

Vicar's Notes

One of the matters that lie heavy on the consciences of most parish priests is the present situation with regard to infant baptism. A great many people who have had little or nothing to do with the Church desire this for their children. I have had even avowed atheists and agnostics press me to baptise their children: "I don't really believe there is any good in it, but just possibly there may be, and if so, I wouldn't want my child to miss it. And there are some schools that take only children who can produce a certificate of baptism, and I may want him to go to one of them." Others say: "I just want him to be done—all the others have been."

These people, often genuinely sincere, and wanting the best for their child, put an interpretation upon baptism which is not that of the Church; and the Church has been at fault for not making this clear. Now the Church is trying to do this, all sorts of difficulties are arising.

WHY NOT TWO SERVICES?

One suggested solution now being strongly pressed is that the Church should provide **two** forms of service. One, baptism in the fullness of its meaning as a part of Christian initiation, a being **begun**, not a being done. The other, a simple ceremony of naming and blessing. Many parents want an assurance of God's concern for their child, but are not prepared to accept any obligation in return. At the moment the Church says in effect, and perhaps rather harshly: No blessing, unless you are prepared to commit your child (and that must include yourselves) to the Christian way of life, and of course, ideally the two go together; love desiring answering love; succour given, but demands made too. Parents love their children long before their children can love them, or even realise that they are there; but as the children grow older, so an answering obedience and love are expected. So baptism is administered to children who are able at the moment, only to **receive**; but with the understanding that parents and godparents will, as they grow older help them to **give** too. If such assurances cannot be given, or have been broken in the case of older children who are being brought up

with no connection with the Church, then baptism has to be deferred—and Oh, the rumpus that often follows, and the fury that falls upon the head of the poor Vicar! If a service of naming and blessing were available to be offered to such children, what troubles and misunderstandings we should be spared!

ONE OR THE OTHER

Unless the Christian Faith can be established from pole to pole, it seems fairly certain that a form of atheistic and totalitarian Communism will be. Communists themselves seem to realise this far more strongly than Christians, and are taking vigorous steps to weaken and then supplant their main rival. Sometimes this is done by direct attack and ruthless persecution. More often it is done by trumped-up charges against Christian leaders, so that they seem to be rightly condemned as political or moral offenders. In many countries, the main way is said to be that of infiltration, getting agents into the heart of the Church's life and trying to disrupt it from within. It is the parable of the leaven in reverse.

"BY FALSE AND SECRET ACTION . . ."

Violet Welton in her little book "Burning Coals of Fire" (we are discussing this in our inter-church study group, and would welcome anyone interested to join us) gives some details of this last method. She quotes secret Communist directives of 1957, though she does not say how she came to have access to them, and how she knows they are genuine.

"Communists are directed by the Party to find ways of penetrating every church, to put themselves at the disposal of the Secret Police, to be active in all church organizations, even going so far as to call on God for help, and to take steps to seduce girls and young women. Detailed instructions are given on 'identification' at all levels: 'Be sure to get baptized, be regular at services, and plead the cause of peace . . . Sow discord. By such false and secret action we shall be helped to reach our objective'."

DISQUIETING READING

For several years, through the kindness of a friend, I have been

able to read a privately issued review of world affairs. It is far from cheerful reading—often downright depressing. The publishers are now working on a plan to make it available to clergy, doctors and teachers in many parts of the world, in an effort to open people's eyes to the gravity of the present situation. It has lately been enumerating the many insidious methods used by Communists to gain their ends in countries not yet under their control, such as corrupting morals, undermining morale, and encouraging indiscipline, slackness and scepticism on a large scale. Again, I should like to see the full evidence for all this, but if even only one-tenth of it is true, the menace is great indeed. We tend to think in terms of the outward and tangible dangers of nuclear destruction or the health hazards of poisonous radio-active fall-out, but this false, hidden, secret working of the corrupt leaven in our midst may in reality be far more deadly.

THE CHRISTIAN VICTORY

There is no doubt that Christianity, when it is really believed in and practised, even though imperfectly, is a power to conquer evil, open or hidden, and to turn the world right side up! Athanasius saw it happening in the fourth century, and wrote of what he saw: "Strange to relate, since they came over to the school of Christ, as men moved with real compunction, they have laid aside their murderous cruelty and are warmed no more. On the contrary, all is peace among them, and nothing remains except desire for friendship."

This has happened many times since then, and could happen again to-day, on a larger scale than ever before, if the Church had the faith and love, life and vigour that ought to characterise it.

