

**BISHOP'S LETTER**  
**Back to the Future**

Somehow our minds think about the past in terms of centuries, and the future in mere decades. I guess this is a kind of defence mechanism. The further back into the past we can push those events we would rather not remember, then the less we have to concern ourselves with them. After all, as L. P. Hartley put it, "the past is another country, they do things differently there".

On the other hand, the demands of the present and immediate future are such that it is tempting not to take a long-term view of what lies ahead. A decade or two is about as much as we can handle, so that what is more urgent takes precedence over what is most important.

It is not difficult to find examples of this going on around us at the moment. Our Government's chosen response to the global economic downturn is to borrow money which might see us through the immediate crisis, but it is money which the future will be required to repay.

Likewise, in spite of protests to the contrary, it is likely that many plans to develop alternative sources of renewable energy supplies will be put on hold until the economy takes a turn for the better. It is our children's and grandchildren's futures we are jeopardising when the urgent takes precedence over the important, and it is our short-sightedness in this respect which means that we may leave a toxic legacy for those who come after us.

I am writing this in January named after the two-faced Roman god Janus, who looked to the past and the future at the same time – and you are probably reading this in February which is the month in the Christian year which begins in Epiphany and ends in Lent thereby looking back to Christmas and forward to Eastertide. So it is a good time for Christians to be reflecting on how the past and future impact on our lives.

For example, one response to the present economic situation would be to decide that our immediate and short-term well-being and security requires us to cut back on our commitments to good causes, including our commitment to the ministry and mission of God's Church. Yet how short-sighted is that! Few of us would want the long-term future of our Church to be put at risk, yet that could be the result of prioritising what is urgent and neglecting what is ultimately far more important.

These are tough times, and there may be tougher times ahead. But let us beware of mortgaging our future when the lessons of the past teach us that this is always long-term folly masquerading as short-term gain.

+ John Lincoln

**INTERREGNUM**

That's the word to describe the time when a parish does not have a Vicar and for us in the three parishes that starts now.

The Rev'd Charles Sowden came to us on a very limited contract for three years, that contract expires on the first Sunday in February, and is not being renewed by the Diocese, so we enter (again) a period of uncertainty and change. To add to the problem, the Rural Dean is out of action due to illness, and the Archdeacon has retired, so a great deal of responsibility for maintaining regular Services as well as the everyday running of Parish affairs will fall on the Churchwardens, who will also be dealing with the bookings of Weddings, Baptisms and Funerals, so please contact them for details. Telephone numbers are printed in this Magazine.

In this Group of Parishes we have the Church Wardens, they will need all the help and co-operation they can get from the members of the Church. John and Alan our two retired priests will be taking some of the load regarding Sunday Services, but we shall be relying on a number of other retired clergy as well, and there may have to be changes where cover cannot be maintained, so please keep your eye on the notices, and if for some reason a licensed Minister cannot be found, or is forced to cancel, there are the Wardens and others very capable of reading prayers and leading worship, so please be prepared for whatever

happens until the Diocese make new arrangements for the overall pastoral care of this and other Groups of Parishes in the area. One of the few things we have been told is that Metheringham Vicarage will not be used to house a resident priest.

At the moment we hope to maintain a rota of Services as near to normal as possible, including the celebration of Holy Communion after the Prayer Book Order on Thursdays at 9.00 am at St Wilfrid's. As they used to say of the Village Shop - Use it or lose it! We offer our thanks and best wishes to Charles and his family.

### **Parish Registers**

Baptism

*Welcome to our Church*

James Thomas Cartwright 28<sup>th</sup> December 2008

Funerals

*We pray for those departed*

Colin Reynolds Died 20<sup>th</sup> January 2009. Funeral 9<sup>th</sup> February at Lincoln Crematorium.

### **LENT 2009**

Plans are under way for a Service on the evening of Ash Wednesday, Feb 25th, 7.30 pm at St Wilfrid's.

A Lent Course "through Lent with the Bible", Probably at 7.30 pm on Thursdays in the Church Hall starting March 5th. This will, of course, be open to all - just bring a Bible.

We are also hoping to repeat the Lent Lunches, to be run jointly by the Group, but need some more helpers, particularly with the organising - don't be afraid to offer.

