

St Swithun's Church Newsletter

For information and inspiration

June 2011

Ascension Day

On 2 June we celebrated ascension day. We celebrate because Jesus returned to the father to be crowned with glory having victoriously overcome death. We celebrate his victory, his glory and his deity.

And yet the first disciples must have felt somewhat bereft as they watched Christ ascend into heaven, and they must have wondered what this new turn of events meant.

We had a wonderful illustration of what this meant at May's all age service. Lynne led an experiment involving vinegar and bicarbonate of soda. She put increasing amounts of bicarbonate in the vinegar and we all watched with growing excitement as it frothed up and overflowed (the jug, the glass dish tidily placed to collect the spillage and eventually, much to the delight of the younger element of the congregation, the table!).

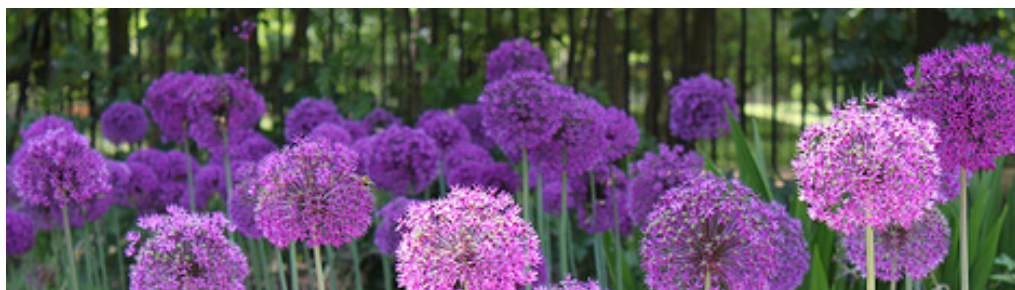
Lynne's message was that we are all God's bicarb! Since Christ ascended we are to be the ones making a difference. We are to be God overflowing in the world. We are to

be those loving our neighbours and our enemies. We are to be those reaching with kindness and compassion to those on the edge of society.

We are to be those radically challenging the status quo and its oppression of the weak and vulnerable.

Christ was constrained by a human body in a particular place and time, but we his followers have the opportunity to continue and spread his impact. Importantly, hot on the heels of Ascension day is Pentecost - the means by which we are equipped and enabled to continue God's work in the world. God's gift of the Holy Spirit is a promise that he is with us still, and passionate still to reclaim this world as his. May we, his agents, be faithful.

Em Coley



A Day in the Life of Gerry Bowen-Thomas

I'm a night owl rather than an early bird. Getting up early is not on my list of great achievements. Waking up early has its points I suppose and it helps if you have a good reason to get up or have something to look forward to. Soon after I wake, it's time for a short morning prayer: 'I welcome this day Lord, it's your gift to me for a new creation. I thank you for a refreshing sleep and for the chance to make a new beginning. It's great to be with you Lord and to know that you will be with me throughout the day. Help me to have patience with people and to leave all I meet with a smile.'

It's Joan's turn to get the tea and bring the papers, and share them out to read in bed. I turn first to the obituaries, and see that my name is not there, so I can read on. I note that 'John...' has died. Dear, dear, and such a young chap. I liked him. So what has the world got for me? I read on and make the odd comment here and there. There are wars and unrest everywhere but I suppose they are needed to make a peace. But that is not the end. It's easier to defeat tyrants than to create free societies with the self-restraints and civilities they require. It will also require spiritual courage for enemies to reach out and shake hands.

That's when I look at my 'to do list'. First, sort out the telephone calls. An undertaker has called, so I must find a grave spot in the cemetery. Somebody else wants to reserve a grave plot. This will involve some paperwork, obtaining a Faculty and of course a hefty fee. Then a call to Brookes University Restaurant to make a booking for lunch with friends. Although we are all past our prime, the talk will not be about ailments, but about values and what we can do to pass them on. The last time we met we talked about how we attached great honour

to being old, and how caring not only adds years to our lives but it also adds life to our years.

I get a telephone call from a close friend. His son has been mugged. When I say how sorry I am he says: 'Don't be. So many people have been to see him, he did not know he had so many friends. He almost feels like thanking his attackers.' This I feel is really the Big Society with a human face.

Then it's a meeting of wardens in the Vicarage with Em, which starts with real coffee. That sets the mood. No agenda, but a rather long list of ideas, things to do, and checking on things that should have been done. It's productive and goes well.

Later a dash to another meeting. This time in Witney, where I am a trustee of Guidepost. The trust cares for people who have dementia, gives support for carers, gives opportunities for adults with learning disabilities, and fun and education for children with special needs. It is not large and has an income of about £6 million a year. Today it's a management committee meeting about how we can help ever more people, and future funding.