OUR CAMPAIGN

With the sombre and disturbing background of world events pressing upon our hearts, it has not been easy to concentrate on our own local affairs. But matters of moment have been astir amongst us. The Christian Stewardship campaign has been having an impact not only material, but deeply stirring to our minds and spirits as well. To accept the challenge to give generously and sacrificially to work which is good has a creative effect on our faith and life. The more widely it is accepted, the

more invigorated the whole Church becomes, and the greater the courage and power it is able to bring to bear upon its increasing tasks and responsibilities. So as the challenge is brought to your own hearth and home, take the opportunity it brings you prayerfully and bravely—the repercussions upon yourself, your family, the parish, and the Church as a whole can be great indeed.

PERSONALIA

Mr. Roy Whiteley, who is well remembered in this parish for the great work he did when we began our Christian Giving Scheme four years ago, and was such a tower of wisdom and strength to us until he left the parish for Hitchin in 1959, has now been asked to devote himself in a full-time capacity to the work he first put his hand to amongst us. He has just been appointed Adviser on Christian Stewardship to the Diocese of St. Albans. He is taking a great deal of interest in the progress of our own present campaign, and is waiting with great interest to know the result. We too assure him of our great interest and prayerful support as he faces up to his important new post.

Mr. T. F. Webb was outstanding in the way he worked with such efficiency and energy for good causes, particularly in the last few years for the Old People's Welfare Committee. He went on working until his strength, already undermined by serious illness, gave out completely—but even so, knowing he would have to go into hospital, he got notices of the next meeting written out and delivered many weeks ahead. He retained his lively interest in the causes he had worked for right up to the end. He will be greatly missed.

Three elderly ladies, with their great-niece, called recently and asked if they might be shown over the church. It was the first visit of the three sisters to the church of their childhood for nearly 50 years. The oldest of them, well in her eighties, had indeed not been back to England since 1913, and was shortly returning to Canada to end her days, so that there was all the poignancy of a final visit and seeing certain things for the last time about her trip. As I took them round, they spoke of their younger days as though they were yesterday, and they

were thrilled when I was able to show them two pictures of their father, one as a young man, the second as a grey-haired, grey-bearded old stalwart in the choir of 1902. These photographs had disappeared when the Simpson Home in Eastbank Road had been broken up, long ago, and they had forgotten all about them.

Miss Edwards has at last been persuaded to make a reality of her retirement as cleaner of the church, but we are glad that she feels able to continue as verger. Any further donations to her retirement gift, which we want to give her at Christmas, will be gratefully received. We should also be glad to hear of a conscientious and reliable person willing to take on the job of cleaner from the beginning of December—it is not much good anybody's starting till the dust and mess made by the dry-rot repairs has settled down.

THE MAGAZINE

The extra work caused by the present campaign made it impossible

to get the October magazine prepared in time, and though the November magazine is now appearing, it will be a fortnight later than intended. Looking through some of the earliest bound volumes of magazines in preparation for my speech at the Loyalty Dinner, I wondered whether our second vicar, Mr. Bligh, who started the whole project off in November 1884, ever had similar difficulties. I got the impression that even then the magazine did not always appear bang on time, yet when the vicar sailed to Italy in 1888, and stayed there for month after month, though the Bazaar had to be postponed until the following year, the magazine, presumably edited by the curate (or Mrs. Fitzwygram?) appeared as usual. But the parish missed the vicar, and when he finally returned, gave him a tremendous welcome, including a letter of loyalty and support signed by nearly all parishioners.

As 1961 will have had only 10 magazines, yearly subscribers will be entitled to the first two issues of 1962 without further charge.

AROUND THE SPIRE

being notes and news about
people, activities & organisation

NEWS OF CLUBS AND SOCIETIES

The **Mothers' Union** have had two very successful branch meetings as well as an outing, arranged by Mrs. Casey, to Guildford Cathedral. In October, Miss L. G. Hearne, the Moral Welfare Worker in the Hammersmith Deanery spoke of the many ramifications of her work. It made us feel how greatly it is needed, and how much it merits support. She brought with her the newly-appointed worker in this area, Miss Kemp. On November 1, one of our own parishioners, Mrs. Mellor, spoke to us about the M.B.A. film "The Crowning Experience," how it was produced, and the striking effect it has had in different parts of the world. More about this, we hope, next month. We regret that we are losing Mrs. Charles as our Deanery President—she leaves us shortly for Dorset.

Two joint meetings have been held with the **Young Wives' Group**. At the first a talk was given on 'Nursing as a Career,' and at the second (which we hope to report more fully lately), the son of a Jewish Rabbi

gave a striking account of his conversion to the Christian Faith. The Group has also held its own meetings the first, an 'At Home' after a service in church and the second its A.G.M., at which the new committee was elected. Joint efforts in November will include a Jumble Sale and a Toy Exchange.

Mrs. Oliver, of the M.U., and Mrs. McNab, of the Y.W.G. are heartily congratulated on the birth of a daughter and son respectively.

