

CHURCH OF THE LITTLE FLOCK ?

Not all that long time ago it could be assumed that everyone who lived in the parish was a Christian and a member of the Church of England unless he specifically opted out - which was not easy to do, for the whole social trend and even government policy would be against him. And up till recently, those who worshipped regularly and were at the heart of the local Christian community felt themselves to be supported by a large number of people of goodwill who also counted themselves members of the Church and were willing to give generously to help forwards its plans and projects. But now it is obvious that things are changing. The number of those who openly declare themselves Christians, or even write 'C. of E.' or other expression of Christian allegiance when filling in the appropriate form, is declining. (So also is membership of the two major political parties - 'drastically declining', according to the editor of 'The Political Quarterly'.) And new members are hard to come by: 73% of Methodist Churches last year gained none at all, and many Anglican and other local Churches would have to say the same. And as society becomes increasingly secularised, and God counts for less and less in the everyday affairs of life, so the number of those in support seems to be going down too. That great Christian leader of pre-war days, Bishop Gore, foresaw this situation in his lectures on 'Christ and Society', delivered in 1927: "The younger among us must prepare to find themselves in a world which in great part has revolted from Christianity - from real Christianity as well as from that which is only conventional, and from its moral principles as well as its intellectual dogmas; a world in which the present relics of Christian establishment have passed away, and in which the distinction between 'those within' and 'those without' will again have become more obvious; a world perhaps in which the active profession of Christianity will again subject a man, if not to persecution, yet to much unpopularity and ridicule".

There are, and there have been for a long period, Christian voices calling upon the Church to 'return to the catacombs', or whatever the modern equivalent of such a retreat might be. If the Church is indeed driven underground, as in China, where belief in the supremacy of God would seem to be considered as treason to the supremacy of Chairman Mao, then this could be within God's providence for the sake of the future of the world as well as that of the Church. But a voluntary withdrawal would be utterly wrong. The Church's place is in the midst of a sick and disordered world for the sake and the salvation of the world itself, which God loves and in which He is deeply involved (and would have His Church be too).

It is not necessarily defeatism or pessimism to prepare for a future in which the Church will continue to become smaller (e.g. with regard to the Church of England: in 1956 the number of Easter communicants was 2,348,000: in 1970, 1,814,000, despite the increase in the national population). But it is defeatism if the Church adopts the mentality of the ghetto and the sect, and ceases to live and act with apostolic faith and courage and love in the world. 'The Christian community must not be a fire that warms only itself' (Rahner). If the Church becomes a more closely-knit and distinct community, a real family, it must at the same time be an open, welcoming, missionary community, not keeping itself to itself, but venturing out boldly into the larger community around.

What do we then do about the future? Of course we think and plan and pray and discuss. This is happening at all levels in the Church - e.g. locally in

discussion at the P.C.C. and its committees, at the meetings of various groups and societies, and at our Isleworth parish conferences (book the next one now - Saturday, October 4). In 1980 it is estimated that there will be 2000 less working-clergy than in 1973. The Deanery Synod at its last meeting had a preliminary discussion about how this might affect our own area. The Diocese of London had 752 active clergy in 1973; by 1980 this figure will have been reduced by 125 owing to retirement and natural wastage, and if the recommendations of the Sheffield Report are accepted, another 60 will have to be transferred to less well-staffed dioceses. This might well mean four less clergymen in the Hampton Deanery at a time when population is rapidly increasing owing to the development of the nursery lands. But will it be possible to find the money to maintain even this reduced number? The Diocesan Stewardship Committee reports that there are signs of more realistic giving; two recent campaigns have resulted in average weekly offerings per family of £1.83 and £1.31 - and there are parishes (such as one in Bristol which some of us hope to visit shortly) where the average giving is far above this. But with the Church's limited resources the task may prove too great, and it may have to be the norm rather than the exception for clergy to have another job, at least a part-time one. Many more people will have to be trained as Readers or permanent Deacons, and one great sign of hope is the increasing number of candidates of excellent quality offering themselves for training in preparation for ordination without giving up their present jobs. Our own esteemed Seymour Harris is to be made Deacon on St. Matthew's Day this year, but the full benefit and blessing will come when he is ordained Priest - we hope at Petertide next year.

Little flock or big flock, minority or majority: so long as we think and plan and pray, remain firmly united in faith and love, warm-hearted and welcoming, and allow ourselves at all times to be guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit - then we can go forward in good heart, with nothing to fear.

