

# St Swithun's Church Newsletter

For information and inspiration

October 2011

## Great is your faithfulness

Lee and I had what turned out to be a battle of Bible verses the other evening. He started it. In an attempt to be reassuring, he claimed that nothing is new. His argument was that everything has been seen before, and so experts in various fields are able to be experts because they have experienced the same thing before.

But it caused a strong and negative reaction in me. The same kind of reaction that is caused by reading the first few chapters of Ecclesiastes, where the expression originates: 'What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun..' (Ecclesiastes 1:9) The chapters suggest there is a meaningless predictability to life, a repetitive pattern in which humankind has no say.

But I think I live for all things new. New friendships. New opportunities. New possibilities. New experiences. And my come back to Lee was with an extract of a hymn in mind: 'Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father; Morning by morning new mercies I see.' This, in turn, is based

on Lamentations: 'Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.' (Lamentations 3:22-23).

This speaks to me of an essential truth about God. Because of his generosity and mercy, we experience newness every day. The Bible is littered with references to this: we sing a new song, we taste the new wine of the kingdom, we are new creations, enjoying new life in Christ. This urges us, then, to live life not according to the drudgery of a repetitious or meaningless way of living, but with eyes open to the originality of every day. There is new wonder all around us: in God's creation, in the people we meet, in the variety of every day life. There is the promise of new possibilities every day.

It is a challenge then to live lives that reflect the wonder of God's gift of all things new. But we know as we do so that we will experience God's love, mercy and compassion anew every morning.

*Em Coley*



## A day in the life of Brenda Groth



The day usually begins sometime between 7.00 and 7.30am. Whoever wakes first gets the tea. Morning tea in bed is a habit we have enjoyed since retirement and one which our guests usually enjoy too – a little bit of spoiling. Usually we chat about what has to be done during the day.

Our day does not generally follow a particular pattern. It might include preparation for Kennington Overseas Aid events in the summer, organising a Fairtrade event, making jam and marmalade for sale at the summer fete or Christmas Market, as well as occasionally being on grandparent duty, which gives us a lot of pleasure. Our friends are important to us too, both those near at hand and those further away and we try to keep in touch. Recently we have tried to be supportive to those older friends who find life a bit of a struggle.

We are unusual among our friends in that we have our main meal at lunchtime, although we are flexible about this. In the summer we have enjoyed fruit and vegetables from the garden for lunch – the fruit of Eckhard's labours rather than mine, although I like cooking them! Later in the afternoon if we

are at home we have a pause and a cup of tea together in the summerhouse. It is better to sit there and relax. If you are in the house there is always another job staring at you!

I know that it is said: 'Groths are always going away', and this is true, so many of our days are not spent at home at all. So far this year we have spent around 50 days away. No wonder that the days at home are spent preparing to go away or recovering and catching up once we are home!

We resolved after retirement to spend a bit more time in Germany and we enjoy a different and important part of our lives with friends and family there.

At the time of a significant birthday I made a kind of resolution to be more thankful for my many blessings in life. My prayers are therefore often ones of thanksgiving, for family, health and friendship and for the special fellowship of St Swithun's, as well for having enough to eat and a good roof over my head. When I am finally in bed at the end of the day I often think of those who have no food and shelter and also of those who are working to alleviate poverty all over the world.

## Fairtrade item of the month

2 pack of fair-trade vests  
from Marks & Spencer

**£8**

Bargain!



If you come across a fair-trade item that you would like the congregation to know about please send the details (what it is, where you can buy it from, how much it costs) to Jackie and we will spread the word.

# Pause for Prayer

At our harvest service we took a collection for Church Urban Fund. On their website ([www.cuf.org](http://www.cuf.org)) they say: 'The Church Urban Fund is here to help enable the Church to be more effective and sustainable in working with the poor, marginalised and vulnerable in our society - the disaffected.' Let us commit to pray for them this month.

The Psalmist says, 'Lord, I know that you defend the homeless, and see that the poor are given justice.' (Psalm 140:12).

