

St Swithun's Church Newsletter

For information and inspiration

November 2010

Paul's Point?

So, here's a confession, I have always found Paul a little pious. Often his faith and view of God are so far removed from my life's experience that I struggle to grasp what he's getting at. As a result I experience him as rather holier-than-thou (or should that be holier-than-me?!).

But I found myself singing a wonderful modern hymn the other day with the following lyrics:

'I will not boast in anything,
No gifts, no power, no wisdom
But I will boast in Jesus Christ
His death and resurrection.'

This picks up a recurring sentiment of Paul (see I Cor 1:31; 2 Cor 11:30; Gal 6:14; Eph 2:1-9) and perhaps for the first time the penny dropped. Having just been diagnosed with probable Multiple Sclerosis, and so facing periods when I may well not be able to draw on my gifts, or power (and indeed wisdom seems lacking at times of crisis), I was struck by how good life is.

Life is good, not because of the things that we can enjoy, not because of who we are or the things that we're good at, or even the things that we have or will accomplish, but because of all that Christ's death and resurrection has won for us.

I regularly refer back to Jesus' assertion: 'I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full' (John 10:10) and I believe wholeheartedly in the rich, satisfying and abundant life that God wants for us. I believe that God makes this available through lavish helpings of peace, joy, love, forgiveness and hope. And I understand now that Paul isn't meaning to be sanctimonious, rather he is asserting that even when the human strength you'd come to rely on has been stripped away, life is still good, because God made it to be, and God himself is good. And that, I think, is cause for an Alleluia!

Em Coley



A Day in the Life of Brian Baggott



My day begins at about 8am (no alarm clock) when we get up, have breakfast, shower and sort out what exciting things we are going to do that day.

At least that was the pattern until our daughter Lorna started working again two days a week, and needed childcare for baby Emily. Lorna works as a nurse at the Children's Hospital and has an early start. So two days a week our alarm is set for 7am so we can be ready to head up the A34 to Kidlington. Emily is then handed over to us and for the rest of those two days she is in our tender care. We bring her back to Kennington and return her just before 5pm to hand over to Lorna's husband Richard. She is an absolute joy and must be one of the easiest babies in the world to look after. She has just started walking as you will soon see in Church when she does the traditional circuit of the altar rails.

On Tuesdays I take her down to the Mother and Toddler Group in the Village Centre. Isabel is already there with Mary Dennett and Sheila Prior helping the mums and increasingly dads and grandparents to look after the children by doing simple craft work and making things out of play dough. Isabel is actually known as the 'play dough

lady'. Emily enjoys her time there, especially playing on the slides and trampoline. I tend to bring her back home at 11am as she is getting a bit tired by then. It is also a great excuse to watch 'In the Night Garden' on TV. Emily is then fed and after her lunch I take her for a walk along Bagley Wood Road. Generally, walking down Bagley Wood Road with Emily is one of the occasions when I might pray. I thank God for his goodness to me and wonder what I have done to have earned such an easy life. I find it easier to pray when I am out – especially when I am in an area of natural beauty and Bagley Wood Road almost falls into that category!

For the rest of the week there is housework. I am quite happy doing the cooking – in fact it is one of the household chores I enjoy. Two things I have never learnt to do are drive the washing machine or the iron. Sometimes I do gardening and occasionally a Good Neighbours run, taking people to the local hospitals, the health centre or the dentist. Thursday morning is midweek communion and I attend regularly. If you have never been you could do worse than give it a go. There is a regular congregation of between twelve to sixteen people. We just have a simple communion service without hymns but with a very short address. It lasts about half an hour and I find it very uplifting.

At least once a week I devote a couple of hours or so to doing the Church accounts. It's not simply a question of counting the collection and banking it. Money comes from all sorts of sources and, of course, is paid out to all sorts of organisations. It all has to be allocated to various budget heads and a proper audit trail of income and expenditure has to be provided to show where the money comes from and where it goes so that everything is transparent.

One of the things we do now is to take an occasional trip into Oxford (using our bus passes of course), and go to the Ashmolean where we spend a couple of hours doing a small part of it. We made a point recently of visiting the Pre Raphaelite exhibition, which was a great treat for me since they are one of my favourite groups of artists.

Looking at magnificent works of art of all sorts, or listening to great classical music, are other things that inspire me to pray. I just want to thank God for giving people such skills which can be shared by all. Music has a great effect on me. Sometimes in Church I find it impossible to continue to sing some verses of hymns because they affect me spiritually so much. Those round about me are probably grateful for that given my singing voice! Certain pieces of classical music have the same effect and can almost bring me to tears.