OUTING TO SHEFFIELD PARK

On Saturday, 14 June, we foregathered at Wayside, it was lovely weather and when the 'eats' were finally loaded we boarded the coach and set off on the very pleasant drive to Sheffield Park where the famous 'Bluebell Line' runs. There was quite a number of children obviously excited at the prospect, then there were Mums and Dads, Grannies and Grandpas, etc. (Not wishing to offend the etc)

After a brief stop for refreshment we proceeded through villages and countryside, quite delightful, to the venue for our break for lunch - a picnic area in Ashdown Forest. There was an abundance of food, both in variety and quantity served by willing helpers, and steaming hot coffee ended our feast. We owe our grateful thanks to those who must have worked hard preparing all this fare.

The children and many 'bigger' boys took the opportunity of a game of cricket, others explored the surrounding heathland.

Thus refreshed we continued to our destination. This outing was to prove to be a trip down memory lane? nostalgic? a museum visit? or just fun! Assembled on the platform we were able to watch the shunting of the carriages into position, and when all had been coupled up the train set off and puffed its way gently along to Horsted Keynes, taking some of us back to a bygone age, with the occasional whiff of the steam engine, the smuts coming in on those

facing the engine - smells and sounds almost forgotten, pleasanter for being in retrospect no doubt. At Horsted Keynes all the passengers left the train and watched the engine change ends ready for the return journey to Sheffield Park Station which displayed some of the old well-remembered metal wall advertisements - Sharp's Mr. Kreemy Knut, Hudson's Soap, Spratt's Dog Food and, of course, "They come as a boon and a blessing to men, the Pickwick, the Owl and the Waverley pen". Most of the party had a look at the engine sheds, some daring to mount the steps to the footplates, one not to be outdone by those a little younger was a certain Mrs. P. I believe! After the odd drink to wash down another round of sandwiches, or an ice cream, we started our homeward journey by a different route, passing through Ditchling, Lindfield (one of England's prettiest villages), Turners Hill, enabling us to enjoy more views of the countryside. Wayside was safely reached by 7 p.m. and the party expressed their warm thanks to all those who had contributed to the organisation of this enjoyable outing.

H.R.W.

THE BARBECUE

It was with mixed feelings that I approached Laurel Dene on the evening of May 31 for the Barbecue. This was to be the first time since our association with St. James's began 14 years ago that I had attended a social function and not been on the organising side. How would I feel with nothing to do but enjoy myself?

The first strangeness was setting out at the time on the ticket and not very much earlier. However, after a chat with the welcome party at the gate we made our way down the long path and followed our noses round the back of the main building to the aroma of sausages and hamburgers, not to mention the onions - (which I had not cried over!). We were greeted by more old friends with drinks waiting for us.

There were several games set out in the lovely grounds and I was able to "have a go" without wondering if I should be doing something in the kitchen. After spending quite a time eating our beautifully cooked supper we found we were feeling quite chilly, but this was soon rectified as David Nunn organised country dancing which was much appreciated, and the warming-up process was completed by coffee afterwards.

I suddenly realised that it was getting dark and I had been so busy enjoying myself I hadn't noticed time passing, or that I wasn't "organising". I did find I had a tea cloth in my hand when the clearing-up was being done, but old habits die hard and it's nice to be able to say from the other side of the fence "many thanks, Social Committee for a lovely evening".

R.M.G.

HELP WANTED

We are short of magazine distributors for certain areas, and would also like the names of anyone willing to do an occasional delivery as a holiday relief. The numbers involved are not large, and seldom exceed 25 per person.

If you could give a little time each month to help in this way, please contact Mrs. Young 979-5629

BAPTISMAL PARTY

A lovely Summer day and an English garden, what more could one ask for when giving a Baptismal Party for about forty mums and babies, plus toddlers, school-children and so on upwards. This event organised by the Mothers' Union in the Vicarage garden on Wednesday, June 17 was a great success, the refreshments disappeared rapidly and everyone was soon chatting to their neighbours in an effort to get to know people.

Many young mothers feel isolated when at home for the first time with a baby who is a great tie although they love him/her very dearly. It is good for them to be able to meet people in the same position so that they may become friends. Later on they can act as baby-sitters and support each other in difficult times as when baby number two arrives or mum/baby are ill or infant has spent all night screaming and mum feels in need of a rest next afternoon even if junior doesn't.

Several people expressed interest in joining a group to meet for coffee and have a chat and get to know each other better. If you are interested in this or know anyone who might be please get in touch with Mrs. Coryn Robinson, 979-6786 or the Vicar.