## Pray for...

Using the following information, please pray for Church Urban Fund:

Church Urban Fund has distributed around £65 million in funding and supported over 5,000 faith-based projects since its launch in 1987.

They target the poorest 10% of communities in England, working in rural as well as urban areas.

They listen to and work with those who know and understand their communities best.

Under the small Mustard Seed grants programme, money reaches projects within one month of the request.

They support projects at an early stage, funding 'core costs' like salaries. They support small, sometimes vulnerable groups as they grow, learn and develop.

They build bridges between churches in wealthier settings and those in more deprived areas through prayer and the sharing of resources and experiences.

## Three Peaks Challenge

On 8 September, along with eight fellow Pearson employees, I was driving along the banks of Loch Lomond towards Fort William. The sun was out and we were quietly looking forward to the challenge that awaited us the next day.

The 'challenge' was the Three Peaks – this involves climbing the three highest mountains in the UK, Ben Nevis, Scafell Pike and Snowdon in 24 hours (including driving time). The reason? To raise money for Hello, the national year of communication campaign, run by The Communication Trust, with the aim of increasing understanding of how important it is for children and young people to develop good communication skills.

With this in mind we assembled ready and willing at 11am the following morning. Much to our disappointment (and dismay!) a low scotch mist had descended and we were not actually able to see the size of the first challenge that awaited us, which on reflection may have been a bonus! The ascent up Ben Nevis was steady, but slow – making sure we had plenty of breaks to keep the whole group together. Once past halfway we thought we had broken the back of the mountain; however, the second half proved to be more challenging as the rain started to fall in earnest together with an ever strengthening wind. This did make conditions more challenging and meant that our summit celebrations were limited to a few photos before the descent began. Not wanting to fall too far behind schedule we managed to reach to foot of Ben Nevis around 6.30pm and following a quick bite to eat (prepared by our drivers) we were en route to Scafell Pike, roughly a six-hour drive away in the Lake District.

We reached Scafell around 1am and despite few of us managing to sleep on the bus,



spirits were still high as conditions here were deceptively dry and mild as we set off, head-torches shining. Our second ascent began well. However, once past halfway, conditions again began to change. Visibility gradually deteriorated to approximately one metre by the time we reached the summit: together with rain and 40-50mph winds this made conditions very difficult – it was here that we were greatly indebted to our mountain leaders who safely navigated a path for us to and from the summit using only a compass and map (there are no clear paths at the summit of Scafell), stopping every time we were slightly off course to get us back on track. Teamwork was vital as we had to stay extremely close to ensure we stayed together – the focus now was not so much on time, but more on safely ensuring that we all descended safely. Which after 7 ½ hours we all did to be greeted by the sight of a welcome bacon butty!

It was now clear that we would not be able to complete the challenge in 24 hours; however, we made our way to Snowdon with time to reflect, recover and recuperate.

A combination of the time and various ailments meant that after much thought myself and the rest of an Oxford contingent of four decided against attempting Snowdon and returned in the pre-booked (naively!) taxi; however, four of the group attempted Snowdon, with three finally making it to the summit and achieving the three peaks!

While personally still feeling a sense of disappointment at not completing Snowdon (it will be done!) I do feel a sense of achievement at having completed two of the three peaks, and very proud of the group as a whole. The experience has reinforced to me two things. Firstly that a group of individuals working completely together to achieve something is a very hard force to stop. Secondly that at certain points we all have to place our faith in others in order to keep going, whether that be friends, mountain leaders or God, and without having this faith it would be harder to achieve our goals.

*Richard Nash*

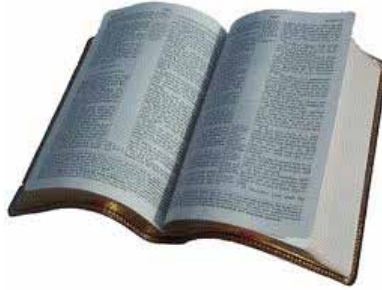
See [www.hello.org.uk](http://www.hello.org.uk) for more about the Hello Campaign

## The Bible Opened...

Between Saturday 29 October and Sunday 6 November we are holding Bible Week to celebrate the Bible. During this week there will be a series of events and exhibitions across the three churches in Kennington, Radley, and Sunningwell.