Keep your eyes peeled for further information.

### **Wanted !**

IRIS CREASEY has come across some unfinished cross stitch kneelers intended for the Church - if anyone feels able to finish them off, June Greenhough has them at the moment, but she professes to be allergic to anything involving needles and thread.

### **Magazine Subscriptions**

These are due now so please help our deliverers by having your £3.60 ready. Many thanks.

### **Dunston School News**

Happy New Year to you all from the staff, governors and children of Dunston St. Peter's Church of England Primary School. As I write this we have only just returned to school after the Christmas break and so there is very little to report. Looking ahead however, the children will soon be enjoying all of the after school clubs that will be starting again. These include music, recorders, computer club, boys' and girls' football, Yogabugs, multi-sports and, soon, a new addition called Film Club!

Towards the end of January we will be having a day of puppet workshops and in February CulturED will be coming into school to lead a day of Indian workshops including story telling, rangoli pattern making and dance.

Graham Boyall

Headteacher



Spoiling God's work in us - John 10:10

Hindering our spiritual understanding - 2 Corinthians 4:4

Sowing doubts into our minds Matthew 4:3, 6

Tempting us to break God's law - Genesis 3:6

While the Holy Spirit convicts us of God's truth (Romans 8: 1), Satan will always seek to accuse and condemn us.

So how do we resist evil? On the cross Jesus secured the victory over Satan, 'And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross' (Col 2:15). Although Satan is still active in the world, his power has been broken and he will finally be destroyed when Jesus returns.

In the meantime, with the power of the Spirit, we always have the opportunity to make right choices in resisting Satan and putting God first in our lives: 'Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you' (James 4:7). In establishing Jesus as Lord in every aspect of our lives, we will find Satan on the run!

AJ

### **Street Pastors increase by 45%**

In 2006/ 2007 the Christian initiative 'Street Pastors' was up and running in 60 towns and cities across the UK. Throughout 2008, this number increased by 45%.

Street Pastors is an ecumenical project that works with Christians, police and local authorities. Teams of Christians go out – usually between the hours of 10pm and 4am – to look after people in the town centre. The ethos is 'to engage with people where they are at', particularly the marginalised or those who feel themselves to be excluded. The approach is to 'care, listen and help'.

The help offered can range from a hug to safe transport home after a night out. Some teams carry flip flops for those who may have lost their shoes, while others take hot drinks and blankets. For more info on this work, please visit: [www.streetpastors.co.uk](http://www.streetpastors.co.uk). PP

### **Weddings welcome!**

Some top tips have emerged as the Church of England gives a wider welcome for weddings. Advice to clergy includes: 'keep Sundays free for shows like this', 'don't skimp on flowers', 'wear your dog collar', 'put your smelliest people on shift', 'don't leave coffee cups around', 'pray a blessing if asked' and 'always thank the organisers'.

The Bishop of Leicester says: "Many more people would choose a church wedding if they knew they could have one. We'll be working hard to let people know we welcome them for a wedding, whether they go to church or not. We're also going to be telling them about the new law which means that having a church wedding is now a lot easier."

The new online church wedding planner is: [www.yourchurchwedding.org](http://www.yourchurchwedding.org). PP

### **Methodist Church calls for welfare with dignity**

Methodists have expressed concern for lone parents and people receiving incapacity benefits following the recent publication of the Welfare Reform White Paper.

While the proposals offer assistance to help some of the five million people who claim benefits find employment, the Church warned the proposed bill would impose new conditions and potential sanctions to a wide range of vulnerable people.

Paul Morrison, Methodist Policy Adviser, said: "Research from the Rowntree Foundation and others shows that those who claim benefits exist on inadequate incomes and want opportunities to work. Although a small minority may abuse the system, a package containing a focus on coercion risks stigmatising the poorest and, at worst, not treating the benefit claimants with the dignity they deserve."

"The Church believes that those who are unable to work because of illness, disability or caring responsibilities are valued and equal members of society and deserve a benefit system which acknowledges this." PP

### **Ash Wednesday – February 25th**

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday. But why 'Ash' Wednesday? The reason has to do with getting things right between you and God, and the tradition goes right back to the Old Testament.