H.T.

SUMMER BREAKS

We are having a break from Keep Fit for the whole of August and will resume in September. Take your courage in both hands and join us then; we have a lot of fun so watch out for the starting date.

The Ladies' Choir also takes a break for the summer; our last "sing" this season will be on July 14. We do not claim to be the best choir in the area but we do enjoy our singing and we have entertained several old people's homes and clubs so we do have an end product. This recreation will also start again in September and the date will be announced in the next magazine.

E.V.S.

VISIT TO ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

On Monday, June 9 we of St. James's were invited by the Roman Catholics of St. Francis de Sales to see their church and spend a social evening with them. This invitation was accepted by about 35 of us who had a most enjoyable evening. We were greeted in their hall with a very welcome cup of coffee, and after a short period of getting to know each other, we were taken into their church where Father Meehan gave us a very interesting and humourous talk about their building and its history and a little of their practices. After this enlightening half hour we chatted our way to the old church building, which is now a social club and were entertained with lovely refreshments and a large glass of sherry, more chat, discussions and general comparisons of our customs. Altogether a very enjoyable and interesting evening. Thank you to all the members of St. Francis de Sales.

E.V.S.

THE WAYSIDE MONDAY CENTRE

From time to time the helpers at the Centre are asked what it is for and what it does: we feel that it would be useful to give a clear definition of its purpose and function so that what we can offer is well-known to all the parish.

First and foremost the Centre provides a place, a time and an unhurried listener for anyone who feels the need to discuss an anxiety, unhappiness or other problem with one other person informally. Most of the helpers have had some training in constructive listening for this purpose.

The Centre also welcomes anyone who is in need of company, perhaps only for a brief period while they are settling into a new community.

While it is not intended simply as a social centre, it may fulfil this function too for those who for domestic or other reasons have few alternative outlets.

R.W. Wilde.

..... to sing

THE MESSIAH

..... for the love of it

The practice session held on June 6 attracted about twenty-four singers and three or four choruses were attempted with varying degrees of success, but nevertheless with enjoyment to those who took part. A small audience also appeared, an aspect which was not encouraged, since our efforts, to say the least, are far below performance standard.

The next practice is to be at 8 p.m. on Friday, July 11.

..... to sing

YOUR FAVOURITE HYMN

..... for the love of it.

As a variation from the Messiah, but still with the object of encouraging personal participation, a hymn singing session is planned for October, when you may choose what hymn you would like to be sung. Date to be announced.

R.J.C.D.

CHURCH OUTINGS

I feel I must write a letter of thanks to the Social Committee, for all the thought and hard work they put into the preparation of the outings.

It is appreciated by all, especially the female adults, not having to even think about preparing food.

I was talking to a couple of strangers in the railway carriage on the Bluebell Line, and happened to mention that it was a Church outing, they were most surprised, whether it was because we were all happy and enjoying ourselves I really don't know. Evidently we were quite different from the image they had of churchgoers.

Keep up the good work, committee, I'm sure I can speak for all of us, we look forward eagerly to the next outing.

V.R.P.

TUESDAY CLUB

The Annual General Meeting of the Tuesday Club was held at Wayside on June 10. It was well attended, 26 members being present. After half an hour of relaxation we got down to the serious business of the evening. We elected a new Chairman, Mrs. Dorothy Edmonds, Vice Chairman, Mrs. Gladys Bosley, Secretary, Miss Connie Wright, Catering Officer, Mrs. Mrs. Monica Lockyer, Outings Secretary, Mrs. Jill Harvey, and Mrs. Amy Hamilton was co-opted as an additional committee member. Our Treasurer, Miss Ida Wills, has another year to serve;

The future programme of the Club was discussed, and promises to be an interesting one. We actually make a small donation to one or two worthy causes, and this year will be supporting the Friends of Laurel Dene and the Cruse Club.

New members are always very welcome - we are a friendly group - why not join us and find out for yourself?

THE MOTHERS' UNION

The next Branch Meeting will be on Monday, September 8 when we shall have a service in church followed by some discussion and information of importance to members.

