

# St Swithun's Church Newsletter

*For information and inspiration*

May 2010

## Clouds

I went to Jersey on my own after Easter for a three-night retreat. From the moment I stepped off the plane until the moment I got back on it again, the sun did not go behind a cloud. It was glorious. But I have come home to a cloud of another sort. A cloud of volcanic ash is, at the time of writing, drifting over from Iceland and grounding planes across the UK.

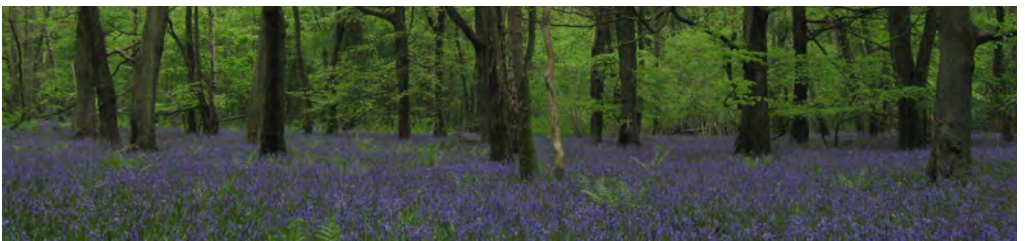
Imagine the delight of school children stranded in Spain, unable to get home for the start of the new term, and the despair of small businesses in Africa, unable to export their goods and rapidly going bust. Did you also wander around the supermarket and wonder whether that supply of bananas you rely on was going to dry up? How much more devastating for the local farmer whose income is reliant on the export trade.

Tens of thousands of people have been affected by this cloud of volcanic ash, invisible from Earth, yet with profound impact. At Pentecost (23<sup>rd</sup> May) we celebrate a very different kind of profound yet invisible impact – God working in us through his Holy Spirit. But do we thank God for the change his gift of the Holy

Spirit brings? Do we thank God for the coincidences (or 'God-incidences' as my friend calls them) that happen that make life that little bit easier? Do we stop to ponder the sense of peace that descends as we enter the house of an ill or dying friend? Do we question the origin of the words that come to mind for that difficult conversation we have with someone at work? Do we stop to analyse the sense of joy that comes as we walk through a beautiful field of buttercups?

We can only guess at how much air time the volcanic ash cloud has enjoyed. It has been all over the radio, the television, and we've all, no doubt, had countless conversations about it. Is the same true about invisible yet profound force in our own lives? Perhaps we should endeavour to make it so. Perhaps we should take the time to stop, acknowledge the presence and influence that God has through his Spirit, and then to thank him.

*Em Coley*



## A Day in the Life of Lee Coley

I'm up at 6.30am most days although often we hear Jack earlier than that. A far better alarm than my phone! I'm usually downstairs by 6.45am and doing various household jobs, including emptying the dishwasher, making Em a cup of tea, packing my bag, getting Jack dressed and helping Ellie get ready. After all that I'm on my bike, cycling to the station and enjoying my book on the way to London. I eventually get into work around 9.20am.

I don't necessarily think too much in the first couple of hours after I'm awake, I just rest in the routine and wake up on the train. My week tends to focus on a Wednesday (which is my day off) and the weekends when I get time to spend with the kids and Em. My focus is primarily on my family and I don't want to waste the opportunity to get to know Ellie and Jack while they're young. I often joke that when they're grumpy teenagers, I'll work all the hours that are available - but for now they will have to put up with me!

I work just next to Westminster Abbey and have a most wonderful view over the Abbey. I find that the sight is now so normal that it no longer astonishes me quite the way it did when I first started working there around 16 months ago. I work within a tight-knit department and so while being a solicitor can be quite an insular job, I don't find this is the case where I am. We often talk about difficult cases or just what is going on in our lives. I had only been at the firm three months when Jack was born, and the department and the firm were extremely supportive at that stressful time.

As I work a relatively short day, I tend not to take a lunch break - instead I eat at my desk while trying to read a file. I often find in the early afternoon that my concentration wanders and perhaps it would be better to go out for a walk. At my previous firm in St Albans, I used to go to the gym religiously each lunchtime and found that this really helped to keep me focused during the afternoon. I don't have enough time now to do that here and instead eat my lunch energetically!

Prayer has an odd place in my day and I don't think I really give it quite the attention it deserves. Being a creature of habit, I pray on the train in the morning (generally after the train has stopped at Reading station) and then send up a few 'arrow' prayers as and when during the day. I find prayer quite intimidating and I'm not very good at keeping still and quiet and focusing my mind on God and what I should be praying about. I admire those who can focus and concentrate but I think God doesn't just link with us when we pray but constantly throughout the day.

