

# St Swithun's Church Newsletter

April 2010

Adrian Plass has written a wonderfully irreverent book entitled *Bacon Sandwiches and Salvation: an A-Z of the Christian Life*. It is both hilarious and challenging, impertinent and thought-provoking – a worthy read. In it, he has an entry under E for Easter eggs:

*Easter eggs: edible reminders of the resurrection, made of chocolate, filled with sweets and wrapped in shiny coloured paper, just as Our Lord was.*

So what is it about Easter eggs that has anything to do with the Christian Easter story? In brief, it is the symbolism of new life – the resurrection of Christ represented in the new life an egg promises. We are all called to new life in Christ, we affirm that in our baptism liturgy, and yet have we stopped to consider what that might mean?

Perhaps, new life in church. Whether we see this in welcoming new people, or embracing new ways of worshipping, undertaking new roles within our church family or even finding new ways to serve God in our community. Can we commit ourselves to praying through and committing to these new possibilities and opportunities?

And perhaps new life in our own lives? This is harder to define, less tangible in

many ways. But the new life God offers is one of joy. It is an inner peace that enables us to walk with God even through life's difficulties and heartbreaks, to be assured of God's love and acceptance so that others may see him shine through us. Psalm 34 verse 5 encourages us to 'Look to God and be radiant.' Trusting in God's gentleness, can we find the courage to invite God to bring his new life into our lives?



And what about new life in the world? How is God's glory displayed in the world he created? In Gerard Kelly's words:

*Where is God's glory seen? A human fully alive. The oppressed freed. Justice done. Beauty celebrated. God let your glory fall.*  
(<http://twitter.com/Twitturgies>)

Can we commit ourselves to those causes in which God's priorities are fought for, and in doing so, his name proclaimed?

Easter – a time of new life. In church, in our own lives and in the world. I think that's cause enough for celebration!

*Em Coley*



## Children's Church

Children's church is beginning to flourish, and over the last few months has grown from two children to as many as 21 on Mothering Sunday. They enjoy learning new songs, being included in the services and showing off what they have been doing.

We have been learning about important people in the Bible and their relationships with God. We have learned about Moses, Noah, Joseph, David, Jonah, Daniel, Esther and Zacchaeus.

In April we begin to work with Scripture Union material which will provide continuity for the children as well as the leaders.

By now we will have held our Easter Crafts afternoon – more about that in next month's newsletter.

And in the summer we plan to hold a Children's Holiday Club on July 28, 29, and 30 from 9.30am–12.30pm for ages 4 to 11.

Please continue to pray for this important work with our children. And, watch this space....!

*Mary Dennett*



## Fair Trade in Kennington

During Fairtrade Fortnight (22 February–7 March) there were two events in the village.

The first was our Pancake Party at St Swithun's where about 50 people enjoyed savoury and sweet pancakes with as many fairtrade ingredients as we could find. We learned a number of strange facts about tea in our quiz and had the chance to win prizes in a special fairtrade raffle.

The other event was organised by the K4F (Kennington for Fairtrade) group in the Village Centre: the Big Swap Mad Hatter's Tea Party. Tea was tasted, biscuits and cake were enjoyed, mad hats were worn, school art competition posters were displayed, Traidcraft goods were sold, raffle prizes won and a good time was had by over 100 people. Thank you to all those who supported these events.

So why are we doing these things? I think we are finding another way to answer the question: 'Who is my neighbour?'

We enable the farmers and producers of fairtrade goods to get a proper price for their goods. One of these farmers could buy his first pair of spectacles. He calls them 'my fairtrade glasses'.

Not only do farmers and growers earn a regular and fair income, but their community benefits too, as they get a special premium which the community decides how to spend. So they might build a clinic or a better road to transport goods to town.

This year the aim was to get people to swap a fairtrade item for their normal brand in their shopping. How many swaps can you make?

*Brenda Groth*

## Easter Week

by Charles Kingsley (1819–1875)

See the land, her Easter keeping,  
Rises as her Maker rose.  
Seeds, so long in darkness sleeping,  
Burst at last from winter snows.  
Earth with heaven above rejoices;  
Fields and gardens hail the spring;  
Shaugh and woodlands ring with voices,  
While the wild birds build and sing.