Our exhibition in June was the culmination of this Summer's programme. After the usual crop of doubts, misgivings and last-minute rush, I think we all enjoyed it. We thought we had advertised this event quite extensively and so were somewhat disappointed by the number of people who, the week after it had closed, said "I wish I had known . . .", Perhaps we can put our thinking caps on again and come to some solution of the perennial difficulty. We have some husbands to thank for their help and especially Mr. Doris Childs - this is International Women's Year! - for help in removing furniture; Mr. Ruth Gostling for help with the vestry black-out and a last minute inspiration over the 'banting' as everyone called it; and Mr. Pat Young for quantities of thick cardboard. Did you know that our precious 'banting' was torn down and carried away by a gang of young hooligans late on Friday night and retrieved some time later after a chase by your Enrolling member, yelling 'Stop thief' at the top of her voice and the aid of a passing motorist who caught and manhandled the leading culprit cammando style? The 'banting', having lost all its tapes and most of the hem, didn't look quite so good on Saturday morning but with the aid of pins we at least got it up again in time for the morning's session.

The exhibition was very kindly received and appears to have been useful both to members, helping them to revise their ideas about the movement to which they belong; and to friends, most of whom said "I didn't know the M.U. was concerned over such a wide area". In a year's planning this is, of course, one of our problems: we are committed to keep in touch with all that concerns families and children and to work at our own discipleship as Christians, and this is a tall order. At this moment two Bills that we ought to be talking about are going through Parliament: Dr. David Owen's Children's Bill, and Mr. James White's Abortion (Amendment) Act; locally we ought to be supporting parents in any way to offset the Education economies (for example how are the children in this riverside area to get proficient teaching in swimming and life-saving now that the schools are no longer arranging it? There are facilities but not everyone knows about them.); our own Church is seething with questions about

Christian discipleship and urgent questions about Church membership and M.U. members should be fully involved in this.

Deanery Day this year will be on Tuesday, September 30, when there will be a service in St. Mary's, Twickenham followed by a 'Bring & Buy' for Overseas. Some of our exhibition will be on show.

If you forgot to put in your order for McGredy's 'Mary Sumner' roses you may like to know that I am starting another one which will go up at the end of July.

C.H.B.

CONFIRMATION

At the service in St. Mary's, Twickenham on Sunday evening, June 15, 34 candidates from nine parishes were presented to the Bishop of Kensington. Those from this parish were: Caroline Jane Bolt, Jeremy Niel Humphrey, Helen Mary Lawrence and Susan Margaret Lawrence.

SOME DATES TO NOTE

- July 14 10.30 Editorial Board (21 St. James's Road); 14.30 Ladies Choir (W)
- 16 07.30 Holy Communion: 20.00 Parochial Church Council (W)
- 17 20.00 Welcome Group (16 Nightingale Road)
- 20 PATRONAL FESTIVAL SUNDAY: Morning arrangements as usual, but instead of Evensong there will be a special form of Family Service at 16.30 followed by Afternoon Tea.
- 22 SAINT MARY MAGDALEN: 07.30 Holy Communion; 20.00 Tuesday Club: Social Evening and Bring & Buy Sale (W)
- 23 20.00 Wayside Project Training Session (W)
- 24 20.00 Prayer Meeting (69 St. James's Avenue).
- 25 SAINT JAMES THE GREAT: 07.30 Holy Communion
- 27 17.15 Senior members of the Church lead service at Wayside.
- August 6 THE TRANSFIGURATION: 07.30 Holy Communion
- 7 20.00 Prayer Meeting (69 St. James's Avenue)

N.B. The Ordination Service in St. Paul's Cathedral at which Seymour Harris will be made Deacon will now be held at 10.30 on September 21 (not September 28 as previously announced). There will be no Parish Communion here that morning, but a coach will be leaving at about 09.15 to take us to the Cathedral. Further details next month.

There will be another Parish Conference at Isleworth on Saturday October 4; Harvest Festival Sunday will be October 5 and the Harvest Supper will take place on October 9.

DEANERY INTERCESSION LIST

- July 13 SS. Michael & George, Fulwell
20 All Saints', Hampton
27 St. Augustine of Canterbury, Whitton
August 3 St. Mary, Hampton
10 The Bishop, Archdeacon and Rural Deans

BAPTISMS

- May 25 Mark Antony Cotton, 105 Uxbridge Road.
Philip Stuart Kestle, 56 High Street.
Duncan Hugh Siegle, 10 Grenville Mews.
June 22 Duncan Giles Horswill, 286 Hanworth Road.

MARRIAGE

- June 21 Michael John Mullett to Caroline Mary Humphrey

BURIALS

- May 28 Lydia Iva Bernard, 45 Holly Road, aged 93 years (at Hampton Cemetery)
June 12 Gladys Marguerite Cohen, Axminster, Devon, aged 87 years
(interment of ashes)
16 Bertha Florence Smith, 60 Myrtle Road, aged 88 years.