I seem to have reached the age where gardening appeals. I think some genetic coding kicks in, making growing vegetables and clearing weeds a hugely appealing thing to do. I'm also doing it to get Ellie interested in where food comes from and to get her involved in the growing process. I suspect once the plants start to produce their fruit, then she will become more excited than she is at present with a few green shoots! So my day ends with some telly and a potter in the garden, before catching up with Em on her day, and sinking into bed at 10.30pm.

## Refresh...



Refresh is a new service of prayer and reflection. It will be held on the first Sunday of the month at 6.30pm during the summer months (June to September). If you are interested in

being a part of the team putting this 30 minute service together, please speak to Em Coley. And please do come along – the first is on 6 June 2010.

## Restoring the Woven Cord

*A Celebration of Celtic Christian Spirituality*

In the summer of 1974, I spent several weeks as a student youth-hostelling round Scotland, and took the boat trip from Mull to Iona. I was struck by the island's beauty, and also by the long history of Christianity, in such a remote place. Whenever I have encountered Iona-style prayer and worship, I have appreciated it.

Michael Mitton, who runs quiet days for the Bible Reading Fellowship, is launching a revised edition of his book on Celtic Christianity at Wycliffe on 6 May 2010. He will be talking to Liz Hoare, Tutor in Prayer, Mission and Spirituality there. To quote from Michael's introduction, 'I am in no doubt that the Spirit of God is reminding us of the first expression of faith in these isles to give us inspiration for Christian ministry and mission today.'

Anyone else interested? Refreshments served from 7.00pm, event starts at 7.30pm. No charge, but please let Claire Proudman know if you are coming (claire.proudman@brf.org.uk; 01235 319700, as they would like an idea of numbers.

*Julia Kent*



# Pause for Prayer

'I tell you the truth:  
whatever you did for one of  
the least of these...you did  
for me.'

(Matthew 25 v 40)



## Please pray...

This month is host to Christian Aid Week. This is a summary from their website of who they are and what they do:

'Christian Aid is a Christian organisation that insists the world can and must be swiftly changed to one where everyone can live a full life, free from poverty.

We work globally for profound change that eradicates the causes of poverty, striving to achieve equality, dignity and freedom for all, regardless of faith or nationality. We are part of a wider movement for social justice.

We provide urgent, practical and effective assistance where need is great, tackling the effects of poverty as well as its root causes. We are an agency of our churches in Britain and Ireland and are mandated to work on relief, development and advocacy for poverty eradication. Christian Aid's work is founded on Christian faith, inspired by hope and acts to change an unjust world through charity – a practical love and care for our neighbours.'

Prayer points:

- give thanks for the commitment and dedication of all who work to make this week a success
- pray for the courage never to give up on the belief that change is possible
- pray that communities would come together to work for change
- pray that we would not allow ourselves to be motivated by apathy, but would develop a heart of compassion for the poor
- pray for whichever political party is elected to govern our country that they would work for justice and change for the world's poor

## Christian Aid Week



St Swithun's Church supports Christian Aid at times of major disasters such as the Haiti earthquake at the beginning of this year, the tsunami disaster in South East Asia, and the famine in Niger.

Christian Aid week this year begins on 9 May. The village does not have a house to house collection, mainly because we have the Kennington Overseas Aid collection instead. However, as a church, Em and I feel that we should support Christian Aid's work in such places as the Sudan, Ethiopia and all those other places in Africa and the rest of the world where grinding poverty exists but which only comes to our notice when things become even more critical than usual.

To that end we will ask you to give as generously as you can to a retiring collection at the two services on Sunday 23 May which is, of course, Pentecost. What better way to bear witness than to give to those who have nothing! Envelopes will be available in advance and at both services for your use, and the only money on 23 May which will go to the Church will be that in our regular giving envelopes.

*Brian Baggott*

## 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!

## Kennington Joint Fete

### 'Paddington Bear's Tea Party', 19 June

The fete is an annual event and we are hoping for fine weather and a successful day. As in previous years the church is responsible for several stalls and will benefit from an equal share of the profits with the school and Kennington Overseas Aid.

To ensure that it is a rewarding and profitable event we need offers of help and donations. If anyone is able to offer help on the day – to man a stall, to help set up, or to help clear away, please speak to Isabel Baggott or Eckhard Groth.

