

St Swithun's Church Newsletter

For information and inspiration

June 2010

Family

I have been thinking a bit about family recently. My thoughts have been prompted by spending time with my grandma who has been in hospital for the last month. Those of you who have spent any length of time in hospital will know that it can be both a tiring and depressing place. In an attempt to make things a little more bearable, my mum, sister and I have between us been seeing Grandma every day. And one day last week we went on a trip down memory lane.

I used to visit my grandma every Monday after school. I remember watching Countdown each week at 4.30pm. I remember picking apples from her apple tree. I remember playing in her garden shed which doubled up nicely as a playhouse for us. I remember learning to play Cribbage and Canasta, I remember never quite acquiring a taste for Spam! For many of my formative years, my grandma has been a significant figure. Not perhaps the cuddly, white-haired, biscuit-laden granny that stereotypical images might conjure, but solid, outspoken, resilient, and independent. I hope her example and her way of loving me have impacted the person I am today.

Because that's family for you, isn't it. People we often overlook – people we rub alongside, in good times and in bad, sharing the mundane but life-enhancing chores and events.



But then we discover years later that it is our family's love that has formed who we are. And it is worth remembering in this context that we are part of God's family. We are his children; heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. He cares for us as a mother hen, and invites us to call him Abba, 'Daddy'.

Can we allow his love and care for us to be as formative as those whose company we share daily? Can we allow ourselves to be as raw and real with him as we can with those who see us at our best and our worst? Can we trust him to share even the most vulnerable areas of our lives? If we can (and, as with families, it is a lifetime's commitment), I believe our relationship with our heavenly Father will transform us beyond our wildest imaginings.

Em Coley



Ordinary Saints

I do not mean either Southampton Football Club or St Helen's Rugby Club, or even the 'saints who come marching in', but Christian Saints. Every month we seem to be celebrating saints on special days, and June is no exception. On 9 June it is St Columba of Iona, followed by St Barnabas on 11 June, and then St Alban on 22 June and St Peter on 29 June.

Saints were special yet ordinary people. We can often see them depicted in stained glass windows in old churches in some strange poses, but they were real people whose mental attitudes are something we can imitate. We, today, can look at things the way they did and adopt their attitudes of obedience and love, care and compassion for our neighbours.

St Columba of Iona was a sixth-century missionary monk who introduced Christianity to the Picts. As a leading figure in the revival of monasticism he also established Iona as a centre of learning and pilgrimage.

Barnabas the Apostle, a Levite, was an early Christian convert who accompanied St Paul on several missionary journeys. He has long been regarded as the founder of the Greek Orthodox Cypriot Church and is the patron saint of Cyprus. Barnabas was martyred by fellow Jews in a synagogue in Salamis.

St Alban, a pagan who converted to Christianity, lived in what is now St Albans and was the first British Christian martyr.

St Peter was a fisherman who was assigned a leadership role by Jesus. We read about him being involved in a dialogue with Jesus (Matthew 16) who asked him 'Who do you say I am?' Peter replied, 'You are the Christ, the son of the living God'. Jesus foretold that

Peter would deny him three times before the cock crowed and we all know the rest of the story. He quickly became a pivotal figure in the early Christian Church and is regarded as the first Pope.

These like other saints were Christian heroes who gave their lives to help others. We can be heroes by doing what nobody else is doing and help others. St Paul wrote of us as 'God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience'.

Becoming a saint is not so much a matter of what standard of morality we have achieved. No matter how often we fail and repent we are all saints, consecrated by God.

Gerry Bowen-Thomas

St Swithun's Day

St Swithun's day falls on a Thursday (15 July). We have decided to celebrate it on 11 July. There will be a service at 9.30am, followed by festivities and the Summer Buffet, which will be outside as long as the sun shines. This is a really good chance for everyone to get together for a summer party and still be home in time for the World Cup Final. Please put the date in your diary. We will be asking for a rough idea for numbers nearer the time.

Isabel Baggott

Home Group

If you are interested in joining the new home group that has grown out of the Lent course, please speak to Em Coley, Margaret Smith, or Kathryn Baggott. The first meeting is planned for Wednesday 9 June at 50a Kennington Road.

Have you heard of www.streetbank.com? This website allows you to share things with people living within a mile of you, and also to offer your skills or items that you don't need but are happy to give away to a new home for free.

It originally started in London, and there are some great stories about how Streetbank has fostered new friendships, helped people out, and led to all sorts of things being shared and given away. Streetbank hasn't yet spread far outside the capital, but I'm hoping that it might really take off in Kennington.

