

St Swithun's Church Newsletter

For information and inspiration

February 2011

What is love anyway?

My dad was fastidious about keeping his books in a good condition. He would insist that we didn't place a book upside down on the arm of a chair, regularly losing me my place by shutting the book and putting it on a table!

I have inherited this role of 'protector of books', extending it ever so slightly to cover all reading material. Yet, one day, memorably, I found myself tearing out a page of my *Red* magazine. What had happened to warrant this kind of wanton destruction, you ask. Simple, it was an article on Valentine's Day, entitled, 'A really romantic gesture is...', which then provided ten top tips for the men in our lives. The most insightful was, to my mind, 'when he knows that when we say "let's not bother with Valentine's Day", we don't really mean it!'

There is plenty of romance advice around but most of the time this is surface stuff: the art of romance or seduction, but what about advice on love? I don't mean the first flush of love, the gooey eyed, puppy dog love that comes quite easily, and doesn't require much work. But where do we look for advice on a love that has seen a person at his or her worst; that deals with the mundane

routines of love, that struggles sometimes not to take the other for granted.

On this topic, the Bible has a wealth and depth of insight rivalled by none other. Colossians 3:12-14, 1 John 4:7-12 are inspiring and challenging but I'd like to leave you with a new take on perhaps the best known passage on love:

What is love anyway? Not the tripe you've been force fed! No, love gives people space and time; it does people good... It protects more than a blockbuster hero; it trusts more than a toddler. It's always positive; it always hangs in there. Love doesn't let you down. (Extract from 1 Corinthians 13, The Street Bible)

It's good advice. Not just for couples, but for all of our relationships, and perhaps worth dedicating some thought to this Valentine's Day.

Em Coley



A Day in the Life of Lawrence Belcher

Em Coley interviews a long-standing member of the congregation...



Lawrence Belcher, a familiar face at Sunday morning services, Compline and the Mid-week Communion, is one of ten brothers and sisters. I asked Lawrence if he and his siblings got on, and his reply was immediate: 'Mother and Father wouldn't have it otherwise!' Three of his siblings are still living: Ron (who turns 99 in May!), Myrtle, and Beryl. It is a testament to the close family he grew up in that all the Belchers live within a five-mile radius of Kennington.

Lawrence's grandparents moved to Kennington in the 1920s, and there has been a Belcher living in the village since that time, although Lawrence himself didn't move here until the 1960s.

Lawrence's day starts between 5.00am and 6.00am when he wakes up, makes himself a pot of tea, and returns to bed to drink it in the company of Radio 4.

But he says the day starts properly at about 7.00am when he sits on the edge of the bed of to pray. The prayers are the same every day. They include the Lord's Prayer, a prayer for the sick, thanks for doctors, nurses and priests and all who minister to his life, as well as prayers for the faithful departed, in particular Lawrence's wife Mary who died suddenly in 2004, and in whose memory the lamp-post outside St Swithun's Church is erected.

After prayers, each of the days of the week has a particular pattern. Monday is washing day, and Lawrence puts my reliance on a tumble dryer to shame – clothes are hung out to dry on the line, winter or summer. Wednesday is shopping day, which is rewarded by a curry and a pint in the Tandem for lunch. Thursday is Holy Communion and Friday fish and chips day. Not, you understand, a take-away, but fish and chips freshly cooked by Lawrence himself.

After church on Sunday, Lawrence always goes down to the river; he has been the president of the City of Oxford Rowing Club since 1972, and it has stood him in good stead – he credits his good health to being a rowing man.

The end of the day also has a pattern – a roll with a can of beer at 9.00pm, a drop of whisky (a man after my own heart!), and an episode of *Songs of Praise* before bed at 10.00pm.

Book stall

Karen Laister from the Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF), based in Abingdon, will be providing a book stall after church on 20 February. There will be lots of books for Lent and Easter, including books for children. She will also bring books on prayer and spirituality, which were popular last time she came.

BRF have a special offer on Lent books: you can buy a pack of ten books for £37.00. Please contact Julia Kent on 01865 739047 or juliak@franklins-solicitors.co.uk if you would be interested in getting together and sharing one of these special offers.



Social activities

Saturday 26 February

7.00pm Fish and Chip Supper and Quiz in Church Hall

Sunday 6 March

4.30pm. Afternoon tea using Fairtrade products, in the Church Hall

Saturday 2 April

10-12am. Mothering Sunday Crafts in Church

Sunday 22 May: Rogation Sunday

Church walk and picnic

Saturday 18 June

The Village Fete (KOA, Church, School)

16–17 July: Patronal Weekend

Kennington Horticultural Society are co-hosting a Flower Festival in the Church on the theme of 'Saints'. Refreshments from the Community Cafe.

