

Dates for your Diary

Sunday 3 April

6.30pm Refresh

Thursday 7 April

8.00pm Lent Course, Church of the Good Shepherd

Friday 8 April

9.45am Easter Service for St Swithun's School (KS1)

Sunday 10 April

6.30pm KOA service, Methodist Church

Thursday 14 April

8.00pm Lent Course, Church of the Good Shepherd

Saturday 16 April

10am—3pm Garden Working Party

Sunday 17 April

Palm Sunday

Friday 22 April

10.30am Good Friday Service in St Swithun's

11.15am Walk of witness (war memorial)

12noon service in Methodist Church

Sunday 24 April

Easter Day!

9.30am All Age Holy Communion Celebration

Friday 29 April

3pm Royal Wedding celebration Church Grounds

From the Editor

The other night I didn't get to sleep until gone midnight, for a very silly reason. I was in the middle of watching a programme on my laptop using the BBC IPlayer website when it suddenly stopped working. I checked and found that other BBC sites (news, weather etc.) were also down. Then I logged into the social media site Twitter and found lots of posts from people theorising that the world must be coming to an end because the BBC had been offline for as much as an hour!

Because I'm a worrier, and because it was night-time, I started getting illogically anxious, and bringing to mind all the other troubling things about our world at the moment: the tsunami and problems with the nuclear power station in Japan; the crisis in Libya; the

government cuts here in the UK and the anti-cuts protest at risk of being co-opted by violent factions.

My worrying had no positive outcome; it just made it difficult for me to get to sleep. It made me long to be able to channel the energy I waste in worrying towards some constructive responses to the things we perceive to be wrong in the world. I think the key is to start small, and to start where we can. As Ghandi famously said, we must *be* the change we want to see in the world. Perhaps we can't personally solve all the ills of our planet, but we can take steps to care for our own immediate environment and we can be voices of peace and wisdom in our own community.

Jackie Smith

St Swithun's Church Newsletter

For information and inspiration

April 2011

I have seen the Lord

John's account of the resurrection is my favourite. Jesus greets Mary who, understandably, is overwhelmed – with astonishment, with incredulity, and with joy. But Jesus gives her very clear instructions: 'Go to my brothers and tell them', he says. And it's easy to imagine the scene – Mary bursting in to a roomful of weeping, harrowed men, with the life-changing announcement: 'I have seen the Lord.'

It's interesting that we equate the role of evangelist predominantly with men, and yet here, in Mary, we meet the very first evangelist. She leads the way for us. For all of us, I believe, have our own stories of an encounter with Jesus to tell. They won't be quite as dramatic as Mary's, and mostly they won't include a vision of God, or even audible words, but we can all testify to having seen God at work in our lives and the lives of others. Some of us will feel more confident sharing this than others.

My in-laws are not Christians, and very rarely take any interest in the religious or spiritual aspect of life. A number of years ago, I remember trying hard to finish my all-age Easter sermon in the dining room of the Coleys' cottage in Shrewton. My father-in-law walked in, sat down next to me and enquired what I was doing. 'Finishing my Easter sermon', I replied, expecting that to be the end of it. 'Oh', he said, 'and what is it

about?' What an opportunity! My response could have told him about the sacrifice of Christ which was rooted of the love of God. I could have gone on to talk about God's power demonstrated in the resurrection of Jesus, the forgiveness of sins and the offer of new life. Instead I stumbled, ummed and ahhed a bit and then said, 'well, we're hiding chocolate around the church and we're going to get the children to find it.' Oh my!

I wonder whether you've ever felt such a failure as I did that afternoon, having missed such a wonderful opportunity to share my faith. I think probably many of us have, and many of us have given up trying after too many botched attempts. And yet, Jesus' command to be his witnesses (Acts 1:8) is to all of us. And not only does he ask us to do this, he promises to enable us.

Our stories are are powerful and often moving. The presence of God in our lives; the changes he has brought about; the challenges he brings; the relationships he has transformed; the testimony of all of this and so much more is significant and life-changing. So my prayer this Easter is that, refuelled once again with the joy and the hope that our faith brings, we might follow Mary's example and proclaim loudly and proudly, 'I have seen the Lord.'

Em Coley

A Day in the Life of Kevin Wright



Our day starts at about 6.30am, usually when one of the cats wakes us, but officially when Radio 4's gently spoken presenters interrupt slumber with the news of the day. The first task for Chris, my wife, is to make coffee while I feed the cats. We retire to separate rooms for half-an-hour of quiet reflection and prayer. I always say the Daily Office of Morning Prayer, which I enjoy because it is Biblical and gives me a discipline within which my prayers can flourish, even if I don't feel like praying. Although on my own, I feel the fellowship of others around the world saying the same Office and reading the same passages. My study looks out on the neighbourhood. I thank God for the new day and for the free society in which we live. I commend to God the tasks of the day, the work of the church in these villages and those I know who are in need.