We would also like donations of cakes, jewellery, books; donated items for the craft stall, bottle tombola and white elephant stall; and any items which could be used for prizes or the Raffle.

There will be competitions to fit in with the theme of Paddington Bear's Tea Party:

#### Food Competitions:

- Adult Competition: a jar of marmalade, jam or preserves. This will be judged by Helen Peacocke, cookery writer for *The Oxford Times*.
- Children's Competition: under eights and over eights categories. Design a biscuit or small cake for Paddington's tea. This will be also be judged by Helen Peacocke.

#### Art Competitions:

- Children's Competition: design a useful hat for Paddington. Under eights and over eights categories. Weimin He, who did the illustrations for the reopening of the Ashmolean Museum, will judge these.

*Isabel Baggott*



Children plant flower seeds in the church grounds with Rosey Hollinrake (Samuel and Oliver Ward pictured here)

## Easter Experience

On Monday 29 March, the church once again played host to a group of children and teachers from the village school (following on from the Christmas Experience in 2009).

Volunteers from the church set up six stations around the church plotting the stages of the Easter story: the palm-strewn approach to Jerusalem; Jesus washing his disciples' feet; the Passover meal; the Garden of Gethsemane; the cross; and the tomb. Members of the congregation donated various props to help create authentic scenarios. The church was transformed!

When the children arrived (90 children throughout the day), there was a person from the church at each station (Brenda Groth, Isabel Baggot, Brian Baggot, Mary Dennett, Margaret Smith, Barbara Boyne, and Em Coley). Groups of about eight children visited each station in turn, and heard part of the Easter story.

Isabel was in charge of the approach to Jerusalem, and she talked with the children about the crowd's hopes and dreams about Jesus. Each child drew or



wrote about their own hopes and dreams on a piece of paper shaped like a stone, and then left it at the foot of the cross. Isabel said: 'We helped the children to think a bit wider about the story'.

At the station representing the cross, Mary Dennett encouraged the children to talk about how they felt when they looked at the cross. She gave out red ribbons as





symbols of Jesus' blood, and the children all held a ribbon and thought of someone they would like to pray for.

Rebecca Pogose, Key Stage One Co-ordinator at the school, said:

'On behalf of all the staff and children in Key Stage One, I'd just like to say a massive thank you to the church helpers for all the efforts and creativity put into making our Easter Experience truly memorable. At each station, we were able to learn about Easter through interactive, stimulating activities and even got to eat a chocolate egg! We learnt about the true meaning of Easter and will always remember this. Em continues to make each trip to church fun and rewarding and our children have truly benefitted from all of her efforts. It's great that there's such a strong bond with our school and we have enjoyed all her wonderful assemblies.'

*Jackie Smith*

## The Church Choir

The choir would be pleased to welcome new voices. We practise in the church on Monday evenings at 6.30pm. The choir's music adds another very welcome dimension to our worship at St Swithun's. Recently we have been introducing the congregation to some exciting new hymns. Come and join us! If you are interested, please speak to Sally Barber.

## Something to Say?

What are you involved in at church or in the village? Why not write a short piece about it? 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: 19 May 2010**

## Contact Details

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## Dates for Your Diary

### 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.

### Thursday 13 May

10.30am. Ascension Day Holy Communion Service

### Monday 17 May

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

### Tuesday 18 May

7.45pm. Deanery Synod.

### Sunday 23 May

Pentecost services 9.30am 11.00am 6.30pm

### Sunday 30 May

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

### Sunday 6 June

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

### Monday 7 June

8.00pm. PCC Meeting, St Swithun's Church

### 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)

## Readings for Home...

During the month of May there will be a sheet available with the week's prayers and Bible Readings on. Please take it away and let Em know if this is useful and you would like the sheets to continue to be available.

## From the Editor

Ralph Waldo Emerson, the American essayist, wrote: 'Adopt the pace of nature, her secret is patience.' I was reflecting on this in the light of a conversation I had recently with a friend, about our lives never being complete. Each person might have something in their lives that they wish was different – a situation, an attitude, a relationship.

But I think life is all about the journey towards completeness, and about being patient along the way. It's a hard lesson to learn, but perhaps looking at the patience of nature's cycles can help.

Winter seemed so long, and spring so late to arrive. But patience has been rewarded with an explosion of beautiful life in gardens and hedgerows. I have a peace lily in a red pot on my desk at work, and last week an elegant white flower emerged on fine green stem.

It's been more than a year since the last flower, but it was worth waiting for!

*Jackie Smith*

