

THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH : The Parish Conference - 3 & 4 May 1975

We are members of a Church which has the active support of about 4% only of the parish. To some of us it seems vital to ask ourselves what the active Christian should be doing in this situation. Have we a special role, and if so does it include bringing new people into the Church?

Originally the problem was put to the P.C.C. by the Stewardship Committee; after serious consideration they decided that in addition to a regular review of the problem at P.C.C. meetings a weekend conference should be arranged. The conference, held at All Saints Church and parish hall, Isleworth, was organised by the Stewardship Committee. Three questions were discussed, one in each of the three half-day sessions.

Each session was a "workshop", with an opening prepared statement, a plenary session and group discussion.

"Why are we Christians?"; the first question, was introduced by a powerful personal statement from Alan Taylor. He said that we are called to God through Christ (Rom I vv 1-6). Every single human being inevitably has to find some relationship with the world around him, family, friends, society and the physical world. Acceptance of the Christian message, that we are offered a personal relationship with God, puts all other lesser relationships in a true perspective. Many people have different ways of expressing this Christian key to living: an "agapeistic" way of life, "living in the spirit of Easter" are two.

The plenary discussion brought out many other personal statements. Christianity was a staff of life, not pie in the sky hereafter. It offered us a chance of growth towards perfection. Perfection was the antithesis of dullness, the nearer perfection we were the more life offered in opportunity for action. Christianity is a pattern for living and the joy of living.

The twenty-one people present split into two groups to continue the debate. In my group the discussion anticipated the next two questions we were to discuss.

The next of these, introduced after lunch by Brian Kibble, was "What stops people being Christians?" Brian reminded us of the skeletons in our cupboards, that the Church has a reputation for obscuring inconvenient scientific truth, and of opposition to honest personal thinking. Why has the Church condoned "just wars"? What was the Church's attitude to pain and evil? Has the Church clearer or better ethics than humanists or indeed other religions?

The group discussion found other things that might be barriers. What relevance has the Church to the personal, social and indeed political problems of our time? While feeling this relevance ourselves, how do we communicate its influence without forcing the Church into the false role of instructing its members how to vote on specific secular issues?

I think we felt the Church's history was less of a handicap than its "low profile" here and now. Our image was one of harmless ineffectuality. (We are, perhaps, like people describing Niagara Falls by showing a lemonade bottle full of water).

The third and last question, "What do we do about it?" was put to an augmented meeting of thirty-three parishioners on Sunday afternoon, after a very condensed summary of the previous day's discussions had been given. The summary attempted to outline our ideas on the first two questions, and to show how we had found some pointers towards solutions to this last one.

We were all agreed that enlarging our Church was a proper objective, some feeling it more urgent than others. Drawing on the discussions of all three sessions I feel perhaps three or four ideas emerged clearly, though by no means unanimously.

Firstly, we should believe that by being people with obviously joyful and purposeful lives, we would recruit by example. This is a personal challenge to us all and something open to even the most diffident of us.

People should feel needed, and not just for money. How could this be achieved? The enthusiasm and renewal that the original stewardship scheme had brought us fourteen years ago was recalled. Various forms of possible new campaigns were discussed, and how people might be brought together in small groups within the larger community.

Could we, perhaps, harness ourselves and others to enthusiasm for new practical projects, for example a Scout Hut?

Perhaps another renewal is already working in the parish. Less immediate and dramatic than starting stewardship, the various new activities associated both with worship and caring that have started in the past two years, might be the beginning of a great new revival. Certainly, whether acknowledged or not, the Church has been the inspiration for some unquestionably good new development in the parish. "I belong to St. James's Church" is something that we can take a modest pride in saying. Perhaps other people will wish to earn their right to say it too.

Lastly, a personal comment, If the weekend had left us with any sense of complacency, it would have been a dangerous failure. But it is clear that several participants felt the reverse - frustrated at what was to them such small apparent progress. Most of us felt it had been well worthwhile; it was, however, only a beginning. The questions we asked ourselves, or something very like them, must surely be the ones that every live Christian community, however successful, must always be asking themselves.

R.W. Wilde
18 May, 1975.

THE HALL SPRING CLEAN

Sixteen people, about 85 man - woman - and child hours, and endless quantities of soap and water. What did we do?

We washed most of the walls and paintwork, cleaned inside all of the windows, and outside some, scrubbed all the floors, cleaned out the cupboards and contents; washed all the chairs; did some odd repairs, and sealed the floors in the kitchen and main hall.

What we didn't do that, given more time and help, we might have? We didn't wash any of the ceilings, the floor and the walls of the stage, the outsides of most of the windows, nor did we repaint the floors and the sundry bits of walls and paintwork which need it.

