

"Who on earth are you?" seems an unlikely title for a Lent Course. To me it sounds rather disparaging, if not actually rude. "Of course I know who I am" most of us would reply; and perhaps we would go on to think, if not say, ("and I don't want to let you find out"). This can happen on a very personal level. But it can also happen on a group level, especially on a christian group level. "I am a Roman Catholic" or "I am a Baptist" or "I am Church of England" and so on until all the various denominations, or traditions as I prefer to call them, have been covered. It is amazing how much ignorance we have of each other and also of ourselves. "Know yourself" is one of the world's oldest phrases and yet most of us don't know ourselves very well at all. Many never even ask the question "Who on earth am I?".

This year's Lent course hopes to help us change our attitudes to ourselves and others, christians as well as non-christians. In the words from the beginning of the course book the aim is to: "explore the relationships that people have in their family, in places where they live and work, and in the world, to reflect on those relationships, and to grow in understanding as to how, in those relationships, they can relate their faith in God to their daily life, and plan for action as a result of it." It is also designed to help people overcome fear of sharing themselves with other christians.

So it is quite a large Agenda! Our hope is locally that we shall be able to join one or other of the Groups being organised by the Hampton Council of Churches. That is why we are asking people to let go of their new membership of our Fellowship Groups (if they have joined one) or to try to attach themselves to a group near them. Two years ago those who took part in the exercise found it more worthwhile than they had expected. This year should prove no exception.

It is now just about a year since Terry Waite disappeared attempting to secure the release of some hostages. Most people believe that he himself was taken hostage; there is discussion now whether he is still alive and hostage or dead. While we must of course continue to hope that he is alive and pray for him we must not overlook the agonies through which his family must be going. They need to be as much a focus for our prayers as he is. And this is always the case with those who suffer. It is so easy to forget those who are not directly in the public eye but are very closely affected by whatever tragedy it is. It is certainly the case with those who are currently involved with the high publicity being given to patients who need urgent

SUNDAY EVENING SERVICES

Please note altered times until further notice:

EVENSONG, or on the first Sunday in the month,

PARISH COMMUNION **16.30 h**

PRAYER AND PRAISE **18.30 h**

treatment in the National Health Service and are not being given it. The families are interviewed remorselessly and often photographed, and are on the point of exhaustion themselves.

This brings us back to where we began. We need to learn to look beneath the outward skin of what we see and see the people themselves for what they truly are. If we can learn to do that this Lent, it will have been an exercise well worth doing.

Nicholas Chubb

Letters to the Editor

Though not strictly a pew-sitting member I am a supporter of St. James's Church and I read every Spire issue. This is the first time in 33 years that I have commented but I feel I must oppose Margery Orton's letter to the Editor.

GRASS-ROOTS GOVERNMENT: I am glad to hear that Church members have been told not to stand in judgement - though this in fact is what we all do most of the time. If we didn't stand in judgement many of the problems associated with sexual deviancy would be lessened.

Margery says "most gays have a choice". They do not. None of us CHOOSE to deviate, we prefer to conform. Many male homosexuals try desperately to fit into the heterosexual pattern but because they are acting against their true natures they cannot succeed. They are forced to seek casual sexual relationships and it is this kind of relationship which spreads AIDS. To be integrated personalities, able to give and to receive love, we must first know and love ourselves. This fact is commonplace in most teachings. Many homosexuals see THEMSELVES as most of us see them - disgusting people who positively choose their perverse way of sex. This CREATES a lot of the problems.

If our society accepted homosexual partnerships they would not need to deny their own natures and seek casual sex. As male homosexuals are the ones most at risk from AIDS it is in the interests of all of us to try to understand and change our attitude. Without ridicule and hate from society they would have much the same chance as the rest of us to form loving, stable relationships, true to their own natures.

Female homosexuals have never been as conspicuous though we are told statistically the numbers are the same. Women seem to manage these matters rather better. I suppose because of the physiological differences even AIDS is not a threat here.