Pause for Prayer



Please pray...

Lord, You have always given bread for the coming day; and though I am poor, today I believe.

Lord, You have always given strength for the coming day; and though I am weak, today I believe.

Lord, You have always given peace for the coming day; and though of anxious heart, today I believe.

Lord, You have always kept me safe in trials; and now, tried as I am, today I believe.

Lord, You have always marked the road for the coming day; and though it may be hidden, today I believe.

Lord, You have always lightened this darkness of mine; and though the night is here, today I believe.

Lord, You have always spoken when time was ripe; and though you be silent now, today I believe.

Getting to know our organists

Who are the people who faithfully turn up to play the organ for St Swithun's Church services every week? Here we get a glimpse of them...



Nick Horn

Nick's day job is as an agricultural contractor and he loves driving his beloved combine harvester. Nick and his wife Helen have been connected with Kennington and the church for about six months now after meeting and chatting to Roger Dennett.

Nick has been playing the organ for about six years. He did piano lessons at school, but owing to his severe dyslexia, he struggled, and eventually gave up. But he has always loved listening to and latterly playing the organ which gives him a lot of pleasure.

Nick is drawn to music because he finds it relaxing and pleasurable. He has two favourite pieces: Trumpet Voluntary by Jeremiah Clarke and Tocata in F by Charles Widor.



Malcolm Smith

If Malcolm is asked what his day job is, he is tempted to say 'fun!' After over thirty years in the funeral profession he now spends his days driving buses – to most people a chore, but as a bus enthusiast, he actually enjoys it.

Malcolm grew up in Leicester, taking up the organ in his mid-teens, having, like most organists, graduated from playing the piano for services at his local church. He went on to study under George Gray, the then cathedral organist, and the City organist Frederick Allt, prior to full-time music study at Coventry. It was during this time that Malcolm was appointed organist at All Saints' Parish Church, Narborough, which is where Tricia and he met and married.

Eventually settling in Oxford, Malcolm and Tricia moved to Kennington in 1990 and he

was persuaded to help out at St Swithun's some ten years ago.

Music to Malcolm has always been the ultimate expression of beauty and emotion. He says he would find it difficult to choose a favourite piece of music; 'but for organ it has to be J. S. Bach's Fugue in G minor. For relaxation, I enjoy Tchaikovsky and Delius though my passion for the work of John Rutter is well known!!'

Emma Partington

Emma's day job is as a teacher at Blewbury Primary School, in Year 2. She moved into Kennington in August 2009, when she and Sam got married, but they only joined the church recently, as they have now bought a house in the village.

Emma has been playing the organ for about eight years, occasionally - she is really more of a pianist. What draws her to music? That's a hard question for her to answer, but she says: 'I absolutely love music, and have done since I was very young. I always find myself singing when I'm happy, so I guess music is just a natural expression of what's going on inside me! I particularly enjoy accompanying worship, but I'm not sure why.'

She has a favourite piece of music for about ten different genres, but if she just had one on her desert island, it would be Bach's St Matthew Passion.



Women's World Day of Prayer

'How many loaves have you?'

On Friday 4 March 2011 women from around the world will celebrate the Women's World Day of Prayer. The service has been written by the women of Chile. It is an appropriate theme, for bread is eaten at every meal and is very much part of everyday life. The women of Chile offer what it means to them as they share this service with us.

Jean Hackett, president of the National Committee of the Women's World Day of Prayer Movement, said: 'This is always an exciting day as a great wave of prayer sweeps the world, beginning when the first service is held in Tonga and continuing until the final service takes place, some 35 hours later, in neighbouring Western Samoa. By then the day will have been celebrated in over 170 countries and over 5000 services will have been held in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland.'

Stretching from Peru to Antarctica, the Republic of Chile occupies a long, narrow strip of land 2640 miles long and 110 miles wide. It is a land of incredible contrasts. It also has the highest incidence of domestic violence in Latin America and most women suffer from discrimination in some form or other.

Although organised and led by women, this is essentially a day of prayer for everybody as we demonstrate our solidarity with our sisters and brothers in other countries, and all are welcome to attend. See www.wwdp-natcomm.org for more information.

The service this year in Kennington will be held at the Methodist Church on 4 March 2011 at 2.00pm.

Isabel Baggott

Church Tea Party



We are having an Afternoon Tea Party on Sunday 6 March at 4.30pm in the Church Hall. There will be sandwiches, cakes and biscuits, all as Fairtrade as possible.

After tea, we will have fun decorating Fairtrade cotton bunting. This means not just children but adults too! All ages are welcome. This is part of this year's nationwide Fairtrade campaign, focusing on a fair deal for cotton producers in the developing world.