All the same, a very solid achievement which should last us until next Spring. Many thanks for all the willing help which enabled us to confine the Sunday work to the sealing of the floors, easily accomplished by two of us before the end of Family Communion.

A sobering thought - the average age of the volunteers was around 51. Shall we still be able to report this sort of thing in 1980? Maybe by then we shall be able to afford to employ professionals, but at today's prices, we'd be looking at a bill of around £200, and a closure of the hall for two weekdays. Any ideas?

ANNUAL CHURCH MEETING

An attendance of 70 or so was 40% up on earlier years, and the "grumble session" was lively, if a bit too short.

Points emerging: The Vicar's assurance that there is no move to kill off Evensong - and, following a substantial "vote" for its retention, his challenge: if you love it so much, how about giving it better support?

A plea for a choir at Family Service - but a report from the Organist that the present choir is sadly under strength. Could this be the way to a revival?

Doubts as to whether the results justify the manpower expended in the Wayside Monday Centre, and a frank admission that these cannot be measured - but enthusiastic support from all involved, and a resolve to continue.

Thus to the formal meeting, with reflections that perhaps we should repeat the pattern, but for me, at least, one jarring note - the coaxing and arm-twisting of reluctant nominees to accept election to the P.C.C. If we don't have enough volunteers, would not a smaller P.C.C. be better?

J.W.G.

GRUMBLE SESSION AT THE ANNUAL CHURCH MEETING

The thought that came into my mind ten minutes after the session had started was, "We are complaining that we don't really like part of the meal on our plates but our stern nannies are saying "Eat it up - it's good for you".

Now we all know that some doubtless nourishing things on our plate don't suit us and can even cause such revulsion that we can't accept them and we have to refrain from eating them. Sometimes we grow in time to like them, or Nanny meets us half-way and does not compel us to stomach them.

Now what about the grumbles? Firstly, let us congratulate our nannies of both sexes who work so hard for our welfare that we were given the opportunity to grumble! In St. James's we have grown used to the freedom of having our own opinions and being encouraged to voice them - 'speaking the truth in love' - and having a lot of them accepted and ratified, so what happens when we don't look like getting our own way?

One answer might be; "Well, although I don't like it and can't accept it, it seems to be popular with most people; it seems to do them good so I will either study to like it or seek a different diet".

Another approach might be; "No, I know this isn't good for me at the moment, I'll chose something different if offered me and maybe have another try later on".

Another answer is, "NO - I think Nanny is unreasonable over this and I'm going on quietly and determinedly opposing her until she sees reason and admits that it might do me good to let me have my own way this time".

Of course another way, and always attractive when we are children, is that we can throw the offending item in Nanny's face and stamp out of the room, or retire in a dignified manner leaving Nanny to say "Well, I'll warm it up for the next meal with a different sauce on it", or, "I think he's got a point and it'll do me no harm to go along with him in this", or, "Well, if he doesn't like the mint sauce with his roast lamb, he can leave it and eat the rest", or she might say "Well, if you won't eat the mint sauce which you don't like, I'll take away the roast lamb which I know you do like and give you your lamb hashed up which perhaps you will accept!".

The permutations of the argument are practically endless, but in the main, the Vicar summed it all up at the Parish Conference when he said something like this; 'We fall into two groups - the odd and the peculiar. The odd will say "How peculiar they are to think as they do, but for the love of God I'll go along with them where I possibly can", and the peculiar will say "How very odd of them not to think as I do, but for the love of God I will go along with them whenever possible".'

As to the particular items of grumble. **Evensong** - Nanny, it did appear that in spite of all your efforts to dolly up the meal, the plain meal was more acceptable than the hashed up one. Some people thought they would hear you say "Children - don't let the meal go cold, come to the table and enjoy it or Nanny will have to take it away - it's up to you".

As to the Hymns we sing - "Nanny, we do like our favourite titbits which we are used to and on which we were reared, just as we like new treats offered for our nourishment from time to time".

As for the big item not mentioned but lurking in the larder - Series three - it seems that it's a diet a lot of people like, or come to like, and it is manifestly good for many - so either partake or prayerfully refrain, but for God's sake do not go hungry by not coming to the table at all! (The eight o'clock meal seems to have been a misunderstanding - can it be that 1662 was asked for and was obediently provided when it was the 1928 amendment which was really desired but mistakenly not asked for? If so it is easily resolved.)

This all may appear flippant but we all must appear very childish to our Father in Heaven, for nannies and children alike, we are all in His nursery.

M.O.

