

St Swithun's Church Newsletter

For information and inspiration

July 2010

Just Like a Child

Ellie walked into the living room the other day when a World Cup match was on. 'We don't want to watch that, do we Mummy?' she commented, and CBBC was swiftly restored! I decided many of you would be in sympathy with Ellie, and so I will leapfrog the football and instead focus on the television that Ellie enjoys.

Ellie's favourite programme, 'Junior Masterchef', has unfortunately just come to an end. 'Junior Masterchef' follows the same format as 'Masterchef' for adults, but the competition revolves around children – ranging from 10–13 years of age. I have to admit that I enjoyed watching this enormously. I was greatly impressed by the ability of these young cooks who have mastered complicated skills in order to produce plateful after plateful of delicious food. But what was most enjoyable was the refreshingly encouraging comments given by the judges; there was always something positive in the feedback which was affirming and constructive, and elicited a huge grin on the face of each child.

What a sharp contrast with the adult version of the programme, where the judges' comments are often scathing

and brutal in their directness. Adult Masterchef wannabes frequently appear crestfallen, dejected or on the verge of tears. This leads me to wonder why we act as if adults need less

positive input than children. Surely we are all susceptible to the doubts, insecurities and heartache of criticism that we seek to protect our children from? We do well to heed Jesus' example of honouring children, not just by continuing to praise and encourage them, but also by recognising that it is a childlike approach and childlike treatment that can be the most God-like way.

Jesus called a little child, whom he placed among them. And he said: 'Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes a humble place – becoming like this child – is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.' Matthew 8: 2–5

Em Coley



Seasons of the Spirit

Many of us at St Swithun's have thoroughly appreciated Teresa Morgan's ministry to us during times of holiday and vacancy, and some of us bought her booklet 'Little Marsh – a parish year', about her experiences during a year of non-stipendiary ministry.

As a result of seeing this, the Bible Reading Fellowship have recently published *Seasons of the Spirit*, which contains a lot of material from 'Little Marsh', and also some new writing. A review from the BRF website is reprinted below. Some of us get a mention!

Teresa is coming to preach on 29 August and copies of her book will be available to purchase then at the price of £6.99.

From *The Church Times*, June 2010:

'Teresa Morgan is a Fellow and Tutor in Ancient History at Oriel College, Oxford. She takes us on a journey through the church year, and through the Oxford area, where she works as non-stipendiary priest.

We look at major festivals and some minor ones. All seasons and events are approached with a sense that 'that deep unity of things, in which everything is both fully itself and part of everything else, is one of the most profound discoveries we make about the world.' This is a diary of faith which explores the author's relationship with God, the people around her, and the world.

In all seasons, there is a desire to see the Divine. Sometimes this is with a good deal of humour. The Jews were looking for a mighty deliverer, a king, the Messiah. The Shepherd's reaction to the Angel's message is: 'Israel is praying for salvation and you are sending a baby? Are you insane?'

On Mothering Sunday, of her mother she writes: 'More than anyone I know, she has a gift of celebrating the wonderful in the

ordinary...she makes an art of everyday living. Everyone around her benefits from her mindfulness.' This is the way the author herself approaches much of the book: nothing around her is taken for granted; nothing is just ordinary; but in all there is an opportunity to get a glimpse of the beyond in our midst. Like the Dennis in her book, she is someone 'who has stopped and stared a lot and sees deeply into things'. We are told: 'We need every glimpse of heaven we can get, or how shall we change the world to reflect it? Giving each other a glimpse of paradise, I reflect, is something we can all do from time to time.'

Time and again the author does this for us. This is a book to set you thinking, to widen the horizon of your faith.'

Reviewed by Canon David Adam, former vicar of the Holy Island of Lindisfarne.

Julia Kent

The Fourth of July

A very memorable date! Everybody at St Swithun's is warmly welcomed to tea at Radley Vicarage at 3.00pm on Sunday 4 July to celebrate with Kevin and Glynis who are being ordained on Saturday 3 July. They will be working with the churches in Radley, Sunningwell and Kennington as assistant curates.

We wish Kevin and Glynis every blessing as their ministry progresses. There will be new friends to meet, cups of tea and food for adults and children. Pam hopes to host it in the vicarage gardens but there are plans to use the Church Rooms and Church if the weather is bad.

If you can come please speak to me so that we can have some idea of numbers.

Isabel Baggott

It Never Rains But...

I wonder if it will rain on 15 July? Who bothers? Gardeners? Cricketers? Tennis players? Or could it be pilgrims? After all, it is St Swithun's Day, when we remember a devout, humble man. It is a time when we bring to mind a Buckingham verse:

'If on St Swithun's day it really pours,
you're better off to stay indoors.'

St Swithun, sometimes called the 'drunken saint' (a jocular reference to heavy rainfall and not to alcohol), was noted for his piety, charity, and frugality. He travelled by night to save on accommodation costs, and used the cash to build churches and bridges. At his insistence he was buried outside the west door of the old Minster at Winchester, so that his bones might be 'watered by the sweet rain of heaven and where passers by might tread on my grave'.