The day ends with us going to choir practice. Sally takes us through the hymns for the next couple of Sundays and we discuss an anthem for the next church celebration. We are agreed that it must be within the compass of the few men, as the women, as usual, will do wonderfully.

And so to bed. First, half an hour's reading. At present I am re-reading the Garrison Keillor Lake Wobegon tales. They are about small-town America and are always amusing and light, with some homespun philosophy.

It's time for prayer before bedtime. As a young boy I prayed with my mother – in Welsh of course. (For years I believed that God could only speak Welsh.) The family still chuckle over one prayer where I thanked God for my day and my parents and brother and especially for the great apple tart. Tonight it will be different.

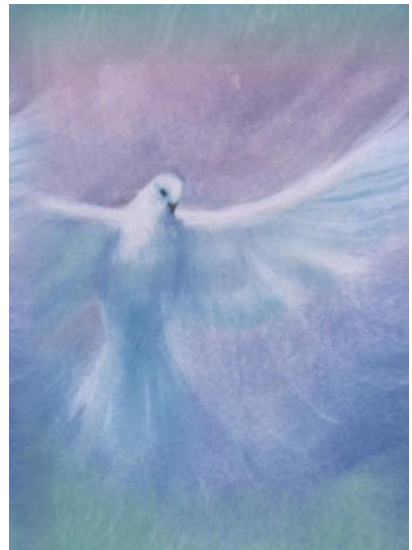
'Today Lord it's been a pretty average day, but then you know that. Lost my temper once and told a white lie. I am sorry that I haven't spoken to you since this morning and I offer no excuses. But you have always been there for me. All I can do is ask you to forgive me and wipe my slate clean and help me to do better tomorrow, not because I deserve it but because Jesus died for my forgiveness.'

And so to sleep.

Pause for Prayer

'I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever — the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.'

John 14: 16-18



Please pray...

Give thanks:

- For the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost
- For the closeness of Jesus through His Spirit
- Our library is to remain open

Pray for:

- Volunteers to staff our library
- Kennington Parish Councillors, in particular those newly elected
- KOA Fun Run (12 June) and Fete (18 June)
- Churches Together in Kennington – Songs of Praise 12 June, 6.30pm
- The courage to speak our faith to others
- The opportunity to share the fullness of the life we enjoy

Garden Working Party



On Friday 15 July, Rosey will co-ordinate a garden working party. This is to tie in with preparing the grounds for the Flower Festival in July.

Do come with gardening gloves and tools, any time between 10.00am and 3.00pm - even just an hour will help. Bring your lunch.

Oxford PHAB Club

Some of you may have heard me talking about my involvement with Oxford PHAB club. Oxford PHAB club is a social group where people can meet together on equal terms. There are many PHAB clubs throughout the UK, and every year they come together for a sponsored walk in Hyde Park. This year the walk will be on 5 June.

Many of our members have physical or learning disabilities that prevent them from going out independently. To take the group out we need specialised transport and our current minibus has become a liability and is constantly braking down. The club needs to raise funds for a new minibus, so I would be very grateful if my friends at church could help by sponsoring me on this year's walk.

Many thanks

Kathryn Baggott

Come and Celebrate!

You have probably heard that the two curates in our Churches, Glynis Beckett and Kevin Wright, will be ordained as priests at a service on 26 June at Reading Minster. It is a very special time for them as they begin this new phase in their ministry. Please pray for them!

A few tickets for the service are still available so please phone me (01235 554739) if you would like to go.

BUT there will also be a special lunch on Sunday 3 July at Radley Primary School at 12.30 when we will all meet together to celebrate!! More info very soon, in each of our Churches.

Pam McKellen

Your Church Hall Needs You

Lots of volunteers please for the BIG CLEAN on Saturday morning (2 July). Names to the wardens. Buckets and mops provided.

Sound in Vestry

Did you know that the sound system pipes the service into the vestry? If at any point during the service you and your child would be more comfortable in the vestry please feel free to use it—you won't miss out on the service. (And let Em or the wardens know how it can be more user-friendly).

Singing the fairtrade song at a recent fairtrade tea party in the church hall



Chain of Prayer Day

What is it?

A chain of prayer day is when we have prayer continuously in church for a whole day.



Where is it?

In St Swithuns Church

When is it?

Monday 27 June, starting with Morning Prayer at 9.00am and finishing with Compline at 9.00pm.

Why are we doing this?