Why am I so keen on Streetbank? Well, there are three main reasons. First, it's a great way of helping the environment: giving things away means that they don't end up in landfill, and sharing means that we don't need to buy so much, saving the raw materials and energy needed to produce things in the first place.

Second, sharing is a reminder that quality of life is not determined by possessions. It encourages us to move away from self-sufficiency and rely on others, which is 'good for the soul'. Conversely, we might be able to help someone who needs, but can't afford, something expensive that we could share, such as a hedge-trimmer.

But what excites me most is the potential for such sharing to strengthen community. Streetbank gives us the chance to get to know our neighbours (if we don't already). And then they can become friends rather than strangers, which is a small step towards making our area more friendly and maybe even helping with the loneliness that is an increasing problem for many people.

For a website like this to work, there need to be enough people using it, so please do go and sign up (it's free) at www.streetbank.com. A few clicks could be the start of a big difference.

Sam Partington



Pause for Prayer

Jesus said: 'You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'
(Acts 1v8)



Please pray...

On Ascension day last month we remembered Jesus' charge to us all to witness to his life and his love. Please pray for our mission to make Christ's love known in our community:

- For deepening relationships with the school
- For wisdom to identify needs in the village
- For opportunities to serve our neighbours
- For courage to explain our faith to those who ask
- For the reputation of this church as a place of welcome and love

Kennington Overseas Aid Project 2010

Excuse me, but how much water do you think you used today? How often did you flush the loo? Did you make a cup of tea or coffee first thing today? Did you switch the kettle on first or take your shower first?

With questions like these, Helen Marsh from Practical Action, who spoke at the KOA service in April, persuaded us to think about our use of water and electricity and to contrast our lifestyle with that of the people of the High Andes in Peru. In this mountainous region the communities are much smaller than Kennington, perhaps four or five families, and they are very remote, living up to 5000m above sea level.

Climate change is happening here too. The winters bring heavy rainfall and severe cold. In the summer the people face drought. So the communities struggle to make a living in the traditional way, growing potatoes and rearing alpacas.



KOA chose to support Practical Action this year to help the men, women and children of these remote communities. Practical Action is known for working with appropriate technology and ensuring sustainability, as well as putting the community itself at the centre of all the development work.

Because of the remoteness the people of the High Andes have no access to basic amenities, such as water, electricity and sanitation. We would probably say that these are very basic needs indeed. So the project will provide:

- Clean water
- Safe sanitation
- Renewable energy

At present, water is collected from the local river (just imagine the Thames!), which is often contaminated by animal and human waste.

In future, families will benefit from safe water piped by gravity into the communities.

In future, families will learn how to build ecological 'dry' toilets.

In future, electricity will be available through harnessing the power of wind, sun and water.

'In future' means if we in Kennington reach out to give a helping hand to enable communities in the High Andes to have some of the amenities we take so much for granted.

Clean water and sanitation go a long way to fight disease. Electricity means power to cook and heat the home in a less polluting and more efficient way, and when you have light in the evening you can read and begin the chance of education.

Why do I think all this is so important for us at St Swithun's?



I always come back to St Matthew 25v40: 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' God wants us to care for all our brothers and sisters wherever they live and he wants us to care for his wonderful world.

To find out more go to www.koa.org.uk

Brenda Groth (KOA Chair 2010)

Help Needed for Fete

The Joint Fete with St Swithun's School and Kennington Overseas Aid will be held on Saturday 19 June in the church grounds.

Help is needed to man stalls and to clear up at the end. The organisers also need items to sell on the stalls, and prizes (e.g. tombola prizes).

Please speak to Isabel Baggott or Eckhard Groth if you can help.

What a Weekend!

The weekend of 8-9 May was packed with varied church activities. First up was the Intercessions Workshop on Saturday morning, followed in the evening by a quiz with fish and chips. And then Sunday saw the children's special shared singalong.

Intercessions Workshop

The Rev Em Coley ran a workshop for people who are either doing or who are interested in doing the intercessions in Church. About 15 people from Radley, Sunningwell, and Kennington were there for the session which lasted one and a half hours.

After a brief introduction, we separated into groups of two or three and discussed the material provided for a few minutes, while enjoying a cup of coffee and a croissant. A short discussion then took place, giving more ideas, followed by a further period in our groups, where we formulated a structure for the intercessions, using the material provided plus some of our own thoughts and ideas.

Another discussion took place to swap ideas between the groups, and further suggestions were made for reference materials, including internet sources, (but careful there), using the psalms, readings for the day, checking with the preacher if they wanted anything included as part of a theme for the day, and so on. There were a few things to avoid as well, such as making them too long, or trying for a second sermon!

