

THINKING ABOUT PRAYER

It is encouraging that in recent years there has been a great upsurge of interest in the whole subject of prayer and the deeper levels of the spiritual life: meditation, contemplation, mysticism and direct contact with, and experience of, God. This has been especially noticeable among the young, some of whom have travelled to the ends of the world in their search. Many have assumed that they could find no help in the teaching and practice of the Church: hence the frantic quest for gurus, transcendental meditators, eastern prophet-messiahs, and so forth. A highly intelligent young student, confirmed while at school, who was planning a pilgrimage to a holy man in the Himalayas, said recently, when it was suggested to her that she might find an answer to her needs nearer at home - 'I had no idea that the Church of England knew anything about, or had any time for, these things at all' - Indeed the Church has often acted as though this were true, but at last the balance is being redressed.

There was great interest in this parish when Sister Audrey came in the Lent of 1971 and gave us new insights and led us deeper into prayer, and we have followed this up in various ways since. Now another splendid opportunity is being offered to us. The clergy and ministers of the Staines Deanery have arranged an ecumenical day conference on prayer to be held on Saturday May 4 in Ashford. It will run from 10.00 till 4.00, and a good lunch will be provided. They have invited people from our parish to join them. The fee is £1: if you are interested and want to know more, please get in touch with the Vicar immediately.

The programme arranged is designed to give an opportunity for learning and growth in prayer to people from all churches and all kinds of experience in praying. A number of visiting consultants have been invited, who will speak in the morning for about ten minutes each, and then people will be able to join a 'workshop' under the leadership of the one whose approach to prayer seems most meaningful and helpful to them. The consultants who have already agreed to come include such well-known writers and speakers on prayer and the spiritual life as Dr. Martin Israel, the Rev. Michael Hollings and Sister Mary Halliday. As accommodation is limited to (I think) about 120, it may well be that the conference will be over-subscribed, and some people will be disappointed: in this case, it is hoped to arrange something similar later in the year.

SOME NOTES FROM THE MOTHERS' UNION

"Exorcism is rarely needed and the less talked about it the better" was the opinion of Captain Barry Irons when he addressed a Mothers' Union conference in November. (He could hardly have foreseen what the media would be at this Spring!). His work in Birmingham is among young people in difficulties and he has himself acquired a house for some of those who are homeless. He is one of the few people specially licensed by the Church in Birmingham to carry out exorcism because he found it to be the only successful way he could help the number of young teenagers spiritually broken and depersonalised from membership of one of the many Satanic groups in the city. He said that the danger of over-publicising the matter is that people with physical and mental illness think they are 'possessed' and present themselves to a priest and refuse effective medical aid.

The conference at which he was one of the speakers was on the subject of the 'Occult' and was one of four some of us tried to report to the February Branch meeting. There are several of these conferences a year. They are all concerned with matters affecting - in the widest sense - family life, and are the result of concern and study in the Dioceses. We are trying to find how best to make opportunities to pass on the information they produce to those of our members who would like it and with this in mind we arranged a morning meeting to report the last one. Hilde Bucknell gave the report and helped the discussion. We asked her to contribute the following paragraphs:

"On Wednesday, 20 February, a well attended conference took place in Mary Sumner House on the subject of battered wives and babies. The speakers were Colin Weaver, the Deputy Head of the National Advisory Centre for Battered Children run by the N.S.P.C.C. in Leeds, and Canon Warburton, Rural Dean from Mansfield, nr. Nottingham, where about a year ago a house was opened to give short-term accommodation for battered wives.

"Whereas it is impossible to do their most informative talks justice within the space available here it is worth repeating some of the disturbing statistics given, namely the figure of 4600 battered babies in 1972, 700 of whom died and 75% of whom were children under two. And the most useful information was the observation that neither baby nor wife beating is confined to any particular class of society, It happens for reasons that lie primarily in the personalities of the offenders, brought about by experiences like severe deprivation of love in their own childhood, and secondarily by sociological stresses such as quick succession of childbirths, inadequate living conditions, urban loneliness, fragmentation of the overall family.

"Short term practical help available varies greatly from one part of the country to another. Long-term help lies in education: on the one hand to re-educate the public from an attitude of condemnation to that of understanding and willingness to help, on the other hand to provide practical knowledge of good parenthood and personal relationships".

It was encouraging to have the support of some non-members at this meeting. It was originally planned that Jack Ashley M.P. should have addressed this conference but the General Election had unfortunately prevented his coming and even more unfortunately had killed his proposed Bill. The Mothers' Union had collected evidence for this and sent it to the Department of Health. We hope the new Parliament will find time for a new Bill to be drafted.

Don't forget to come and bring your friends to support Christian Aid at the Austerity lunch on April 10, and the Branch meeting afterwards.