We don't know what makes some people homosexual. As a mother of two girls and two boys who reads a lot, even in the early days of motherhood I used to wonder how I would feel if any of our children grew up to be sexual deviants. From what I read, whichever sex deviated, it would be my fault. Much as everything else that went wrong would be my fault. A mother's place is in the wrong. (As far as I know they are heterosexual!) But what of parents of homosexuals. They too suffer. Tension within the family would be reduced with a more accommodating society - and perhaps with fewer tensions in the family there would be fewer homosexuals anyway.

Barbara Withers

Margery Orton's letter in the January "Spire" prompts me to consider what we expect from our Church leaders, and whether these expectations are reasonable ones.

Over the years I have joined in many discussion groups in the parish, and these questions have often arisen in one way or another. Usually the answer to the first question is something like "spiritual leadership". Perhaps this is obvious, perhaps it lacks precision, but it has always seemed to me to be worth saying.

It also seems worth saying, although equally obvious, that it is not reasonable to expect leaders to be infallible in either word or deed. Their guidance must be weighed by our own conscience together with our own feelings, readings and judgement. This personal responsibility seems to me to be the heart of any adult faith.

So we expect our leaders to be men and women of special spiritual insight, but we cannot expect them to be always right or always behave ideally. We expect that their nature, their prayers, study and meditation will give them a special ability to give good guidance. We expect them to be growing in wisdom. All will be more or less hampered by their human weaknesses. Some few will remain so blind or crippled by their disabilities that their leadership will be false or ineffective. We, the flock, must make up our own mind as to which leaders are those with true insight.

We might ask ourselves "does this leader speak and work for love of God and love of neighbour?". If so, then perhaps he or she is a true shepherd in spite of many frailties. Perhaps the imperfect can sometimes be better guides than the more obviously virtuous. I understand that in Jesus's time the Samaritans were held in some contempt by the Jews.

Dick Wilde



JUST LOOKING

ONE DAY I STOPPED in front of a Cezanne still-life — green apples, a white plate and a cloth. Being tired, restless and distracted by the stream of bored Sunday afternoon sight-seers drifting through the galleries, I simply sat and looked, too inert to remember whether I ought to like it or not. Slowly I became aware that something was pulling me out of my vacant stare and the colours were coming alive, gripping my gaze until I

was soaking myself in their vitality. Gradually a great delight filled me...It had all happened just by sitting still and waiting.

If just looking could be so satisfying, why was I always striving to have things or get things done?...I began to wonder whether eyes and ears might not have a wisdom of their own.

JOANNA FIELD

The Leprosy Mission

As many people do, I imagined that the disease of leprosy was almost a thing of the past, but hearing the illustrated talk from Mike Heywood of the Leprosy Mission at Prayer 'n' Praise on 6 December was a vivid reminder that this, sadly, is a mistaken assumption. The Leprosy Mission is a Christian ministry to over 300,000 leprosy patients world-wide - Mike stressed that the sufferers are thus described and that the word "leper" with all its dread connotations is never used. The Mission, with hospitals and centres in many third world countries, concentrates on preventative and early treatment of the disease but provides also surgery and rehabilitation - we saw slides of the work of a Scottish surgeon who specialises in the treatment of crippled hands and has pioneered an operation to restore much use to deformed fingers.

The medical and surgical staff of the Mission hospitals is drawn from many countries whilst nursing and hospital routine seems to be done by local people. All types of staff are Christian and bring the gospel good news along with their medical skills to help to restore their patients to physical and spiritual life.

Leprosy is apparently a disease of the nerve endings and if diagnosed in time, can be cured in about a year by the use of a multi-drug therapy which costs only £20 per patient! Stubborn cases can be arrested in 4-5 years but of course gross physical damage cannot be repaired - damage to nerve endings brings lack of sensation and people with leprosy can lose their feet completely after receiving some wound or burn. £1 given to the Mission will buy a pair of protective sandals, the wearing of which may prevent much harm. There are small collecting boxes available from David Lloyd and if you feel that you could save 20 £1 coins in one year, you would have paid for the treatment of one patient for that year.

All in all, this was an interesting and inspiring evening.

Margaret Taylor

The year
An uncut jewel is,
Of matchless worth,
Bringing along with it
New heaven and earth.