After breakfast I check my e-mails and respond (or file them in that bottomless pit called 'pending'). I receive information about the projects I have to do to prepare to be a parish priest. There are directives from Church House about my professional development, an MA in Ministry and Theology, for which I have to produce portfolios of reflections on my work. There may be e-mails from Pam and various teams as well as routine information from the Diocese and Deanery.

As a former teacher, my day was incredibly structured, so the open-plan style of each day has been an immense challenge. I consider the desk-bound tasks I have to do; the sermon; preparing school assembly (which I love doing) or the essay that beckons. I see which meetings I have to attend and then try to arrange some pastoral visits.

enjoyed worship accompanied by traditional Indian instruments and communion celebrated with chapatti and wine. We were overwhelmed by the real community that exists within and between the churches. Food and hospitality are central to church life. A joint prayer meeting began with a bring-and-share meal with fare ranging from shepherd's pie to lamb curry with masala tea and Indian sweets to finish.

The churches are seeking to improve life experiences for those in the parishes. A night-shelter for homeless people has been running through the winter. It rotates between church halls. Food and supervision are provided by church members. The churches have just employed Calum as an outreach youth worker. We helped out at the Vibe Café where a local band of Christian rap artists engaged with teenagers. I am keeping what I learned in the rap workshop in reserve in case I need (another) alternative career.

A Rocha (it's Portuguese for 'The Rock'), which hosted us, promotes environmental issues from a Christian perspective. Their Southall project is impressive. They worked with the local councils to turn 90 acres of derelict land into an urban park and natural habitat for wildlife. Minet Park is a tribute to their conviction and imagination. We reflected on the theology; cleared brambles and planted 200 saplings.

The mission-placement week was stimulating, challenging, rewarding and tiring. I'm missing the tastes and smells – the food was wonderful – but most of all the people. Their warmth and hospitality will be my lasting memory.

Mike Harmon

St James, St Leonard and St Swithun Prayer Shawl Ministry

The first meeting was a great success and there are 15 of us who have committed to creating prayer shawls. We will need funds for yarn so we are asking for donations or 'Sponsor a Shawl' (whole, £10, or part). Envelopes for this will be in all churches on 10 April, but if you can't wait just give your contribution to Isabel Baggott.

We will meet next on 13 April in Radley church room at 7.30pm, then on the third Wednesday of every month, same place and time. Do come and join us!

**Chris Wright (01235 799676
cawright@talktalk.net)**

Flower Festival

Between 15 and 17 July the Church, in conjunction with the horticultural society, will be hosting a flower festival in church. There will be a programme of events across the few days. This is a superb opportunity to open the church to members of our community who are otherwise unlikely to enter the church building, and so to witness to our faith. Please put the date in your diary and pray for the opportunities this event offers.

Em Coley

Mission Southall

Southall Broadway teems with people at all hours of the day. Shops and restaurants are open into the early hours and business never stops. Mountains of green grocery spill out onto the pavement, vying for space with kiosks and food vendors. The place pulses with life.

The numbers are amazing. The estimated population of Ealing, of which Southall is part, is the same as the city of Nottingham, but the density is much, much higher.

I spent a week in Southall in March 2011 as part of a mission placement team of ten students from Wycliffe Hall. We were hosted by a group of five Anglican churches and A Rocha, a Christian environmental organisation. We went to serve the churches in Southall and to learn from them how Christian faith works as the minority religion in a multi-cultural, multi-faith

setting. We received far more than we gave and had so many new experiences that our minds reeled.

Southall has seen waves of immigration since the 1950s. It's just 7 miles from the City of London and right next door to Heathrow Airport. People seem to stop off there to get started and move on at the first opportunity. Sikhs from the Punjab and Hindus from other parts of India arrived first. Next came Muslims from Pakistan; Tamils from Sri Lanka. National groups from across Asia are represented. In the last decade many Polish immigrants stopped off. There is a regular throughput of asylum seekers from international trouble spots that hit our television screens and fade as the cameras move on. The human story of many forgotten war-zones can be found in Southall.

The ethnic diversity is matched by the religions represented there. The largest Gurdwara in Britain dominates the skyline. It functions as a cathedral for Sikhs in the UK. But it is just one of many gurdwaras, temples and mosques. Southall bucks the trend for religious observance. There are a lot of people committed to and practising their faith. We visited a number and enjoyed the hospitality and welcome from the religious leaders.