In the Old Testament, the Israelites often sinned. When they finally came to their senses, and saw their evil ways as God saw them, they could do nothing but repent in sorrow. They mourned for the damage and evil they had done. As part of this repentance, they covered their heads with ashes. For the Israelites, putting ashes on your head, and even rending your clothes, was an outward sign of their heart-felt repentance and acknowledgement of sin.

(See Genesis 18:27; 2 Samuel 13:19; Job 2:8, 30:19; Isaiah 58:5; Jeremiah 6:26; Jonah 3:6)

In the very early Christian Church, the yearly 'class' of penitents had ashes sprinkled over them at the beginning of Lent. They were turning to God for the first time, and mourning their sins. But soon many other Christians wanted to take part in the custom, and to do so at the very start of Lent. They heeded Joel's call to 'rend your hearts and not your garments' (Joel 2:12-19). Ash Wednesday became known as either the 'beginning of the fast' or 'the day of the ashes'.

The collect for today goes back to the Prayer Book, and stresses the penitential character of the day. It encourages us with the reminder of the readiness of God to forgive us and to renew us.

The Bible readings for today are often Joel 2:1-2, 12 – 18, Matthew 6: 1-6, 16 – 21 and Paul's moving catalogue of suffering, "as having nothing and yet possessing everything." (2 Corinthians 5:20b - 6:10)

The actual custom of 'ashing' was abolished at the Reformation, though the old name for the day remained. Today, throughout the Church of England, receiving the mark of ashes on one's forehead is optional. Certainly the mark of ashes on the forehead reminds people of their mortality: "Remember that you are dust and to dust you will return..." (Genesis 3:19)

The late medieval custom was to burn the branches used on Palm Sunday in the previous year in order to create the ashes for today. PP

### **Why sparrows, hedgehogs, frogs, butterflies and bees need your help**

As you plan the garden this year, spare a thought the remaining residents of your flower beds, pond and trees. Here are some sobering statistics from the chairman of Natural England:

Bumble bees: the number of species in lowland Britain has halved since 1950.

Hedgehogs: are losing an estimated fifth of their population every four years.

House sparrows: have declined by 68 per cent in the UK since 1977.

Moths and butterflies: numbers are declining rapidly; moths by nearly a third since 1968.

Frogs: loss of ponds and habitats means just one thing: loss of frogs! PP

### **On how to manage the boiler at church**

The Rectory, St. James the Least of All.

My dear Nephew Darren

I confess to being rather disappointed that little Miss Asquith retired from stoking the church boiler last month. She was ideally suited to the job; being only five feet, two inches tall, she didn't have to stoop too much to get into the five foot high cellar.

That she had done the job for the past 50 years seemed another good reason for her continuing.

But no, just because she turned 94 at the end of last month and was finding it difficult to negotiate the cellar steps on her two sticks, she decided to throw in the towel. And her rash decision placed us in a dilemma.

The boiler has been lit every Wednesday, so that the church becomes almost bearable by Sunday morning. It therefore means that it has had to be stoked three times a day for four days - not too onerous a duty I would have thought, especially as it gives an ample three days afterwards for recovery. Admittedly, the fact that a complete change of clothing is necessary after each visit is a slight handicap, but no one could be persuaded. Such is the level of Christian commitment these days.

And so we have become very modern and now have a gas boiler. No longer used, the cellar was instantly invaded and occupied by the flower arrangers and is now full of chipped vases no one can bring themselves to throw away and lengths of string and chicken wire that seem indispensable to their art.

There was an attempted second invasion by the Scouts looking for somewhere to store their tents, but they were repulsed by volleys of Oasis from the female occupying forces. They initially also took hostages, until the police convinced them it was not an entirely good idea. We now have a system with frost detectors, thermostats and so many options on the time clock that it renders the system incomprehensible. Apparently a simple on/off switch was an

option the plumbers were unaware of. I also miss that deep rumble beneath our feet during Matins, sounding like the Queen Mary coming into port, letting us know that the ancient boiler was attempting to get the water lukewarm.