I believe we went away with a better understanding, plus more options for the intercessions. It was a pleasant, enjoyable, and helpful session.

Mark Horseman

Quiz with Fish and Chip Supper

What an evening! People started to arrive around 7pm and socialised over a glass of wine and a few nibbles. People were free to sit with friends or to take the opportunity to join with less familiar faces and hence make new friends. Each group of people at a table became a team and the hilarity began when they were asked to choose their own team name. These ranged from 'The Young Ones' to the 'We Don't Know' team, but the questions catered for all ages and levels of knowledge. Even if teams were struggling, there was a true spirit of sharing and points were gained by opposing teams as answers were liberally called out in good fun.

The rounds varied from picture rounds and general knowledge, to a music round in which each team was required to give a rendition of a familiar song. Our team was lucky enough to perform 'We Will Rock You', and points were generously awarded by the other teams for the pleasure apparently experienced by the performing artists, as well as for their vocal talent! I have to say that I shall have a lasting image of a certain 'Super Trooper' and someone who wonders what's in store 'When I'm 64'!

The fish and chips were enjoyed by all, with another drink and more socialising. The fun finally ended with the draw of the raffle where an even spread of prizes across the teams enabled everyone to leave feeling like a winner.

Helen Franklin

Sing-along Singalong

I have long aspired to be the lighting or sound engineer at a major concert – Status Quo or something like that – because on tour you get to see the concerts many times for free. Well I have made it!

I was asked to operate the projector so that those of us lucky enough to attend this superb event could be fully involved. One thing I found was that it is not an easy job, especially when you have seven-year-olds not only 'advising' you on how to operate your own equipment but being far more streetwise with computers and IT equipment, and pointing out that you are something of a luddite as far as modern technology goes.

To be in the presence of so many children – not just those who are regularly committed to the Sing-along Club – totally enthusiastic and committed to singing hymns and other Christian songs, along with their parents and grandparents, all of whom were fully involved throughout the afternoon, was a privilege.

Thanks to the children and their families for their support, and a huge vote of thanks to Sally and Em for their inspiration and commitment to this programme.

Back to my analogy of the lighting engineer – I would do this gig every week.

Roger Dennett



Calling all Musicians!

We are looking at getting a music group together to play at All Age Services and possibly for the Communion Service.

It's not something we are rushing into, but we would love to know if there is anyone out there who can play an instrument of some sort, from recorder to guitar or even a tambourine to help keep the beat!! I'm admitting to the flute and a one-finger piano attempt.

If you are willing and able (or if you know anyone else who is), then please get in touch with me or Em so that we can get together to see whether it's a genuine possibility or just a dream! No limit on age, so no excuses!!!

Sally Barber

Something to Say?

Please send any newsletter contributions 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 June 2010

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Dates for Your Diary

Sunday 6 June

6.30pm. Refresh (a service of prayer and reflection)

Monday 7 June

8.00pm. PCC Meeting, St Swithun's Church

Wednesday 9 June

8.00pm. House Group, 50a Kennington Rd (then every fortnight in term time)

Monday 14 June

7.45pm. Stewards Workshop

Saturday 19 June

Joint Fete with St Swithun's School and Kennington Overseas Aid

Sunday 20 June

11.00am. Servers' Workshop

Monday 21 June

3.30pm. Sing-Along

Thursday 24 June

7.45pm. Deanery Synod

Sunday 4 July

6.30pm. Refresh

Saturday 10 July

PCC Away Day

Sunday 11 July

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

Sunday 18 July

Parish Pilgrimage. There are still a few places left (see Gillian Cox for more details, 01865 735590; gilliancox@ntlworld.com)

Monday 19 July

3.30pm Sing-Along

From the Editor

In this issue we've heard from Gerry about having compassion for our neighbours, from Brenda about helping people in the High Andes, and from Sam about sharing our things via 'Streetbank'. It's good to be generous. How can we encourage generosity?

You may have seen The Rev Peter Owen Jones' recent television series 'How to Live a Simple Life', in which he experimented with living by the rule of St Francis of Assisi. Peter walked from Sussex to Devon with just a sleeping bag and no money, asking for food and shelter along the way.

St Francis valued 'poverty' and 'fraternity'. People who follow his teaching live simply, depending not solely on their own efforts to

meet their needs, but on the generosity of others, with the result that ego takes a back seat and real connections and relationships develop.

It seems counter-cultural to relinquish our carefully defended independence, and certainly risky in today's distrustful and suspicious society. But what if the vulnerability that comes with expressing need actually brings the reward of true community?

What would our own community look like if we acknowledged such inter-dependency and allowed it to flourish?

Jackie Smith