Brenda Groth



Contact Details

Clergy:

Rev Em Coley 01865 735135;
emcoley@me.com

Rev Pam McKellen 01235 554739;
p.mckellen@btinternet.com

Newsletter Editor:

Jackie Smith 01865 326175;
jacquelinesmith0@gmail.com

Church Wardens:

Isabel Baggott 730950
Gerry Bowen-Thomas 739356
Bill Hunwick 739311

Luke Biggs

Something to Say?

Please send any contributions for the St Swithun's Church newsletter to the Editor, Jackie Smith. We welcome text and/or pictures (in particular it would be good to build up a bank of pictures reflecting church life, so if you have any please do send them in).

Don't worry if writing isn't your thing – Jackie can help you with the right form of words.

Deadline for copy: 20 Feb 2011

Dear Friends

Just a few lines to let you know the latest news about Luke. Luke had his second small bowel transplant on 2 November in Birmingham Children's Hospital. When we first visited him you couldn't see him for all the tubes going in and out but he soon made good progress being the little fighter that he is and came home on 2 December. The downside is that he can't mix with lots of people for six months as his immune system is very low and he would be prone to all sorts of infection.

Luke and his family celebrated Christmas at home this year. It was so exciting to have them come to our house for Christmas Dinner; you wouldn't believe how much Luke ate. It was a truly special time for them. They were also able to celebrate New Year with friends and went for their traditional walk in the woods, which they have been unable to do for at least two years.

Since then Luke has been in and out of the JR and Birmingham Hospital for various reasons and is now waiting for results of tests to make sure everything is OK. There are times when he gets bored with being at home but a trip down to the allotment with Grampy helps, and he was able to watch the KADS dress rehearsal from the top committee room so that he didn't mix with everybody.

Life is full of ups and downs for everybody so the family appreciate all the support they get from all sorts of people. We thank you for your prayers – they have been answered over the last 13 years.

With love from Margaret and Pete

NB Please when you pray for Luke would you also pray for all those children who are undergoing liver and bowel transplants, that their families are also receiving the support they need.

Be refreshed...

'Refresh' is coming back. This short service, that is a time for quiet reflection and prayer, will be held on the first Sunday of each month, at 6.30pm. The first one is on **Sunday 6 February, 6.30pm** in the church.



The service will not follow a set order or style, but it's hoped that it is something that will evolve, when people who have found ways of 'being still and knowing God' will get together and share them with others.

In our busy world we all need time to be still and listen to the Lord. May 'Refresh' be that time for you.

Margaret Smith

From the Editor



Recently I attended a meeting that involved a three-minute breathing exercise to bring about a sense of calm. I am used to this kind of practice because I do yoga, but it astonished me how simple and effective it

was. You close your eyes and focus on your breath going in and out of your body. Our breath is something regular that we always have access to, and it can have an almost instant calming effect when you focus all your attention on it.

The feeling of well-being that I enjoyed after this exercise led to me wonder why I have not really succeeded in my resolution to spend some time in focused silence and reflection every day, and why I have not actually been to a yoga class since before Christmas.

I suspect there are a variety of reasons why we can fail to build in some reflective time. We feel busy (chores to do, appointments to keep); we suspect that it might be impossible to keep the constant chattering thoughts at bay; we worry that our deepest anxieties might surface; we believe that sitting in quietness is a waste of time.

The leader of the group I attended suggested that we 'make an appointment with ourselves' every day, and I like this turn of phrase. Perhaps we can think of our times of quiet as times when we 'make an appointment' not only with ourselves, but also with God. Of course he is there, loving us, every minute of every day, but it might take a bit of discipline on our part to become increasingly aware of that.

Jackie Smith

Dates for Your Diary

Sunday 6 February

6.30pm. Refresh - a quiet service at St Swithun's Church

Thursday 10 February

8.00pm. Pastoral Care Course in Church Hall

Tuesday 15 February

3.30pm. Singalong in Church

Wednesday 16 February

8.00pm. Homegroup

Thursday 17 February

8.00pm. Homegroup

Sunday 20 February

11.00am. Musicians gathering in Church

Sunday 27 February

11.00am. Ben Hull's baptism

Thursday 3 March

8.00pm. Pastoral care course

Sunday 6 March

6.30pm. Refresh

Sunday 20 March

11.00am. APCM

Monday 21 March

PCC meeting

Sermon series: the Living Jesus

30 Jan: Jesus the Magnificent Outsider

6 Feb: Jesus - Crazy about the Church

13 Feb: Jesus - Partner in Prayer

20 Feb: Jesus in a World of Pain

27 Feb: Jesus - Centre Point in History

6 March: Jesus - Changing Rules; the World's Hope