Brunt had agreed to act in that capacity so far as taking the chair at committee meetings and presiding at branch meetings, but regretted that owing to family and domestic ties she was unable to undertake the visiting of members and attendance at Diocesan meetings that were part of the duties of an Enrolling Member. Miss E. Beckett had undertaken to act as "Assistant" Enrolling Member and carry out these duties as far as she was able.

As a result of a ballot the following members were re-elected to the committee for the next three years Mésdames Bird, Lewis, Wilcox and newly elected were Mrs. Allport and Mrs. Swatland.

Mrs. Reed had felt that she must now give up the bulk of the work

she has done for the "Kind Thoughts" box over the last seven or eight years but was willing to help with visiting whenever she was able. She was thanked for the very great service that she had rendered to the Branch through her constant attention and interest and was presented with a pot of primulas as a token of the many that she had brought to members when they were ill.

Her work was to be taken over by Mrs. Mills, 40 Oldfield Road, to whom notices of illness should now be sent. Mrs. Bird will now take over the catering arrangements and Mrs. Allport becomes General Secretary.

The Jumble Sale originally booked for March was postponed since it was announced that the Scouts had one in the same month. It will now be early in May. Please give us all you can cast out since as much as possible of the profit goes to the Renovation Fund.

Joint Evening Meeting. The first was held on March 15th after the Ash Wednesday Service. A brief outline of the scope, objects and regulations of the Mothers' Union was given. Afterwards there was a discussion mainly on the question of the divorce-bar to membership.

It was decided to hold another meeting at 8.0 p.m. at Wayside on April 11th.

M.U. Workers' Meeting. Owing to epidemics and bad weather only two of us were able to attend the meeting at the Friend's House Euston Square on February 24th.

There Mrs. Lambert told us of the decisions to make the eightieth anniversary of the founding of M.U. a special recall to members to become as stated in the Third Object "A band of Mothers who pray . . ." and most of the rest of the afternoon was taken up by two talks by Mother Clare on the subject of personal prayer. The theme of her first was that our greatest need was what she called "sensitivity to God," the ability to turn to Him at any moment, to be aware that always it is He who takes the initiative when we are open to it.

She spoke of the speed of modern life and said that we should not in any way try to contract out of it but must learn to discipline it; to think, when we found ourselves time-watching, what we really had time for.

She spoke of the vitality that comes from silence in God's presence, "He is tranquillity but Creator of all motion." "Feeling" the presence of God was largely an emotional experience but "realising" his presence was an act of will-power based on knowledge.

She asked us to avoid strain and anxiety over learning to pray since in that state neither could possibly help us.

In her second talk she spoke of the value of the scriptures in prayer, and suggested that in reading the Gospel stories we should try to look at the situation from Our Lord's point of view; to see how He was constantly frustrated by both His enemies and His friends, how urgent the situations were in that He had so little time. We were to read the Gospel so as to see God and Jesus and this would affect our prayers. For example penitence should not be so much self examination of how we had failed what we thought we ought to be, so much as trying to see what God could have done with what, in fact, we are. Intercessions should avoid the pitfalls of self-opinion and dogged determination about what we think but should instead be a making of ourselves into a prayer channel between God and those prayed for.

"Home and Family" Owing to the printing situation it is not possible to say when this journal will be published, but it will not be ready in March.

The Working Party, announced last month, is now well under way.

Ten people have met at Wayside on Thursday afternoons. The chief occupation so far has been basket-work but their has also been some embroidery and plain sewing done. A great deal more help is needed for these. Please call in for some work even if you are not able to stay for the afternoon.