Miyauchi - A Christian Japanese leprosy sufferer
(From "Escaped as a Bird" published by The Leprosy Mission)

Hampton Hill Association -

St. Valentine's Eve Buffet Supper Party

A cheerful get-together with licensed bar, buffet supper, dancing and entertainment will be held on Saturday 13th February from 7.30 to 11.30pm at the Parish Hall, School Road.

Tickets are £2.50 (including supper) and can be obtained from Dennis Dolan, 979 8641, Maureen Loukes, 941 3951, or Joyce Doughty, 979 2839.

WAYSIDE MONDAY CENTRE

A Listening Post

All who are under stress, anxious,
depressed, lonely or bereaved
are welcome

Mondays (except Bank Holidays) 10.30 am - 1.00 pm

"Wayside", 25 St. James's Road

Parish Carol Singing

A small band of enthusiastic singers set off a few evenings before Christmas to sing carols around the neighbourhood. It was a fine dry night and the organisation was in the capable hands of our organist, Olive Hayward, under whose baton we sung, I hope with spirit (either Christmas or Holy not the other kind: we kept that for later).

We sang at the doors of several of our congregation and from them we had a warm welcome: from the world at large we had very little response indeed. The volume we produced was simply not enough to compete with radios, televisions etc. A few people passing by stopped to listen but on the whole the response was disappointing.

It has never been our policy to collect money on these occasions or to knock on doors but people do come out and press money on us (which we give to charity) as this is what they expect. In order to get more of a response in future, I think it is going to be necessary to have more singers to increase the volume and to knock on doors so that people are aware of our presence. Any money offered could be put in a collecting tin and added to the amount collected for the nominated Christmas charity in church, this year Crisis at Christmas. It is very disheartening to sing to an empty street.

Another alternative would be to abandon an evening walkabout and have a stationary sing outside the parade of shops in the High Street, perhaps on the Saturday before Christmas, perhaps in costume - Victorian seems to be popular.

Whatever the merits one way or another of the above, the refreshment at Wayside proved very popular - plenty of mince pies and coffee with some of the spirit (bottled this time). So after a rather a mediocre evening, at least the camaraderie at the end was well worth the effort.

Helen Taylor

Christmas Highlights

Crib Service

As has become the custom now (after its very modest beginning a few years ago) the church was comfortably full for the Christmas Eve Crib Service. Families crowded in to sing the familiar Christmas hymns which are based on the Christmas story in the Gospels. Naomi Chubb read the extracts from the Bible and helped with marshalling the children on the stage, where they sang "Away in a Manger". Parents nobly responded to the challenge to be the Three Kings in "We Three Kings of Orient are" and the assembled children were then taken to look at the crib and present their own offerings of gold and one toy! Altogether a very happy start to the festival proper by residents and visitors. We hope we shall see you all again next year.

Christingle Service - 3 January

This annual service in aid of the Children's Society did not attract as many visitors as usual, I thought, but was still very enjoyable and effective. The proceedings started with a play performed by the cubs with some extra help from other youngsters. It put across the message that the Christingle service was special, worth attending and helped less fortunate children.

Then came the time for the children to go to the front with their special Children's Society envelopes. They exchanged these for the Christingle oranges, the meaning of which had all been explained during the play. The orange represents the world, the red band the blood of Jesus. The four sticks are the four seasons, and on them are the foods provided by the Lord. The candle in the middle is Jesus - the Light of the World. All the children lined each side of the church with their Christingles and the candles were lit. How moving it was with the lights down and their singing of "Away in a Manger". A lovely experience. Perhaps having the service before Christmas, or having it in the morning would attract more people?

Debbie Nunn

(The envelopes yielded some £150 for the Children's Society)

Fun and Games, not to mention Food

It was a delight to see so many of our youngsters enjoying the fun and games at the Parish Children's Party in the Hall on 9th January. There were about 40-50 whose ages ranged from three to fifteen! Alan Taylor had them all on the go, some helping but most playing. I wouldn't say that the under-fives had much idea of what they were supposed to do, but with a little "help" they all managed very well.

Tea is always a high point at any party and this was no exception; hamburgers, hot dogs, tomato sauce, crisps, cakes, biscuits and juice, all very popular and eaten without formality! After tea came the "Magic Man" as my granddaughter described him. Tim Rowett entertained the children with many unusual shaped balloons and blow-up toys.