WORSHIP CONFERENCE

Two of us attended the recent Liturgical Conference held at Ashford Methodist Church. It was good to meet and hear so many other Christians and to share with them our views and opinions about the Church today. It is only when one attends such a gathering as this that one realises how fortunate we are at St. James's in being able to do so many things that other churches would like to do but are unable to because of lack of support or enthusiasm either from their clergy or the rest of the congregation.

After a morning of discussion on such subjects as "The Church as the Suffering Servant" and "The Purpose of Public Christian Worship" we were served an excellent lunch at St. Hilda's Church Hall. Here on display was a wonderful collection of literature, plays, poems, readings and most of all music. Some of these items we bought for future use.

In the afternoon each of us attended a different group concerned with various aspects of worship. I attended one of the music groups, which was showing us how simple music making with children could be achieved quickly given a variety of instruments - drums, triangles, glockenspiel, xylophone etc. We very quickly were able to produce a creditable performance and a short recording was made to be used in conjunction with a special service the following day.

The other St. James's representative went to the section on "Dance and Drama" where they shared their ideas and experiences in all aspects of dance and drama in worship. There is no doubt that this can be used in many ways to

help towards a deeper understanding of worship.

There were many specialist groups but we could only attend one each; pity, as we felt sure the other sections on Poetry, Visual Aids, Modern Music, Traditional Music and several other subjects would also have been interesting and useful.

To finish the day, prior to the closing prayers, our leader re-constructed a scene from a church he had once attended where they had, as he put it, three rules for the congregation:

1. Sit at the back!
2. Sit as far as possible from anyone else!
3. Look miserable or bored!

NOT US SURELY!

H.T.

ORGAN RECITAL

Nearly a hundred people were present in the church on the evening of Wednesday, April 23, to hear Mr. David Bell give his second organ recital in Hampton Hill. This was a measure of the enjoyment his last recital had given in 1974, and the audience was not disappointed this time; there may be standing room only at his next appearance.

Mr. Bell's programme was divided into two parts, starting with some well-known classical pieces, and ending with some modern-day works. Three pieces by Bach and Handel's Organ Concerto in B. Flat were superbly played - Mr Bell's great skill doing full justice to St. James's newly-renovated instrument. Lightness of touch was contrasted with the occasional full-throated bass chord. Dr. Thalben-Ball's Elegy proved a hauntingly evocative composition, conveying strong yet subtle images against a subdued background.

An entertaining and educative evening was brought to a close with the serving of coffee, when Mr. Bell found himself the centre of an enquiring and appreciative crowd. There is clearly a ready demand for such musical events and the Social Committee will endeavour to see that similar functions take place at regular intervals. The performance gained in value through Mrs. Dilys Melville's professional comments at the end.

R.B.

. . . . to sing

THE MESSIAH

- for the love of it.

A number of people have expressed a wish to become better acquainted with the many inspiring choruses in Handel's "The Messiah" which for many years has been the most popular work presented by choral societies and advanced church choirs, particularly in nonconformist Churches.

A first practice session was held quite informally on Friday 2 May which eight people attended - not a very enthusiastic response but nevertheless a start. Further practices are to be held at 8.0 p.m. for one hour on Fridays as announced, at approximately four week intervals.

I would particularly ask those eight who attended to come again and each

bring a friend so that the next session may number at least sixteen, and the third may number thirty two which would form quite a respectable senior choir.

Please do not be dissuaded because you feel inadequate, or cannot read music - we practice each part (soprano/contralto/tenor/bass) separately, if necessary bar by bar.

All that is asked is that you provide your own copy (The Messiah, published by Novello & Co., Ltd., Borough Green, Kent, edited by E. Prout) and come with an enthusiastic desire to sing The Messiah - for the love of it.

R.J.C.D.

LITURGICAL COMMITTEE

Parents of small children will be pleased to learn that crayons and drawing blocks are again available for use by the younger members of our congregation during Church Services. So if you have an artistic two-year-old with you in Church please ask a sidesman to provide you with the appropriate equipment.

Make a note now of Sunday, 28 September. This is the day on which our Reader, Seymour Harris, is to be ordained in St. Paul's Cathedral. We are hoping to arrange a coach to take members of the congregation to this service. Watch out for further details.

L.M.

HOLIDAYS FOR DEPRIVED CHILDREN FROM NORTHERN IRELAND

A Hampton Organisation which works for the relief of deprived children from Great Britain and Northern Ireland has arranged summer holidays for these children here in this area. The children are coming mainly from Belfast and Birmingham, and groups of thirty are staying for a week each, from the end of June through to September. Each group will then go on for another week either in Wales or Yorkshire. The children are to be accommodated in private families, but will meet in the daytime for organised activities. The Parents and Young People Group of the Community Care Group has offered some help in this respect, and we are now looking for families who can put up one or more children for one or more weeks. Some assistance is also needed for daytime activities. I would ask anybody who feels able to help to get in touch with the C.C.G. office or me personally (Tel. 979 9662 or 979 3529).