You, to whom your Maker granted  
Powers to those sweet birds unknown,  
Use the craft by God implanted;  
Use the reason not your own.  
Here, while heaven and earth rejoices,  
Each his Easter tribute bring –  
Work of fingers, chant of voices,  
Like the birds who build and sing.

# Pause for Prayer

Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Hebrews 10:22–35



## Please pray...

Following the APCM last month please pray:

- That we would be inspired as a Church community, rooted in the life, death and resurrection of Christ, and seeking how this is to be demonstrated by this community of believers
- That we would encourage one another
- For new PCC members (Gillian Cox, Roger Dennett, Julia Kent, Phil Martin)
- For the new initiatives and new members at St Swithun's

And in this month of April and bank holidays please pray:

- For a time of refreshment and renewal for all those on school holidays this month, and for those with the opportunity to spend more time together as families
- For all those going away on holiday

## Children in Church?

About a month after we had arrived in Kennington, my mum was visiting and we walked past the church with Ellie. 'Look Granny,' Ellie said, 'that's my church. I have fun in there.' What an accolade! What a testimony to the warmth of welcome Ellie has experienced at St Swithun's. And what a responsibility we all have to ensure that other children coming to St Swithun's feel the same.

There is an important principle that when children are in church, there is something happening which they can engage in. I know many people have memories of sitting in silence in an uncomfortable pew in a cold church, being ssshhhhed by parents, while what went on was a complete enigma. And I am delighted that this is not the case at St Swithun's.

You will have noticed a few changes - the song at the end of the service is child-friendly, and important celebrations such as Easter and Christmas are All Age Worship services. Naturally this is a compromise from a style of service that some have been used to for a long time. But it is a useful compromise - much, I believe, can be learned from children and their way of approaching and worshipping God, much can be learned from embracing unfamiliar means of engaging with God, and much can be gained by accommodating children in our Sunday worship.

On Mothering Sunday, 21 children filed out of church for their activities in the church hall, and I for one was moved as the stream of children just kept walking past. My prayer is that in the months and years to come, this line will just keep on growing.

*Em Coley*

## Children's Sing-Along

We've had five Sing-Alongs so far, and at each one 15-20 children have burst in through the doors with huge smiles on their faces, parents chasing after them to find their little ones gathered around the fairtrade choc-chip cookies.

Each week the children, aged between 3 and 8, can't wait for the songs to begin. After a traditional warm-up of 'Baby Shark', or the now infamous 'Bananaman', we launch into a range of songs new and old, often taking requests towards the end. It has been so lovely to watch both children and their parents enthusiastically joining in with the actions as they learn them. We are steadily finding a selection of new songs and remembering some older children's hymns that I used to sing when I was younger, in Joan Savin's choir.

Before I go on maternity leave we are going to have a 'Singalong Sing-Along' on Sunday 9 May at 3.30pm (with

refreshments afterwards), to share with the children's parents and our congregation all the work and fun that we have had so far. This will be an opportunity for you to listen, watch, or join in with the hymn aerobics and find out what 'Baby Shark' is all about.

I would like to thank Barbara Boyne for her support and hopefully increasing piano playing, and Brenda Groth for kindly giving up her time to provide biscuits and squash for the children and a well-earned cup of tea for the wonderful parents who have supported us and enabled the Sing-Along to carry on. And of course, I would like to thank Em for agreeing to the idea in the first place. It's something that I've wanted to do for a while now and she shared the drive that was needed to make it work.

Long may the songs be sung and the group grow.

*Sally Barber*



*Snowdrop  
walk led  
by Bill  
Hunwick in  
February*

## Environment Corner

Thank you to all those who came and enjoyed the gardening day on 27 March, when we made further progress towards the development of the Churchyard. We plan days throughout the year where we can move forward with the 'Biodiversity Action Plan' agreed by the PCC.

The initial intention is to continue clearing the debris and pernicious weeds that have grown up over the years, and to construct and plant the rockery in front of the church. Rosey Hollinrake is planning an exercise with the children to plant a couple of small areas of beautiful summer meadow flowers during Children's Church.