What is special about the day for us? There was once a sign outside a Heathrow bookshop which advertised 'fuel for your spiritual journey'. Today we can all be fuelled up and turn our heads and hearts to God, so that we can be just like Swithun.

Christianity is not a lifestyle accessory like an i-pod or bath essence, neither does it have a secret ingredient like coca-cola. But it does disclose the final point of our lives, which is to share in God's freedom. Swithun had a point to his life and he saw the work of God in what he could do outside the church and himself. The Zulus have a saying: 'I am because we are'. So shall we start to think about St Swithun's secret ingredient and learn to say 'we' and not 'I'.

Gerry Bowen-Thomas

Pause for Prayer

'Do you see what this means - all these pioneers who blazed the way, all these veterans cheering us on? It means we'd better get on with it. Strip down, start running - and never quit!' (Hebrews 12: 1 The Message)



Please pray...

In July we remember our patron, Saint Swithun, a humble, caring and devout man. He lived in troubled times and was always an upholder of justice.

So please pray:

- for peace and reconciliation in a conflict-ridden world
- for heart and eyes that see not the ugly and bad but the good and beautiful of this world
- for those who give their time and talents to fight against hunger, torture, injustice and the exploitation of the world
- for those who have nowhere to go and nobody to care for them

Children's Activities in August

What an opportunity! Two days in Mary's back garden, a group of delightful children, crafts, singing, sporting activities and plenty of time to get to know God better. Thursday 19 and Friday 20 August herald these delights as St Swithun's Church holds a mini holiday club for our Children's Church and Sing-Along members.

So, how does this involve you?

- If you have children between the ages of 4–11 and would like to book a place, please email Em (emcoley@me.com) and you'll be provided with a booking form.
- If you are available and would like to help out on either day, please give your name to Mary Dennett.
- Please pray for these children, that their faith would flourish and they would continue to develop a relationship with our loving heavenly Father, and experience the fullness of life that he brings.

Thank you.

Em Coley

Stride and Ride

Stride and Ride (Saturday 11 September) raises funds for the upkeep of churches in Oxfordshire; half of the money raised comes back to the participating churches. This year I'm seeking sponsorship for cycling round 30 churches within a five mile radius of St Swithun's. Em is joining me and it would be good to have two more people. Do let me know if you are interested. I will also be approaching members of the congregation to act as hosts to the many people who will visit our church on the day.

Roger Dennett (07816 152705)

Church and School Links

Past and present, the church and school in Kennington have been linked by more than just a name. Each month this column will provide insight into these varying links. Please let the editor know if there is something you would like to write about.

Full Circle

I have been going to Full Circle for four years. It consists of four retired people (three women and one man), one facilitator and five six-year-olds. We meet every Wednesday lunchtime in the termtime at St Swithun's School.

We take our sandwiches with us and in the case of a couple of the children they bring their cooked school dinners to eat with us. We eye with envy the roast potatoes, meat and Yorkshire puddings. We chat while we eat our food and share our news. Then Sally, the facilitator, brings out her boxes full of ribbons, glitter, pens, coloured paper, etc. From these we make a different item each week – glove puppets, wooden tops, decorated boxes, glittery butterflies, windmills and so on.

What do we get out of these sessions? Lots of fun and laughter. For me it is the chance to spend time with children, as my two grandsons are now 18 and 21 years old. For the children it is a chance to learn new skills from an older generation and to understand a little bit about our lives.

Sheila Prior

Christian Aid Collection

The retiring collection for Christian Aid which took place over Pentecost raised £168.55, of which £50 was gift aided. My thanks to all who contributed towards this impressive total.

Brian Baggott

Annual Choir Meal

For the past three years the choir have been out for a meal to celebrate the friendships and hard work of the previous year. A pat on the back shall we say.

This year Bill very kindly volunteered to cook for us all and so the venue was the Church Hall on 9 June. All was set for a great social evening.

As I was driven into the church grounds it seemed strange to see lots of activity in the Church. The reason: a power cut in the Hall. Bill had precision planned everything, but had not foreseen that the simple plugging in of the hostess trolley would short out the electrics. No light, heat or hot water!!! Disaster for some, but not for Bill Hunwick! Panic for a little while but then a solution was found and trolley, microwave etc. were wheeled over to the Church.

After grace, Bill and the Baggots proceeded to serve us with three splendid courses. The first, a delicious soup, discovered on a WI cooking course Bill had attended (we all now have the recipe!). The second, a choice of beautifully cooked meat and veg smothered in delicious gravy. Lastly came a pudding to throw all diets out of the window. To round the evening off Ivan led us in 'splice the main sail and toast to the Queen'. Despite Bill's worry the food was amazing.

At the end of the evening Bill was thanked for a truly great meal, and Sally was presented with flowers and a gift as she goes on maternity leave as choir mistress.

We thank God for an evening of great food and fellowship which ended with the last candle being blown out and washing up being left until daylight!