Christians may be in the minority but they are living out faith in vibrant, imaginative ways. We



Increasingly, as the weather improves, I cycle into Radley (we live in Abingdon) for appointments. I try to pray before each encounter and, if appropriate, as I leave someone too. There are frequent evening meetings, such as the Lent Groups or a talk to the Women's' Fellowship.

Chris and I share all meal-times and always say grace. We praise God for the abundance of His creation, of which we are stewards. We try to walk for about 30 minutes each day if we can and enjoy trips out to National Trust properties or for lunch or shopping on our day off. I relax with art, music or watching rugby. The latter often causes the blood pressure to rise rather than fall!

During Lent I am listening to CDs of speakers from last year's Greenbelt Festival. Often slightly quirky and off-beat, these stimulate me into new ways of thinking and may provide a new slant on some aspect of the church or faith. It is so important to find time to listen to God.

Kevin Wright

Pause for Prayer

'My sheep will listen to my voice

So there will be one flock, one shepherd.....

My sheep hear my voice.

I know them, and they follow me.

I will give them eternal life, and they will never perish'.

John 10 v16;27

Garden Working Party

On Saturday 16 April, Rosey is organising another garden working party. Come along to the church grounds with garden gloves and secateurs etc., any time between 10am and 3pm - even just an hour will help. Bring your lunch.



Let us pray

For world leaders that they stop shouting each other down and hear the cries of the oppressed, the afraid and the scarred lives of their citizens.

That we may listen to those at the margin, the emotionally and materially poor.

And listen to the fears of the sick, the lonely and bereaved of this parish.

That we can listen to one another even though our views may be different.

That in a noisy world we may listen with the ears of God so that we can speak the word of God.

That as we listen to our abused, suffering earth we may be aware that our pursuit of today is a threat to tomorrow.

The Royal Wedding

Come and celebrate the royal wedding in the Church Grounds. From 3pm on 29 April we will be joining the celebrations of the newly wed prince and princess with cake and fizz. Put on your finery, invite your neighbours (pray for sunshine!) and join us on this special day.



Craft Mornings

I am delighted that more than enough people volunteered to help with the craft mornings to make this venture possible. We will be opening the church on the second Saturday of the month between 10am and 12noon, and inviting the children of the village to come and do crafts with us (giving the parents the chance to go home to enjoy the weekend papers).

The dates are as follows:

14 May, 11 June, 9 July, 10 Sept, 8 Oct, 12 Nov, 10 Dec.

I'll be inviting everyone who volunteered to a meeting very shortly where we will discuss ideas and arrange teams.

Em Coley

Ash Wednesday Reflection

This year I went to an Ash Wednesday service for the first time, partly because another member of the Kennington congregation went last year, and said he was 'blown away' by it.

At a service of Holy Communion, fine grey ash from the burning of last year's palm crosses is mixed with oil, and the priest uses this to mark each worshipper's forehead with a cross, saying the words 'Remember that you are but dust: from dust you came, and to dust you shall return. Turn from sin and be faithful to Christ.'

Communion at Radley was Iona-style, in a large ring, giving the elements to each other. There was a strong link to the funeral service, bringing back memories of the death of those dear to us, as well as reminding us of Jesus' death. There was also a great feeling of oneness with the earth, and with the others in church that evening.

When I got home the television was on, and Professor Brian Cox was telling the world, in a trailer for his current series, that we are all made from stardust. How did the writers of Genesis 3:19 and Psalm 103 know that? Why is this considered to be news in 2011?

Maggi Dawn in the Lent book *Giving It Up* says 'Pausing to contemplate our mortality on Ash Wednesday is not for the sake of making us bleak, but to startle us into an awareness of the gift of life. The call to repentance isn't supposed to leave us dour or morbidly obsessed with our failings. Instead, it's a call to turn away decisively from what keeps us from God, alienates us from other people and stops us from living well. Lent begins with a challenge to clear out the mental and spiritual clutter and so discover how to live life to the full.'

Julia Kent

Holy Week Details

We join with Radley and Sunningwell for Holy Week meditations, as follows:

Monday 18 April at 7pm in Radley

Tuesday 19 April at 7pm in Kennington

Wednesday 20 April at 7pm in Sunningwell

On Maundy Thursday (21 April) we will share a Holy Communion service:

At 2pm in the Methodist Church; At 7pm in Radley

Please do join us for some (or all!) of these special gatherings.