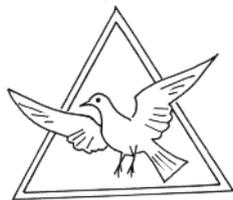


Party on a Sunday!

By Rev'd Alison Newman

Have you ever tried eating a jam doughnut without licking your lips? It's actually harder than it sounds - if you don't believe me try it! It's a great party game.

On 11 May there will be a party atmosphere in church. Why? It's the birthday of the Church, and by that I mean the whole Christian Church. That day we celebrate the Christian festival of Pentecost. We shall be remembering how at Pentecost the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples



with great power. We have the images of wind and fire, which in the bible are symbols of God's presence. Jesus had promised his disciples that when he left this earth he would send them the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit would be the sign that Jesus was still around, that he was still with the disciples.

The Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen was the first person to discover the magnetic meridian of the north Pole and to discover the south pole. On one of his trips he took a homing pigeon with him. When he had finally reached the top of the world he opened the bird's cage and set it free. When Amundsen's wife saw the bird circling in the sky

overhead she knew her husband was alive.

When the Spirit came it was a permanent reminder that Jesus was still alive.

Many people are quite frightened by the Holy Spirit. Maybe it's not helped by the fact the Holy Spirit is sometimes referred to as the Holy Ghost, which as a child for me conjured up a figure with a white sheet. We might be afraid of the Holy Spirit because we don't exactly understand who the Holy Spirit is.

Sometimes the Holy Spirit is translated as 'Paraclete' which means Comforter. Many children have comforters or security blankets, my own children used to carry around muslin squares! They provided a comfort when they felt afraid or alone. The problem comes when you lose the favourite toy or blanket! Even as adults we have our favourite objects, a comfy pair of slippers,

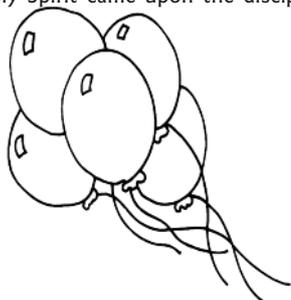


things which are a symbol of security for us.

So the Holy Spirit is our Comforter. The Holy Spirit helps us by supporting us, encouraging us, reassuring us; no matter what we are going through we are not alone. Now that doesn't mean life will be plain sailing with no problems but it does mean we don't face our problems alone.

The Holy Spirit also gave the disciples the courage to go out and share their faith. We read how 3,000 people were added to the number of disciples on the day of Pentecost, and so the Church began.

That's why on 11 May at 10.30am we invite you to come along and party with us. There will be an All Age Service, balloons and of course a birthday cake! Come and join in the fun.



Well done Ed!



On Sunday, 13 April, Ed Miller ran the London Marathon in 4 hours 14 minutes, a personal best.

Ed raised over £2,000 for his chosen charities - Muscular Dystrophy Campaign and St. Mary's, Shortlands.

Special Church Services for May

Thursday 1 May Ascension Day

8.00pm - Holy Communion with hymns followed by drinks at the Vicarage and the lighting of the Ascension Day Rocket

Sunday 11 May Pentecost - The Birthday of the Church

10.30am - All Age Family Eucharist with the release of Pentecost Balloons

Sunday 18 May

6.30pm - Three Choirs Festival Choral Evensong
The Choirs of St. Mary, Shortlands, St. Peter & St. Paul, Bromley and St. Mark, Bromley join together for the Annual Three Choirs Festival.
Preacher: The Very Rev'd. John Simpson, O.B.E., M.A., D.D.
Dean Emeritus of Canterbury

Parish Picnic & Barbecue, Fun & Games

Sunday, 8 June 2008

in the church grounds, following the 10.30am Family and Parade Service in the church.
Bring your own picnic - barbecue food and refreshments available to buy.

There will be a toddler play area, and many fun games for adults and children.

Come and enjoy the Shortlands community!

Former Canterbury Dean comes to Shortlands

The Very Rev'd. John Simpson, O.B.E., M.A., D.D. is the guest preacher on Sunday, 18 May at 6.30pm on the occasion of the Annual Three Choirs Festival at St. Mary's Shortlands. Dean Simpson was Dean at Canterbury Cathedral from 1986 to 2000. Prior to this appointment he was Archdeacon of Canterbury from 1981 to 1986. Dean Simpson was for 10 years a Tutor in Liturgy at Oak Hill Theological College where he tutored Canon Paul Miller.