My favourite film of all time is the original *Brief Encounter* with Trevor Howard and Celia Johnson. Another one of my all-time great films is *Shadowlands*, telling the unbelievably sad story of C. S. Lewis and Joy Gresham, who became Lewis's wife a few weeks before she died of cancer. I defy anyone not to be moved by it.

Eventually we will climb the stairs for bed. We usually aim to be in bed by just after 11pm but rarely manage it. It is when I am settled in bed with the lights out and just before I go to sleep that I say my main prayers. I thank God for giving me such an easy life, pray for my family and friends and those I am aware of who need His help, and finally pray for anything major in the wide world. I am not a good prayer and probably forget more often than not. I hope God will forgive me. I'm sure He knows I mean well.

Brian Baggott 

Pause for Prayer

Do Not Worry

'Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?'

Matthew 6 v 25-27

Please pray...

- for those making difficult decisions about council services in the face of budget cuts
- for those who are worried or unwell

Thank God...

- that He is close at all times
- for the beauty of autumn
- for friends and family who enrich our lives



Prayer partnership

Did you know that our current prayer partnership scheme began with an idea formed in a small group called 'Acting Small' at a parish away day back in October 2004?

We were looking for strategies for growth in our church. As prayer is essential to the life and growth of any church, the prayer partnership scheme was started.

Whenever each of us prayed for the work of the church, we held before the Lord the name of our prayer partner and whatever role they have within the church, helping us to focus on how the Lord wants us to move forward. This practice shaped a network of prayer that might carry us all forward together.

Today our church is growing and still needs prayers for guidance in its continuing work of doing the Lord's will and spreading His love. It is not a hard task! It does not matter if you feel you are not good at prayer or whether or not you pray regularly, the Lord does not always work to our timetable.

Please come and join this network and make us stronger in the Lord's love. We change partners (by lottery) after a service around the beginning of Advent. I will put a marked box at the back of the church with a slip to fill your name in. I look forward to drawing everyone's name out of the tub ready for Advent and the church's new year.

Yours in the Lord's love

Margaret Smith

Fairtrade in Kennington

How appropriate it was that on Harvest Sunday, 3 October, Em was able to pass on the great news: Kennington is now a Fairtrade village!!

It has given me a great deal of pleasure to see what the group Kennington4Fairtrade has achieved over the two years since a member of this congregation suggested at the AGM of Kennington Parish Council that we might like to try for this status.

At St Swithun's we have been interested in Fairtrade for a long time. Coffee Mornings and Sales of Fairtrade Goods have been held at St Swithun's since at least 1999 and in 2006 we were awarded the status of Fairtrade Church.

Many members of this church and other churches in Kennington have been very supportive over the years and I would like to thank them all most sincerely. Since Em arrived last year Fairtrade at St Swithun's has received a real boost.

- The children received Fairtrade Easter eggs at Easter and sweets at Harvest.
- The Singalong children get Fairtrade refreshments.
- We have hunted for treasure in church in the form of Fairtrade gold coins.
- The café in the church grounds in August served Fairtrade refreshments.

Thank you to Em and to all those who supported these occasions.

It is good that St Swithun's has taken a lead but it is the village that has got the Fairtrade Village status. It's a great achievement but it is not the end - rather the beginning of the journey for there is always more to be done and our status has to be renewed next year.

Your next opportunity to support Fairtrade is at the coffee morning advertised in the box below. There will be a number of stalls with food items, present ideas and Christmas cards.

I hope to see many friends old and new as customers on this occasion. If you are engaged in the Big Clean in church you will be allowed a special break to come and have coffee and shop!!

Brenda Groth

Coffee Morning & Sale of Fairtrade Goods

Saturday 13 November

10am-12 noon

St Swithun's Church Hall

There will be a number of stalls with food items, present ideas and Christmas cards



3 Parishes Christmas Festival

Between 6–11 December this year, each of our churches will be displaying Christmas themed items. At St Swithun's we will be filling the church with different Crib scenes. If you have any crib scenes, particularly unusual ones, please speak to Isabel. And do make the time to visit churches in Kennington, Radley and Sunningwell during the festival week to see what the other churches have displayed. More information to follow...

Harvest Hop!