In May we hope to have an afternoon theatre-outing.

C.H.B.

COMMUNITY SELF-HELP

I wrote about this project in the February issue of the Spire, and outlined preliminary plans. The members of the Committee have in recent weeks been receiving replies to our initial letter; comments and suggestions have been put forward, and we feel that the response has been encouraging enough for us to go ahead and plan an inaugural meeting. This is to be held on Wednesday May 15 at 8.15 p.m. sharp, at St. James's Hall, School Road, Hampton Hill.

Mr. Tom Dean, Community Services Officer, from the Department of Social Services, Richmond on Thames, will be our introductory speaker, and questions from the floor will follow. We are then asking the participants to separate off into groups relating to areas of concern; these will include child care, the handicapped, senior citizens, housing, neighbourhood responsibility. We shall have asked volunteers beforehand to act as group leaders and scribes.

The groups will be encouraged to think out what more needs doing for the community in their particular area of concern in Hampton Hill and Hampton, to suggest plans for follow up, and to report back to the main meeting when it is resumed. From this meeting we hope to be able to see what resources we have and how best they can be utilised for the benefit of the community as a whole.

As well as representatives of organisations we want people to come to this meeting who are not already committed to active work in any sphere but who would like to become involved. All interested people are welcome to come to the meeting.

As we are starting with coffee, perhaps friends intending to come will very kindly give me their names.

Hannah Stanton.

DANCE IN WORSHIP

Please don't forget that on Sunday May 5, at the invitation of the Hampton Council of Churches, Mrs. Margaret Stevens of the Reigate Liturgical Dance Group is bringing her dancers to All Saints' Church, Hampton to a United Service at 6.45 p.m.

The Rev. John Cotgrove, our Rural Dean, tells me that Mrs. Stevens has already been to see him, in order to see the church and to talk over various themes which her group will express in dance. It promises to be a very interesting evening.

Hannah Stanton.

BRAINS OF ST. JAMES'S 1974

The evening of February 26 found a vast expectant audience gathered at Wayside to witness the intellectual battle-of-the-century arranged by the Social Committee between select teams from the PCC, YPF, and MU. If these acronyms (wot?) mean nothing, let it be explained that such worthy brain-children as Messieurs Brunt, Melville and Rockliffe represented the Parochial Church Council, Caroline Bolt, Ian Fisher and Roger Severn the Young People's Fellowship and Mesdames Bucknell, Rockliffe and Young the Mothers' Union. Promptly at 8 p.m. the teams were deluged by a stream of questions ranging from politics and history to food and football. About two hundred head-scratching problems had been chosen by the Chief Inquisitors Avon Pailthorpe, Peter Bowes-Cavanagh and Martin Edmonds, and it was quite astonishing that there was usually at least one person in the room who knew the answer to the most abstruse question. Even the audience had a go occasionally, when the teams were unable to identify E. Heath as the former centre forward of Bexley United. It was a close-run contest, with the Mothers' Union team just getting their slender necks in front of the P.C.C. with the Y.P.F. a close third. A victory for Women's Lib., perhaps. All-in-all it was an engrossing evening, and everyone came away with an extra bit of knowledge. Many thanks were

due to the ladies of the kitchen for the welcome refreshments at the half-way stage. It is hoped to repeat this enjoyable venture sometime in the future.

R.B.

WOMEN'S WORLD DAY OF PRAYER - FRIDAY, MARCH 1

I attended the evening service which was held in our own church of St. James this year and there was a congregation of at least 60 of many denominations, and it was pleasant to greet familiar faces from the other churches on this, I think, very moving occasion.

The service this year had been prepared by the women of Japan. The evening address was given by Mrs. Hope Hay of the Society of Friends - a quietly spoken lady and it was particularly interesting that, sitting in the back row of the church, I heard every word clearly. (Mrs. Orchard gave the address at the afternoon service to, I am told, a very full church).

It is wonderful to think that women all over the world are joining together on this day in prayer and thanksgiving, and to me the regular hymn "The day Thou gavest..." is so apt and thought provoking that during these services people are waking at different times all over the world. "As o'er each continent and island, the dawn leads on another day. The voice of prayer is never silent, Nor dies the strain of praise away" to quote just one verse. In these troublous times the words of this hymn might well be used as a daily prayer, and sung more often in church.

The profundity of the prayers was emphasized by the "voices" from various parts of the church reminding us of some of today's problems - hunger, discrimination, pollution, apathy, etc.

Thanks to Mrs. Brunt and the committee of the Hampton Council of Churches for their work in the organisation of this day at St. James, also to those involved in the preparation of the lovely hot coffee, which was so welcome on this rather cold evening, thereby warming our physical bodies, after a service which must have warmed our hearts and spirits.

D.W.