Commenting on this Festival, Canon Paul Miller enthused, 'We are very much looking forward to the Festival. It combines high quality choral singing with the visit of a high profile preacher. It is also a wonderful opportunity for three neighbouring churches to get together. Dean Simpson was largely responsible for initiating and seeing through to completion the Canterbury Cathedral International Study Centre and Lodges, which have become mostly used by an international clientele. We are fortunate to have him coming to Shortlands.'

Music to be sung at the Festival includes: Responses - Sanders, Canticles - Dyson in D, and the Anthem 'Evening Hymn' by Balfour Gardiner.

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Mothers' UNION
Christian care for families

Mission of the Month for June

The Mothers' Union Literacy and Development Programme

The Mothers' Union is a worldwide Christian organisation of some 3.6 million people in 77 countries. It is open to men and women, single and married, and aims to provide Christian care for families internationally. There are 32 members of the St Mary's branch.

The Mothers' Union Literacy and Development Programme is one of the organisation's initiatives, and is to be St. Mary's Mission of the Month in June. This programme was started in 2000 and runs in 3 African countries: Burundi, Malawi and Sudan.

Volunteers are trained to run groups in their own area wherever there is a need: in remote villages, inner city slums, and displacement camps. They are for all faiths and denominations, and are not closed to men, though they are aimed primarily at women.

Through participatory learning, group members become literate and numerate while discussing key issues, such as health and hygiene, and income generation. Those who have been on the programme testify to how it has changed their lives forever. By learning to read, write and count, they gain confidence and acquire new skills. It is not just the individuals that benefit: they can lift their families out of poverty and ensure their health too. In turn, the community in which the family live will also be helped.

The Mothers' Union funds 25% of the programme, which amounts to about £60,000 annually, the remainder being provided by Comic Relief. It is estimated that it only costs £25 to make a course participant numerate and literate using the programme. A small sum when one considers the impact this can have on each learner's life, as well as that of their family and their whole community.

Many have been helped so far, but there are still many more who could benefit from the programme. The money raised at St Mary's in June will certainly be put to good use.

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christian aid

7 DAYS IN MAY

Welcome to Christian Aid Week
2008: 11 - 17 May

This is where you and thousands of people across Britain pledge to make a difference. With your generosity we hope to raise millions for the world's poor and oppressed.
So please give what you can.

But money alone, crucial though it is, is not going to defeat injustice and poverty. For that we need to create a movement of change so the voices of the powerless are no longer ignored by the powerful.

That's why we want more than your money: we want your time, energy and passion so you and people around you have a stake in fighting for a fairer world now.

So pledge to do something for Christian Aid Week. It doesn't matter how big or small the pledge is. Whatever you do, do something. It all adds up!

For more information please contact Tricia Braithwaite 8460 4152 or Sarah Craggs 8464 4379.

SPAN THANKS

We record our thanks for donations during the month of March of £11.51

FRIENDS OF ST MARY'S, SHORTLANDS

The Friends invite you to a

SUMMER SOLSTICE SOIREE

in the Church Grounds on

Saturday, 21 June, from 6.30 to 9 pm

4 Play Sax will play at intervals during the evening

Bring your own picnic.

Dress: smart casual
Tickets: £2 available from the Church Office - numbers limited

In Church Hall if wet



New addition to Office Team

St. Mary's Parish Office staff has a new addition to the team. The post of Assistant Parish Administrator is now to be shared. Jane Peters, the existing post-holder, is to be ordained in September to become Honorary Curate of Shortlands. Jane has worked in this position since it was created 6 years ago. Jane will now just work in the school holidays, and Janet Fiddeman has been appointed to the position in term time.

Janet has a background of administration in Barclays Bank. She begins her new appointment on 2 June.

Pictured are the new team from left, Jane Peters, Richard Vickers (Parish Administrator) and Janet Fiddeman.

Balance your household budget - it's a matter of life and debt

The Church of England is launching an easy-to-use interactive online resource for working out a household spending budget, with helpful prayers for guidance, emphasising that the Bible teaches us to be content with what we have, rather than find satisfaction from over-spending.

With average household debt in the UK at £8,985 (excluding mortgages), the move is an addition to the Church of England's national Matter of Life and Debt campaign. Launched in January 2008, the campaign offers common sense advice and resources so that householders can make sense of the amount of debt they are in, and then seek assistance from a registered debt adviser if necessary.

The Bishop of Ripon and Leeds, Rt Revd John Packer, Chairman of the Church of England's Stewardship Committee, says: "Christianity affirms that we need to take care over our spending. We need to avoid the dangers of debt. We also need to ensure that people do not take advantage of those in debt. This initiative runs alongside our concern about the exploitation of people in debt in our society."