The whole party was a great success and I hope it will be repeated. Thank you Social Committee, Alan and Tim. You all worked very hard. On asking my four grandchildren what they liked best about the party, the answers were "The hamburgers", "The games", "The Magic Man" and "The food - well all of it really".

Eila Severn

Christmas past and present

Christmas is Christmas and no other time is like it. But apart from the religious meaning, what have your Christmases meant to you in the past? I am always sad to miss church services at this time, and this year I went down with a really severe cold and cough which, since I was busy, developed into a feeling of utter exhaustion. On such an occasion there is a lot of time for thinking and so I cast my memory back over the many Christmases I have been privileged to have, not always with family around, and wondered if I could encourage you to do the same.

As a child I remember my mother taking us, with toys that were to be replaced by new ones, to a poor road in Teddington where the children had no shoes or socks but were running about in the cold and mud in bare feet and with no coats; and yet there are so many grumbles today.

I remember the first year that I was living in a flat in Cornwall. I had planned a lonely day which I started by walking down to the nearest church for the 8 am Communion Service, and when I got there the church was closed and there was no service at that time. I felt as though my good intention had been rejected and I felt very lonely. Then, at about 10.30 am, I answered my door and found a Cornish colleague with an invitation to join her family for midday dinner and she drove me home to a really family table including her doctor father. While still at the table he received an emergency 'phone call - I think someone had fallen on a bottle or else had been careless with the carving knife. I remember him looking to one of his sons and saying "Am I alright to drive? Come with me". There were not many cars on the road in those days and no breathalysers. I spent Boxing afternoon watching young doctors shakily riding bicycles in the hospital corridors and acting skits for the ward patients, so it turned out quite pleasant after all.

I have written before about my Christmas in Las Palmas in the warm bright sunshine and the balmy night, and also about one Christmas in Ireland when I was driven miles into the wild country to a little Church lit by candles.

As I get older and cannot always go out to the lovely services arranged for us, I turn more and more to the television and the beauty of Christmas on the screen is very much appreciated, but I miss the greetings from friends and the warm loving atmosphere of St. James's. And now, as I write very early in the New Year, we look forward for we are past the shortest day and the minutes are adding up. The jonquils are out in Hampton Court Gardens and leaves are pushing up, and not so long hence we will be gasping for breath at the sheer beauty of the carpet of daffodils and Spring.

Alison Thompson

St. James's Women's Tuesday Club

At "Wayside", St. James's Road on Tuesdays at 8.00pm

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| 16 February ... | Plants in Chile - talk by Mr. Kirkham |
| 1 March ... | Quiz |
| 15 March ... | The Tower of London - talk with slides by Mr. F. Robinson |
| 29 March ... | Hampton School of Needlework - talk by Miss J. Young |

Christian FAMILY magazine took a look at I Corinthians, chapter 13 and decided their own interpretation would settle for something a little more homely than the tongues of men and of angels. Setting the whole thing in the midst of family life, this is what they came up with.



LOVE IS...

Love IS patient – even when milk is spilled for the third time in one day.

Love is kind – and never says what we deserve to hear.

Love does not envy – when he sleeps and you're up all night with sick children.

Love does not boast – even when you've lost five pounds and she hasn't.

Love is not proud – but is willing to be the first to say 'I'm sorry'.

Love is not rude – but speaks to family members as courteously as to guests.

Love is not self-seeking – even if it IS your turn to choose . . .

Love is not easily angered – even if he did forget your anniversary.

Love keeps no record of wrongs – and never says 'I told you so!'

Love does not delight in evil – but rejoices in the truth.

Love always protects – the innocent until proven guilty.

Love always trusts – and expects the best of others.

Love always hopes – to reconcile differences.

Love perseveres – in accepting family members AS THEY ARE, not as you want them to be.

Love never fails to make a strong and loving family.

I know that if my prayer
In perfect faith is given,
I can, as once Elijah did,
Call down the rain
And fire from Heaven!