Margaret Smith

The Village Fete

The Village Fete was held on Saturday 19 June in aid of Kennington Overseas Aid, St Swithun's School and St Swithun's Church.

Weren't we lucky again? Yet another fete with good weather, although there was a nasty wind and some threatening clouds which probably kept a few people from coming to join the fun.

And fun it was! Helen Peacocke and her dog Pythius opened the proceedings and she judged the preserves competition. But the highlight was probably Pythius picking out the best dog biscuit, made by Tony Miles!

It has been very clear to me, as a member of the fete committee, that a lot of hard work has to go into the preparation of items for sale by the many stallholders. I would like to thank all the stallholders and their helpers for the time and effort given.

Special thanks must go to Isabel who directed us all beforehand and on the day.

There were some hiccups. Some people could not come at the last minute and left us with fewer people to man the stalls. But what a lovely surprise when people come up to you and ask, 'Where can I help?' Thanks to Jackie, for asking, and then doing the most arduous job of the day, running the skittles with friends!

It was also great to see Em run so many stalls (not all at once!), which gave her a chance to talk to lots and lots of people. Judging by her comments she clearly enjoyed the day.

Now the planning has to start for next year's fete! Any volunteers for running a stall or helping on the day in 2011?

Eckhard Groth





It started gradually on Saturday morning. Mary was there first, as she often is; more helpers arrived; Lisa's family came in a van and unloaded dozens of tables, a BBQ and even a fridge freezer. Gazebos and bunting went up and the area around the church began to look like a fete. Everybody worked hard – nobody complained. Midday arrived and amazingly everything was ready. Helen Peacocke, the food writer for the *Oxford Times*, opened the fete and her improbably named dog, Pythius, was well behaved. Everyone was having a good time. The artist Weimen He gave the children a lesson in sketching, children bounced on the bouncy castle, men gazed into the trees to guess the height of a whisky bottle. The BBQ and tea and cakes were eaten and enjoyed. We were all so pleased that the rain had come in the night.

I would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who helped to make it such a happy event, those who worked for days before and those who arrived and found themselves unexpectedly helping on a stall. Thank you to the children for having fun. Thank you to all those who contributed in different ways, bringing items to sell, spending their money, and just giving the event their support.

Isabel Baggott

Bishop's Open Gardens

On Saturday 7 August there will be an open gardens event to raise money for the Archway Foundation, a local charity serving those hurt by loneliness.

The event is at the Bishop's house, 27 Linton Road, Oxford OX2 6UL from 2.00–5.00pm (last admission 4.30pm)

Adults £3.50, £1 for children over 5 and under 16.

Tea and cakes will be for sale as you enjoy the gardens.

See www.archwayfoundation.org.uk for more information about the charity.

Something to Say?

Please send any newsletter contributions (text and/or pictures!) to the Editor, Jackie Smith. Don't worry if writing isn't your thing – Jackie can help you with the right form of words.

Deadline for copy: 20 July 2010

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Dates for Your Diary

Sunday 4 July

3.00pm. Tea at Radley Vicarage

6.30pm. Refresh

Saturday 10 July

PCC Away Day **NOW POSTPONED**

Sunday 11 July

9.30am. St Swithun's Day Service followed by festivities and summer buffet

Tuesday 13 July

St Swithun's School in church, exploring God as Creator, and the Trinity

Sunday 18 July

Parish Pilgrimage. (Contact Gillian Cox 01865 735590; gilliancox@ntlworld.com)

Monday 19 July

3.30pm. Sing-Along

Sunday 1 August

6.30pm. Refresh (service in Church)

Monday 2 August

Kennington Overseas Aid shop with cafe in the Church grounds

Saturday 7 August

2.00–5.00pm, open gardens at the Bishop's house, 27 Linton Road, Oxford

Thursday 19–Friday 20 August

Children's Activities

What's in a name?: We now have two groups in Children's Church (under threes, and three-to-sevens), and they need names. Can you come up with suggestions that follow a theme and so could accommodate even more groups in the future? Please send your ideas to Em at the vicarage or email them to emcoley@me.com by 20 July 2010.

From the Editor



This month I would simply like to share a favourite poem. A friend first introduced me to this poem many years ago. It has helped me to remember to slow down and look for expressions of eternity in the here and now.

I don't find it easy to live in the present, but I think it is one route to a happier life. R. S. Thomas encourages us to make sure we are always in a receptive frame of mind, so that we can truly experience what is going on around us, and learn to interpret it in the context of eternity.

Jackie Smith

The Bright Field

I have seen the sun break through to illuminate a small field for a while, and gone my way and forgotten it. But that was the pearl of great price, the one field that had treasure in it. I realize now that I must give all that I have to possess it. Life is not hurrying

on to a receding future, nor hankering after an imagined past. It is the turning aside like Moses to the miracle of the lit bush, to a brightness that seemed as transitory as your youth once, but is the eternity that awaits you.

By R. S. Thomas