So that householders can work out their own household budget, the Matter of Life and Debt web pages at www.cofe.anglican.org/debt now feature an easy-to-use, interactive,

downloadable Excel spreadsheet - which totals up income and spending, and allows householders to make adjustments until they are balancing their budget.

The resource also displays simple-to-follow money-saving tips when users fill in boxes. There are links to specially written prayers for guidance for those working out a household budget, at www.cofe.anglican.org/prayers.

One prayer requests: "Lord God, your will is to bring hope and a future to all your people. Trusting in your steadfast love, we ask your guidance as we work out a household budget. Help us to learn to let no debt remain outstanding, except the debt to love one another, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

Dr John Preston, the Church of England's Resources and Stewardship Officer, and co-author of the Matter of Life and Debt resources, said: "It is right for the Church of England to speak out on the issue of consumer debt, as money, wealth and possessions are mentioned in the Bible more than 2,400 times."

The downloadable Excel file and other useful resources and information can be found on the Matter of Life and Debt pages of the Church of England website at www.cofe.anglican.org/debt.

'Brewed God'

by Canon Paul Miller

Philip Larkin is a highly renowned poet who was cherished largely because of his gift for winning the respect of two kinds of reader - those scrupulously concerned with literary standard, and those other non-specialist listeners-in to what is generally available.

One of my favourite poems of his is called 'Church Going'. Larkin wasn't a churchgoer or particularly religious but he had a fascination for the building and of the mystery within it. His poem finds him first entering the church, 'once he's sure there's nothing going on inside...' and how he encountered the 'musty, unignorable silence'. He called it 'Brewed God'.

He circumnavigates the inside... wondering and asking himself questions... 'when churches fall completely out of use what shall we turn them into...' He talks about some as being 'Christmas addicts' and for some seeing this special shell as a place for marriage, birth and death. But having reflected on all these issues, he comes to an astonishing conclusion -

'A serious house on serious earth it is,
In whose blent air all our compulsions meet,
Are recognised, and robed as destinies.
And that much never can be obsolete,
Since someone will forever be surprising
A hunger in himself to be more serious,
And gravitating with it to this ground,
Which, he once heard, was proper to grow wise in,
If only that so many dead lie round.'

There is a real hunger in many to engage with the serious.

St Mary's Shortlands Holiday Club 2008



Champions' Challenge

will run from
Monday 18 August to
Friday 22 August
10.00am - 3.00pm

for all primary school children

Booking starts 1 March,
closing date 13 July 2008
Contact Rev'd Alison Newman
on 8658 7784

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by
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Caroline Atkinson

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Open up the roof!

Do you know the story in the Gospels where four friends take a paralysed man upstairs to the roof and lower him down into the house? We are told that Jesus acted to heal this man 'when he saw *their* faith.'

If you have a particular need or concern, have you ever thought about asking someone else to pray about it? Others can have faith and pray for the things that are too vast for you alone.

A team of members of St Mary's will shortly begin visiting some of the roads in the parish. If you receive a letter through your door, we will be calling on you. We call it prayer visiting, as we will be asking people if they have requests for prayer that we can take away with us. Confidentiality is an important matter which we will respect.

As Christians, we believe that a problem shared can be a problem partly solved; far more than that, we believe that God hears and answers our prayers, sometimes in unexpected ways!

Oberammergau 2010

The Parish Holiday to Austria and the Passion Play at Oberammergau, led by Canon Paul Miller, is now fully booked. There is, however, now a waiting list for those still interested but who have not yet booked.



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Every Sunday

- 08.00 Holy Communion
- 10.30 Family Communion, except the first Sunday in the month in term time. During term time there are separate groups in the Church Hall for children aged 4-14.
- 10.30 All Age Eucharist or Parade Service (1st Sunday in the month, term time).
- 18.30 Evening Service

Every Monday

- 17.00 Evening Prayers

Every Wednesday

- 10.00 Holy Communion

Further information about all services can be obtained from the Parish Office.

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Vicar	Canon P. Miller	8460 4989
Associate Vicar	Rev. A. Newman	8658 7784
Readers	Mrs. A. Gimson	8460 6494
	Mr. P. Stotesbury	8650 3259
	Mrs. J. Peters	8650 5986
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Pastoral Assistants	Mrs. S. Harrison	8464 0284
	Mrs. J. Jackson	8325 1972
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	Mrs M. Westropp	8650 5178
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Cubs (Mon.)	Mrs. L. Swatton	8650 0397
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Guides (Fri.)	Mrs. G. Dawson	8460 5884
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