SOME DATES TO NOTE

- March 11.—2.30 p.m. Mothering Sunday Service for Parents and Children. Collection for Church of England Children's Society.
- March 12.—6.30 p.m. Y.W.G. coach party to Ideal Home Exhibition.
- March 13.—8.0 p.m. Scout Group Committee (Wayside).
- March 14.—8.0 p.m. Annual Parochial Church Meeting (Wayside).
- March 17.—2.30 p.m. Scout Group Jumble Sale (Hall).
- March 20.—8.0 p.m. Street Warden and Prayer Group (Wayside).
- March 25.—Palm Sunday.
- March 26—29. Holy Week. Holy Communion daily 7.15 and 10.30 a.m. Compline and Address on Wednesday, at 7.30 p.m.
- March 28.—8.0 p.m. Young Wives' Group (Wayside).
- March 30.—Good Friday.
 - 9.15 a.m. Children's Service.
 - 10.15 a.m. Mattins & Sermon.
 - 12.0—3.0 p.m. The Three Hours Devotion.
 - 5.0—6.15 p.m. Procession of Witness.
 - 8.0 p.m. Compline and Address.
- April 1.—Easter Day. Holy Communion 7.0, 8.0, 9.0 a.m. and 12.15 p.m. Mattins 11.0 a.m. Children's Service 2.30 p.m. Evensong 6.30 p.m.
- April 4.—3.0 p.m. Mothers' Union Enrolment Service.
- April 6.—7.30 p.m. Magazines ready. Distributors Meeting.
- April 7.—8.0 p.m. Parish Easter Social (Hall).

MARRIAGE

Feb. 11.—Percy Lewis Catchpole to Louie Ella Mary Holloway.

BURIALS AND CREMATIONS

Feb. 11.—Henry Colbeck Murray, 64, Sixth Cross Rd., aged 58 years (at S.W. Middlesex Crematorium).

March 2.—Dorothy Blanche Louisa Marshall, 52 Anlaby Rd., aged 81 years (at S.W. Middx. Crematorium).

.. 5.—Rose Couch, 205, Uxbridge Road, aged 82 years.

FROM BEYOND THE SPIRE

THE CHURCH OVERSEAS

God Called : They Obeyed

These are the stories of two Christian African women-missionaries.

Debola came from Uganda, but the time came when she knew that God was calling her to work in the Sudan. She counted the cost—language difficulties, unfamiliar food, perhaps loneliness. But God had called her, and she went. There she worked in a girls' school and won the confidence of children and parents, living and speaking the message of God's redeeming love in Christ.

And then there was Fanny. She had been taken from her own town in West Africa as a child. But many years later she returned in search of her family and relatives. She found them. But she discovered that the town of her birth had no church and no Christians! Fanny knew that God was calling her to bring the Gospel to that town. Of her a C.M.S. missionary writes: "Often she would come and see me bringing with her the money that she had scraped together to help towards the support of an evangelist in that town. Another time she brought a parcel containing Bibles and hymn books. And it was not long before we had an evangelist established; and to-day there is a church."

God called : they obeyed.

Tell us more!

"The Girl Guides at our school," writes a C.M.S. missionary in Nigeria, "often go off into a nearby village and spend the day there, just meeting people and trying to

help where opportunities arise. In the evening they return to report.

They have always made a number of contacts and have found opportunities to give a simple Gospel message; in almost every case they have been asked—"Will you come back and tell us more?"

There are people all over the world saying "Tell us more." And there are some who have never yet heard for the first time. Do you care? Are you ready to pray, give and (if God calls you) go?

Will you pray?

"Recently I visited a Christian village dispenser," writes a C.M.S. doctor in West Pakistan; "he is running his own private practice in a circuit of ten villages. His dispensary is in the compound of the little mud church in a village where there are fifteen Christian families. As there is no pastor or evangelist in this village, he takes the Services on Sundays."

Will you pray for this man with his great responsibilities for the physical and spiritual welfare of that little community?

Seeker after God

A C.M.S. missionary on the North West Frontier has written to tell of an old man who has recently been converted. His name is Niko; so he has taken the Christian name of Nicodemus—a seeker after God. This man was illiterate, but is determined to read so that he may see for himself what the Bible says. "At night," writes the missionary, "as I pass his quarters, I can sometimes hear his old voice as he patiently spells out the story which has come to mean so much to him."