ORGAN RECITAL

On Friday 17 May we are very lucky to have David Bell to come to our church and give an organ recital. He began playing the organ at the age of twelve, taking on his first professional appointment at sixteen. His studies at the Guildhall School of Music in London culminated in his being awarded the Silver Medal in organ playing for obtaining his diploma with the highest honours awarded throughout the British Isles.

Some years on the staff of an internationally-famous firm of organ-builders brought him into contact with some of the largest and finest instruments in the country, bringing invaluable experience as a demonstrator on pipe and electronic organs.

Since then he has had much experience as a recitalist, both in this country and in Paris, Brussels, Hanover, Hamburg, Cologne and other foreign cities. He has played for four major film productions and has been associated with the music of two others.

He regularly works with professional orchestras in and around London during the concert season, and has made over twenty gramophone records as organist, playing with orchestras (including the Orchestre de Paris and the Paris Opera orchestra), accompanying singers, choirs (including the famous Treorchy Male Voice Choir in Wales), military bands, brass bands and opera productions on no less than five record labels (this includes a recital specially recorded for release in Barbados, accompanying the cathedral choir and containing the official recording of the newly-composed national anthem). Recently part of one of his recordings was used as background music in an episode of the B.B.C. Television production of "The Pallisers".

David Bell can be heard playing the signature tune (written for organ and orchestra) of B.B.C. Radio One normally broadcast daily at the start of transmission, and has also broadcast on Radio Two. As guest organist at brass band festivals he has broadcast three times on the Royal Albert Hall organ, and his playing has been heard throughout Western Europe by relay to foreign broadcasting networks.

He enjoys a busy schedule of choral society work, and likes to specialise in performing large scale choral works with the organ alone, in the absence of an orchestra. He possesses a high degree of skill as an arranger, and some of his arrangements have been published. In addition to these activities he uses his knowledge of organ-building to advise occasionally on the tonal design of new and rebuilt instruments.

He came to see the organ a few weeks ago and was most impressed with our beautiful instrument. The recital will start at 8 p.m. Admission will be by programme available from members of the Social Committee and other members of St. James's parish.

BARN DANCE

Have you got your ticket for the Barn Dance on 27 April? Only 40p. including refreshments available from all members of the Social Committee.

A PRAYER.....?

Hello. Are You there?

Please listen carefully:

There are a few things that You ought to know about.

The world is in a bad state

And the country is going to the dogs with extreme rapidity.

The weather is cold and foggy,

Which interferes with travel and also with business.

I have a persistent pain in my left shoulder.

And my eldest son - born, You may recall, in 1954 -

Seems to lack a proper sense of responsibility.

Please attend to these matters.

Thank You, of course, for past kindnesses,
Such as creation, preservation, reasonable health
(Apart from a persistent pain in the left shoulder,
Which please rectify).
And ability to keep up the mortgage payments:
(But please take steps to help with the higher interest).

In return for which,
May I express my regret for anything amiss
Such as My Sins.
But kindly note that I have not committed
 adultery
 murder
 robbery.

What I said to my secretary
Was only the result of natural impatience
Such as any hard-pressed man might feel
And she is inordinately prone to tears.
As for the unfortunate developments at the office party,
I was very sick afterwards:
So we'll call that quits.

Please keep things going smoothly.
See that nobody connected with me gets hurt.
Also that people who don't say their prayers
Have no unfair advantage through the time thus gained.

And don't let there be any power cuts where I am living,
For Christ's sake!

AMEN

(This was submitted by a student at a training-weekend as an exercise in how not to pray, and is reproduced here with his permission. At least the man was honest in expressing what he felt, and there is something to be said for that! - Ed.)

SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS - YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 1973

(Subject to Audit)

To be presented to the Annual Church Meeting.

1972	General Fund - Income		1973
3052	Pledged Giving	3008	
338	Other Giving	416	3424
868	Refund of income-tax on Deeds of Covenant		1143
375	Other income		372
£4633			£4939

Payments

630	Repairs and Maintenance - Spire and Tower	993	
302	General	62	1055
328	Heating, Lighting, Insurance		315
697	Vicar, Organist, Choir etc.,		704
1900	Organ Rebuilding. Balance of cost.		2192
476	Diocesan Quota		572
100	Parish Magazine Subsidy		300
508	Donations and Charities		590
609	Other Expenses		407
£5550			£6135

"Wayside" Account

379	Rental Income . Sundry receipts.		400
236	Less Outgoings		277
£143	Nett Income		£123

Parish Hall Account

1106	Income from letting and sundry receipts		1309
445	Less Running Expenses		654
661			655
696	Less Renovation Costs		-
35 (DL)	Nett Income		£ 655

Magazine Account

281	Income from advertisements and sundry receipts		377
100	Subsidy from General Fund		300
381			677
427	Less Production Costs		600
46 (DL)			77