Though widespread publicity has been given to the need of the 1st **Hampton Hill Guide Company** for a Captain, there is so far no sign of any answer, and the company is in real danger of having to close down. The District Commissioner, Mrs. Belcher, has now moved from Kingston and is back in the parish again, at 42, St. James's Avenue. She would be glad to hear of any offers of help.

THE HARVEST SUPPER

By 5.0 p.m. on the afternoon of September 21, a small band of very willing helpers had transformed the hall into a very pleasant room, and

all was ready for the 120 people expected.

The supper (turkey, ham, salad, rolls and butter, peaches with ice cream, and coffee) was followed by a short but very amusing play "The Seaside Trippers," acted by equal numbers of young people from St. Mary's and our own Y.P.F., and produced by Mrs. Eustace.

Mr. G. I. Robinson was the organiser, and his smooth touch before and during the evening was largely responsible for its great success. We are grateful to him and all who worked with him for such an enjoyable night out.

THE PARISH DIARY

Some recent events, and some to come:

Hampton Council of Churches: Annual General Meeting, October 16th; United Service at St. James's October 22nd; Study Group on the book, "Burning Coals of Fire" is meeting monthly: next meeting, Monday, November 20th, 8.0 p.m. at 20, Cranmer Road. Next United Service at the Congregational Church, 6.30 p.m. on Sunday, January 28th.

Mothers' Union and Young Wives Group: Mothers' Union Mass meeting, Friends' House, October 24th; Workers' Meeting, October 30th; Branch Meetings, November 1st, 2.30 p.m.—"Moral Re-Armament in Action"; December 6th, 2.30 p.m.—Talk on Christmas Carols by the Rev. J. H. B. Charles. Y.W.G. Annual General Meeting, Oct. 25th; Branch Meeting—"The Traditions and Legends concerning Christmas" (Mrs. Dunderley) 8.0 p.m. on November 29th; Joint Meeting, Tuesday, November 14th (W)—Toy Exchange.

Social Afternoon and Presentation to Mrs. Charles (retiring Deanery M.U. President), 3.0 p.m. Monday, December 4th at St. Mary's Hall, Twickenham.

Councils and Conferences

November 6th, 8.0 p.m. Ruri-Decanal Conference (St. Mary's Hall, Twickenham).

November 16th, 8.0 p.m. Parochial Church Council (Vestry).

The Prayer Group is studying the Epistle to the Romans. Last meeting, October 18th; next meeting, November 22nd, 8.0 p.m. in the Vestry.

Social and Musical Events

Brahms' Requiem, presented in church by the Hampton Philharmonic Society on Saturday, October

28th, at 7.30 p.m. Parish "Loyalty Dinner," held at the Tudor Rooms, Bentalls, Kingston-upon-Thames, on Tuesday, October 31st, 7.30 p.m.

Second Mass Attack on churchyard weeds and vegetation, Saturday, November 25th, 9.30 a.m.—4.0 p.m. (if weather conditions favourable). Anyone who has a rake or a pair of shears and can spend an hour or two will be very welcome.

Church Services and Arrangements

November 12th — Remembrance Day: Special form of service in the morning, beginning at 10.57 a.m.

6.30 p.m. Thanksgiving for the Christian Stewardship Campaign, and recognition of the Church's responsibilities beyond the parish. Preacher: The Rev. G. H. Stevens (C.M.J.).

November 13th.—Work on dry-rot damage in Nave begins. It is hoped to have services in church as usual on November 19th, when the new scheme of pledged giving begins, but if the church is in too bad a condition, services for this Sunday may have to be transferred to the Parish Hall, School Road. There will be no week-day services after November 9th until Thursday, November 30th, St. Andrew's Day, at 10.30 a.m.

The Revised Edition of Hymns Ancient and Modern was first used in our church on the occasion of the United Service on October 22nd and it will be the normal hymnal in use from now on—but we will not introduce too many new hymns all at once.

MARRIAGES

- Sept. 2.—Michael John Wiggins to Jean Pauline Stephens.
.. 2.—John William Smith to Janet Sylvia Austin.
.. 15.—Roy Cameron Steel to Angela Isabelle Pereira.
.. 23.—George Beresford Roberts to Margaret Lucy Manly.
.. 23.—Bernard Frederick Smith to Pauline Mary Louise Jennings.
.. 23.—Richard Charles Seaton to Marilyn Rosam.
.. 30.—Michael John Finlay to Rosemary North.
Oct. 14.—Brian Gordon Birtles to Rosemary Harmer.

BURIALS

- Oct. 17.—Thomas Frederick Webb, 6, Albert Road, aged 70 years.
.. 26.—Emily Jane Ling, Laurel Dene, aged 87 years.