*Handa - A Christian Japanese leprosy sufferer
(also from "Escaped as a Bird")*

Around the Spire

It was very nice to have Dilys Melville back in her old house for a week or so during January. Several people managed to visit her and she was pleased to see them. Her daughter Rosalind and her family, with whom she now lives, were away on holiday, so Dilys stayed with her son Richard and his wife Ruth.

Doris and Stan Childs have both been rather under the weather lately. Stan had a fall which resulted in a cracked rib and some bruising to his face and Doris finds it increasingly difficult to get about. Roy Brooks has also been ill of late, and now we hear that Lessie Mills has had another fall and is in hospital with a broken leg. We hope to hear better news of all these people soon.

If you have ever partaken of a cup of coffee after the Parish Communion Service, you will know how much it is appreciated. It is also a time of socialising which to many is very welcome as they may spend the rest of the day alone. It would be very nice if we could increase the number of people willing to undertake this small service occasionally; it does not take very long and is very worthwhile. So next time the rota looks a bit thin put your name down - someone will show you what to do. Bring a friend to help if you like, roll up your sleeves, get cracking and enjoy yourselves at the same time.

It is always pleasant to be remembered, especially when someone we have known and loved has died. Merlin Browne has left the church £100 in her will, a very kind and thoughtful gesture. Her two remaining sisters were very pleased to receive flowers from us for Christmas and send their love to all their friends.

There has been a good response to the appeal for children's clothes for the Mission Hospital at Milo - many thanks to all those who have contributed. We are fortunate, too, that Margaret Hobbs has found someone who is arranging for the clothes to be taken to Tanzania. Our grateful thanks go to that person also.

Just as we go to press, we have heard that Donna and Lee Purcell have had their first baby. Mother and baby - a boy - are both well. Donna is the daughter of Stella and Bob Walker whose eldest grandchild was born on the same day of the year, the 8th January. Our best wishes go to them all.

Stewardship Giving

The total pledged giving in the four quarters of 1987 compared with that in 1986 was:

	<u>1986</u>	<u>1987</u>
January - March	£4332	£4229
April - June	£3558	£4042
July - September	£3424	£4722
October - December	<u>£3293</u>	<u>£4660</u>
Total for year	£14606	£17653

This represents an increase of over 20% 1987 compared with 1986 even though the results of our May programme could only be felt in the second half of 1987.

News from the Scout Group

Now that Michael and Yvonne Childs have had to give up their long involvement in the 3rd Hampton Hill Scout Group as reported recently in "The Spire", Colin Hucklesby (898 9609) is Acting Group Scout Leader and Maureen is continuing as Leader of Gold Pack Cub-scouts which meets on Wednesdays. Brown Pack (Mondays) is being led, at least for the time being, by Margaret and Keith Hillman (391 0094). Greg Martin (979 7265) continues as Leader of the Scouts (Fridays) and Ingrid Payne (977 5917) and Sylvia Smith run the Beavers (Fridays) for 6-8 year olds. All these meet in the Parish Hall.

There are also Venture Scouts for 15½ - 20 year old boys and girls. These are currently preparing for the Southern 50 mile Challenge - a 24 hour orienteering test in the Chilterns to take place on 13/14th February. We wish them luck.

Please make a note for 27th February when a rather special Jumble (Jumbo?) Sale will be held all day in the Parish Hall with high quality goods.

From the Registers - Funerals

December	18	Bruna Germana Blaschke	93 Hollybush Lane	aged 69
	22	Lionel Bertram Breakwell	10 Longford Close	aged 69
January	6	Dorothy Nellie Jennings	15 Eastbank Road	aged 93

Dates to Note

February	3	20.00 Deanery Synod	
	16	20.00 P.C.C.	
	21	15.00 Thinking Day Service for Guides and Brownies	
March	4	14.30) Women's World Day of Prayer 20.00) at St. Theodore's, Hampton	
	20	11.00 P.C.C. (for Accounts <u>only</u>)	
	30	12.00 Austerity Lunch	
	31	Maundy Thursday	
April	1	Good Friday	
	3	Easter Day	
	20	20.00 Annual Church Meeting	

Copy date for March issue: 14th February

A FAMOUS PRAYER

*GOD GRANT ME the serenity to accept
the things I cannot change.
The courage to change the things I can.
And the wisdom to know the difference.*