This was the second time 'Jonny and the Jivetones' provided live music for our fund-raising Autumn Bop. This year it was held in St Swithun's School Junior Hall. As usual, Mary Dennett had organised a fantastic supper and a merry band of volunteers were in the staff room sorting this out before the band struck up at 8.00pm prompt. And what a band, all teachers bar one daughter, all talented musicians and all obviously keen on sixties music.

I remember Jonathan (Jonny) Dennett, guitarist/vocalist extraordinaire, as a small boy who lived near me and was a pupil at St Swithun's School. Now he is a husband, father of two and a newly appointed headmaster, but he also has a wonderful growl when singing 'Pretty Woman'.

Rosey and I were the first on the floor but it didn't take long for the rest to follow. Those of us who remember jiving had a field day and Don Cook is a virtuoso. We will not see him in the same light again.

Another highlight was the sight and sound of Sally, Helen, Jo and Linda, as the 4 Degrees, accompanying Jonathan with one of his songs. We could try 'Britain's Got Talent'! If Susan Boyle can do it!!

I thoroughly enjoyed myself as did everyone else, I hope. The band was excellent as was the supper. The atmosphere was friendly and happy, a good example of people coming together in love and friendship in the community.

Linda Frankum



Christmas 2010 at St Swithun's Church



I love the build up to Christmas! I can happily start getting in the festive spirit in October, and, for me, it starts not with displays of Christmas decorations in garden centres, or the gift catalogues landing on my front mat, but with the wonderful escapism of 'Strictly Come Dancing'!! And we're already well into the competition (Scott to win!!!), so here are the dates of the Christmas services to further whet your appetite. And, don't forget to get ahead with Christmas shopping at the Church Christmas Market on 20 November in the Village Centre.

Date	Time	Service
5 December	9.30am 6.00pm	Holy Communion Village Carols around the Tree Mince pies and mulled wine in Church
12 December	9.30am 4.00pm	Holy Communion Christingle Service
19 December	9.30am 6.30pm	Holy Communion Carols by Candlelight
24 December	4.00pm 11.30pm	Crib Service Midnight Communion
25 December	10.00am	Christmas Day Communion
26 December	9.30am	Boxing Day Communion

NB Would you be willing to help with the admin side of Christmas services this year? I would be very grateful for any offers of help with typing up services, folding service sheets, putting together the pew sheet etc. Do let me know if you have time and/or skills on offer! Thanks.

Em Coley

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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 Nov 2010

Dates for Your Diary

Saturday 6 November

9.30am-4.00pm. PCC Away Day, Appleton Church

Sunday 7 November

5.00pm. Tea and fireworks with Kennington Churches Together at St Swithun's

Saturday 13 November

10.00am. Fairtrade sale & coffee morning in the Hall.

10.00am. Big Clean

Saturday 20 November

10-12 noon, Christmas Market, Church Hall

Monday 22 November

3.30pm. Singalong in Church

Monday 22 November

8.00pm. PCC in Church

Sunday 28 November

Methodist Anniversary Service, Methodist Church

Sunday 5 December

6.00pm. Carols around the tree followed by mulled wine and mince pies in the Church.

6-11 December

3 Parishes Christmas Festival Week

NB The Kennington St Swithun's Home Group will be meeting on 10 November, 24 November, and 8 December.

From the Editor



Will you love the 'you' you hide?

On Sunday we sang the following line: 'Will you love the 'you' you hide if I but call your name; Will you quell the fear

inside and never be the same?'. I wonder whether we spend enough time considering the importance of loving ourselves. Perhaps we think that there is something quite wrong with such an emphasis. Shouldn't we be thinking more about loving God, and other people?

But take another line that we said in Church on Sunday: 'Love your neighbour as you love yourself.' This is completely different from saying 'Love your neighbour *rather* than yourself.' Instead, Jesus's second commandment assumes that loving ourselves is a given. And why wouldn't it be? After all, God loves us more than anything,

so it makes total sense that we should love ourselves.

In the TV series 'The Big Silence', Abbot Christopher Jamieson helps five people discover the power of silence. He describes the experience of silence as something which 'allows your real self to come out more - you don't need the masks'.

Maybe we are tempted to try and conceal ourselves from God, worried that we are letting him down. Maybe we hide our true selves from other people, worried that we might be rejected. Maybe we even hide our selves from ourselves, afraid of what we might confront if we were to get rid of all the external distractions.

But ultimately I think God is asking us not to be afraid to love, discover and express our selves more. It is in this state that we can have an authentic encounter with him.

Jackie Smith