We want to have a day when we pray for our community in Kennington and indeed for communities around the world. The Flower Festival (15-17 July) will be a great opportunity for a meeting of the church and the village community, and so we want to surround it in prayer.

How can you join in?

Everyone who can spare half an hour in the day or evening to come into church and pray can join in. You don't have to be skilled or clever to pray. You don't have to pray out loud. You don't have to use special words. God hears every humble, faltering prayer.

We need at least 23 people to join the rota and form the links in a chain. It would be good if we could have an unbroken chain.

There will be some cards to help you pray but your own thoughts are uniquely yours, and they are valued as you are.

Brenda Groth

The Grande Fete 2011

Saturday 18 June

This is a fun event to be a part of. If you have been at previous fetes you will be aware that there are a lot of people having a good time while they make some money for St Swithun's School, St Swithun's Church, and Kennington Overseas Aid. You will probably find that you enjoy it even more if you can man a stall for a short time or help with the setting up or clearing away. It is a good event for families because children are very good at helping on the stalls – why not sign up for at least a half-hour slot?

The fete starts at 12.00 – you don't need to bring lunch – there will be a barbecue, or filled rolls in the church hall.

We need items to sell on the stalls - good books, craft, toiletries, jewellery, cakes, and tombola prizes such as bottles of shower gel, soft drinks, wine, and bags of sweets.

Please bring these items before the day so that they can be allocated to the right stall and priced. There is a labelled box at the back of the church for any donations.

Items for the White Elephant and the Silent Auction can be brought on the day.

We would also be grateful for donations towards the cost the barbecue (food and charcoal), the bouncy castle and ice cream.

Isabel Baggott



Home Groups

It was once said that the Sermon on the Mount was probably the best known part of the teaching of Jesus, but arguably it is the least understood and certainly it is the least obeyed. So over the next few months, the home groups will be taking on the challenge of getting to grips with both understanding Jesus' teaching and applying it in the lives we lead.

The groups provide a relaxed home-based atmosphere in which to discuss the Sermon's subjects such as being citizens of God's kingdom, being part of the church community, understanding the place of law, and not worrying about life(!). The discussions can be lively and challenging, but also an arena to be open about the

doubts and uncertainties we might have. We also take the opportunity to pray for each other and others known to us.

There are currently two groups, one meeting on the second, fourth and fifth Wednesdays of each month at 8.00pm, and one on the first and third Thursdays, also at 8.00pm. The next few meetings are scheduled as shown in the table below. Both the Wednesday and Thursday groups are open to new members, and anyone who just wants to see what goes on is welcome to come along. If you are interested, please speak to Em or call me on Oxford 326641 (martin@morse.org.uk).

Martin Morse

Wednesday Group, 8.00pm	Thursday Group, 8.00pm
25 May (92 The Avenue)	
	2 June (5 Fairways)
8 June (50a Kennington Road)	
	16 June (5 Fairways)
22 June (92 The Avenue)	
29 June (location tbd)	
	30 June (5 Fairways)
13 July (50a Kennington Road)	
	14 July (5 Fairways)
27 July (location tbd)	

From the Editor



On Bank Holiday Monday I went for an exceedingly grey and rainy walk up a big hill in the Peak District with my brothers and a nephew. Aside from the soggy sandwiches, scraped knees and general clamminess, we had a great time. I was really pleased that I had organised the walk. We discussed how much more satisfying it is to spend time actually doing something together rather than just sitting around drinking tea as so often happens at family gatherings (although there's obviously a place for that too!).

That got me thinking about church life, and how relationships and community can only truly be built when we try to do things together. Obviously I am a fan of sitting around drinking tea and coffee (and eating cake) - but I think what really binds a group of people together is a shared goal, and the experience of working together towards it - be it climbing a hill or working out how to share the experience of discovering and expressing what God and his love means.

Jackie Smith

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Dates for Your Diary

Sunday 5 June

6.30pm Refresh

Saturday 11 June

10.00am –12.00 noon Craft Morning

Sunday 12 June

11.30am KOA fun run/walk

Saturday 18 June

12.00 noon Grand Fete

Sunday 12 June

6.30pm Pentecost Churches Together
in Kennington Songs of Praise

Monday 27 June

All Day (9am-9pm) Prayer Chain in St
Swithun's

Saturday 2 July

Church hall spring clean

Sunday 3 July

12.45pm Lunch celebrating the curates'
priesting. Radley Primary School.

6.30pm Refresh

Saturday 9 July

10.00am-12.00 noon Craft Morning

Friday 15 - Sunday 17 July

Flower festival

Sunday 24 July

3 parishes pilgrimage

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 June 2011