Naturally, there have been teething troubles; for several weeks, the church was admirably heated on Tuesday mornings and Friday afternoons when it was unused, but arctic on Sundays. On another occasion, the frost stat took over, but would then not let go, keeping the building heated for 14 days continuously. We shall probably need a loan from the International Monetary Fund to pay the bill.

And so twenty-first century technology is beginning to make a not altogether welcome appearance at St. James'. Miss Asquith has a lot to answer for.

Your loving uncle, Eustace

PP

### **What have church magazines in common with wooden spoons?**

In the 150 years since the Rev J. Erskine Clarke launched what is thought to be the first 'parish magazine' on the world, they have grown, expanded, and diversified. Nowadays church magazines come in all styles. Some aim at their communities, while others are more specifically church-focused.

Over the years, church magazines have run from one page in length to a whopping 48 – or more – pages. Whereas once stout-hearted parishioners laboured long hours with the stencil duplicator, nowadays many press a few buttons and presto: full colour laser work.

Church magazines come in all prices. They have ranged from ¼d, to 35p to £1 to totally free. Some have adverts to help towards costs; others eschew such worldly methods. Some are crammed full of information: a glorious jumble of material squeezed in anywhere. Others are meticulously organized, and expansively laid out, with 50% white space.

But amidst all the variety, one thing remains the same: each church magazine is based on a real local church, aiming at its very own local readers. It is (or should be) unpretentious. You could almost call it 'folk literature'.

On Flog-It (BBC-2 22 September last) Paul Martin visited a specialist workshop in Tenby and made himself a love spoon in the local tradition. Contemplating his handiwork, 'It's slightly naïve,' he admitted. 'But there's a lot of heart and soul in it. And that's what it's about in folk art.' That's what the church magazine should be, too.

There's the apocryphal story of the Archdeacon who, when asked what he thought of church magazines, replied: 'If ever I see one,' he replied, 'I burn it before it can do any more harm'.

He was obviously missing the point: yes, church magazines may be slightly naïve, but what does it matter? Just so long as they have 'local heart and soul'. PP

### **Real parents sharing and caring with Home-Start**

Every year, 71,000 children are helped thanks to the help freely given to their parents by a volunteer from Home-Start, the UK's leading family support charity. Set up in 1973, it recruits and trains volunteers to support parents with at least one child under the age of five.

Home-Start has almost 16,000 volunteers who visit families in their own homes - parents supporting other parents in a variety of situations including isolation, bereavement, multiple births, illness or disability.

One of campaign's key messages is that you can change someone's world by sharing what you know.

Anne Pharo, a retired infant school teacher, is a good example. Now 69 and a grandparent, she has been a volunteer for Home-Start for about five years. She has helped four families in that time. She is currently supporting Suki Mann, a single parent, and is like one of the family. Suki's son Jakob, aged three, had health problems when he was younger. Before she met Anne, Suki was at breaking point, socially isolated and burdened by financial difficulties. Anne helped her get a diagnosis for Jakob and enabled her to sort out her finances, get training and get back on track.

Another example of a good Home-Start relationship are Christine Ferris and Denise Ross from East Belfast. Christine has been supporting Denise for about a year. Like Suki, Denise has one young child and has felt quite isolated. "Having Christine gives me something to look forward to," she says.

Being a volunteer means visiting a family for a couple of hours each week. It's about friendship – parents supporting other parents. With volunteers' help parents can gain the confidence to manage on their own and give their children the best possible start in life. Qualifications aren't needed to become a Home-Start volunteer, though parenting experience is essential.

If you are interested in volunteering for Home-Start visit [www.realparents.org.uk](http://www.realparents.org.uk) or call 0800 068 6368 or email [info@realparents.org.uk](mailto:info@realparents.org.uk) PP

As this month we remember the birth of Charles Darwin

God is the true origin of species. – Don Garlington

If the universe reveals its order to us through rational science, it is because the universe is so ordered by the Author of reason. – George Roche

No philosophical theory which I have yet come across is a radical improvement on the words of Genesis, that 'in the beginning God made heaven and earth.' – C S Lewis

Modern evolutionary secularism provides no foundation for valuing human life. - R C Sproul

If a watch proves the existence of a watchmaker but the universe does not prove the existence of a great architect, then I consent to be called a fool. – Francois M Voltaire