It is obvious that children who live in the worst affected areas of Belfast and who are suffering from the effects of prolonged violence must benefit from a harmonious, pleasant holiday. Their parents could never afford to go on holiday with them. But apart from the immediate benefit, there is the longer term hope that a holiday spent happily together will do something towards healing the terrible gulf and hatred that exists between the two communities in Northern Ireland. The children are taken evenly from protestant and catholic families. There is some aftercare in Northern Ireland. We do not know how much good can come out of this scheme, but I feel our Christian conscience cannot let us stand back when there is an opportunity to help in this desperately sad situation.

H.B.

SOME DATES TO NOTE

- June 5 - 7 10.30 - 12.00: Mothers' Union Exhibition in church
6 08.45 Holy Communion (St. Anne's Chapel, LEHS); 20.00 Sing-
ing of 'The Messiah' for the love of it, in church.
10 20.00 Tuesday Club A.G.M. (W); Wayside Project - Training
Session (W)
11 SAINT BARNABAS: 07.30 Holy Communion; 20.00 Marriage
Preparation (Vestry)
12 20.00 Prayer Meeting (69 St. James's Avenue); 20.00 Social
Committee (75 St. James's Avenue)
14 PARISH OUTING to Sussex
15 Confirmation in St. Mary's, Twickenham (The Bishop is arranging
other services for the Deanery in the Autumn)
16 10.30 Editorial Board (75 St. James's Avenue)
17 20.00 Parochial Church Council (W)
18 07.30 Holy Communion; 14.30 Garden Party for mothers with
babies recently baptised (Vicarage)
21 14.30 The Bishop Wand School: Summer Fete
23 20.00 Stewardship Committee (81 Burton's Road)
24 SAINT JOHN BAPTIST'S DAY: 07.30 Holy Communion
28 Laurel Dene: Open Day
29 SAINT PETER'S DAY: Sunday Services as usual
- July 2 THE VISITATION: 07.30 Holy Communion
3 08.45 Holy Communion (St. Anne's Chapel, LEHS);
Mothers' Union Outing
8 20.00 Quarterly Committee of Hampton Council of Churches
(south aisle, St. James's Church); Wayside Project Training
Session (W)

BAPTISM

- April 27 Benjamin Lorton Crompton, 28 Somerford Road, Reddish,
Stockport.

BURIAL AND CREMATIONS

- 24 Harold Stanley Gardiner, 91 Burton's Road, aged 69 years
(at South-west Middlesex Crematorium)
May 5 Janice Stupples, 28 Seymour Road, aged 33 years
(at Kingston Crematorium)
19 Norman Harry John Dick, 20 Fairlight, Uxbridge Road
aged 69 years (at Twickenham Cemetery)

EXPLORING THE WAYS OF THE SPIRIT

A very full and varied programme has been arranged for this Congress on Spirituality, too complicated to be summarised in the space available in this magazine. Many of the visits and special events take place at the weekends, but there are also lectures during the lunch-hour in City churches, and weekday evening symposia. Some members of the Liturgical Committee have copies of the programme: for further details please get in touch with them. The Congress covers the whole month of June.

NOTE THIS SUMMER FETE

On Saturday, June 21, commencing at 2.30 p.m., the BISHOP WAND CHURCH OF ENGLAND SECONDARY SCHOOL will be holding its Summer Fete in the school grounds at Layton's Lane, Sunbury-on-Thames.

As many readers will know, the school draws its pupils from a very wide area, covering some thirty parishes, including our own, and since its founding in 1969 the school has rapidly achieved a name for educational 'forward thinking' in the widest sense, based on high academic standards and Christian principles. Needless to say, funds are urgently needed for the provision of facilities and equipment which are not financed by Church, State or Local Authority and all profits will be used for such purposes.

Please come and enjoy yourselves on this occasion, and at the same time contribute to a very worthwhile cause. Admission is by Programme, price 5p, which can be obtained from members of the school, or at the gate on 21 June. Car parking will be available in the grounds.

Our own Coffee Morning on May 13 in support of the School produced £8.50, and a cheque for this amount has been sent to the Headmaster.

DEANERY INTERCESSION LIST

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| June 8 | St. Mark, Teddington |
| 15 | S.S. Peter & Paul, Teddington |
| 22 | All Hallows, Twickenham |
| 29 | All Saints', Twickenham |
| July 6 | Holy Trinity, Twickenham |
| 13 | S.S. Michael & George, Fulwell. |