Everyone is welcome to help with future tasks, from talented gardeners and environmentalists through to supporters with coffee, tea and biscuits.

The members of the committee have not been formally agreed; the first meeting

will be an open meeting to which all are invited to contribute. Please let me know if you're interested in coming (01865 327095; dave.ward@lrqa.com) so we can have an idea of numbers and I can inform you all of the date and venue.

We intend to have regular meetings to discuss detailed plans and perhaps sort out how we can make connections further afield (e.g. with the Kennington Horticultural Society). Very soon I hope to get plant donations from all and sundry.

Other initiatives to be discussed at the committee and agreed by the PCC would be to assess the church's carbon footprint and set objectives for its reduction, while encouraging work with other 'green' groups in the village. Any suggestions for inclusion in this newsletter slot would also be welcomed by me.

Happy gardening!

*David Ward*



## Intercessions Workshop

We are running an intercessions workshop on Saturday 8 May 9.30–11.00am in St Swithun's Church.

Whether you are on the intercessions rota, thinking about joining, or simply interested in learning more about praying for others please do come along.

The day is also for those from Radley and Sunningwell, so it's a chance to meet people from other churches too!

## Word from the Wardens

St Swithun's is a warm welcoming church but we still need to take precautions to keep the church secure. If you are in church during the day you can help by looking around and checking that the vestry door is locked. Keyholders please remember to check all outside doors are locked and take your key home with you if you lock/unlock a door during the day. Thank you.

## Parish Snippets

The jumble sale on 20 March raised £357. Well done everybody!

Did you know the church has a small library of books you can borrow? It is located in an alcove on the right as you approach the altar.

Thank you to Gwyneth Thomas who arranged the flowers and to Mary Dennett who did the tomb for Easter weekend.

## From the Editor

I hope any thought of snow is now far from everyone's minds. But I have the snow to thank for two life-changing events.

In February 2009, shortly after my best friend died in a mountaineering accident, I woke up on a Monday morning to find several inches of snow on the ground. Having abandoned any idea of cycling, and then any hope of a bus arriving, I began the long trudge to work in town.

I fell into step with someone else doing the same thing. Over the next hour we got to know each other very well and found we had a lot in common. Of course she doesn't replace the friend I lost, but I gained a new friend that day.

About a year later, snow fell again and I wondered what adventures it might bring!

It was Sunday and I decided not to make the trip to church in Oxford – instead I and my neighbours walked the five minutes to St Swithun's and found a welcoming community and hot coffee and biscuits.

Since then I have been showing my face a bit more often at my local church, and enjoying the opportunity to get involved in things a bit closer to home. Em has asked me to help produce this monthly newsletter for the St Swithun's Church community. I hope it proves a useful and friendly publication, and I look forward to getting to know more of you in my role as editor.

*Jackie Smith*



## Dates for Your Diary

### Sunday 4 April

9.30am. All Age Worship, followed by an Easter Egg Hunt

### Monday 19 April

3.30–4.30pm. Children's Sing-Along Practice

### Saturday 8 May

9.30–11.00am. Intercessions Workshop in the Church

7.00pm Fish & Chips with Quiz

### Sunday 9 May

3.30–5.00pm. Singalong Sing-Along. Come to the church to hear the children sing, with sandwiches and cakes afterwards.

### Monday 17 May

3.30–4.30pm. Children's Sing-Along Practice

### Monday 31 May

Joint Evening Songs of Praise Celebration with Radley and Sunningwell at St Swithun's

### Saturday 19 June

Joint Fete with St Swithun's School and Kennington Overseas Aid in the church grounds

### Sunday 18 July

Parish Pilgrimage begins (see Gillian Cox for more details)

## Something to Say?

What are you involved in at church or in the village? Why not write a short piece about it so that others are informed about what is going on. Do you have an item of news to share or an announcement to make? What regular features would you like to see in the newsletter?

Please send any contributions, pictures, or just thoughts and ideas to the Editor, Jackie Smith. Don't worry if writing isn't your thing – if you have something to say, Jackie can work with you to come up with the right form of words. (See Contact Details on the right.)

**Deadline for copy: Tuesday 20 April**

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