The week starts on Saturday 29 October as the three churches simultaneously read through the Bible. Between 9.00am and 9.00pm do drop into church to hear extracts read, or sign the rota to join in the marathon read.

Each church will be bringing a 3D element to the Bible as well, as we create displays which focus on the Bible's different parts. In St Swithun's we will have displays illustrating Old Testament stories; in Radley the Gospels and in particular the 'I am' sayings will be brought to life; while in Sunningwell the focus will be on the book of Acts and the Epistles.



If you would like to be involved in creating a display of an Old Testament story, please contact Em or one of the Wardens.

As for services, on Sunday 30 October at 6.30pm we will celebrate the King James Bible. Please nominate your favourite Bible passage for this service. There are slips at the back of church, or you can email [emcoley@me.com](mailto:emcoley@me.com).

On Sunday 6 November at 6.00pm in Radley there will be a service of 'the Bible set to music' which will include hymns and

other musical items that are based on biblical words.

The week promises to be fun, and a fitting celebration of God's word in the year that the King James Bible has its 400th birthday. Please do join in the events and services, and encourage friends and neighbours to see the exhibitions.

## Garden Working Party

On Saturday 15 October, Rosey will co-ordinate another garden working party. Come along to the church grounds with garden gloves and tools.

Anytime between 10.00am and 1.00pm, even just an hour will help. Bring your lunch. We'll be giving the rockery a last weeding before winter, and tidying other areas around the grounds also. Possibly, we'll prepare other areas for Pictorial Meadow seeds for next year.



## **Fairtrade - a continuing journey**

It doesn't seem a year ago that Kennington gained the status of a Fairtrade Village. Members of St Swithun's Church continue to be very supportive of our efforts in the village, and church Fairtrade events are a big part of the whole picture. Now our status has to be renewed and so there will be more events coming up.

Here at St Swithun's the next opportunity to support Fairtrade will be at the coffee morning advertised below. I hope you will all come along and show your support for the producers around the world who want to have a fair chance to earn a living for themselves and their families.



### **Coffee Morning & Sale of Fairtrade Goods**

Saturday 29 October

10am–12 noon

St Swithun's Church Hall

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

## **Methodist Church Anniversary Service**

Doreen Biggadike writes:

To all at St Swithun's

On behalf of the members of Kennington Methodist Church, I would like to invite you to our church anniversary service on Sunday 23 October at 6.30pm.

Our preacher will be Reverend David Cooper (our previous minister).

We look forward to seeing you and welcoming you to our church.

Your sincerely,

Doreen, Church Council secretary

## From the Editor

One of my favourite things to do is to bake cakes and invite people around for afternoon tea. Last Sunday I made



a Victoria sandwich and some shortbread and tidied the house in preparation for my guests. Shortly before they arrived I realised that it was warm enough to sit outside - but one glance at the patio showed me that it was covered in fallen leaves from the sycamore tree that grows in the pub next to my house.

My first reaction was to rush out and sweep the unsightly mess away so that my friends would be able to sit in a pristine garden. Then I looked again and saw that the leaves were beautiful and made a very attractive autumn backdrop for the tea table - it almost looked like something from a magazine! This led me to wonder whether there might be a lesson in learning to look for beauty in all things. Perhaps we are preconditioned to think only of certain things as beautiful, but how much richer our lives might be if our eyes were opened to find beauty in unexpected places, situations, and people.

*Jacqueline Smith*

### Clergy:

Rev Em Coley 01865 735135;  
emcoley@me.com

Rev Pam McKellen 01235 554739;  
p.mckellen@btinternet.com

### Newsletter Editor:

Jackie Smith 01865 326175;  
jacquelinesmith0@gmail.com

### Church Wardens:

Isabel Baggott 730950

Gerry Bowen-Thomas 739356

Bill Hunwick 739311

## Dates for Your Diary

### Saturday 14 October

10.00am-12.00 Craft Morning in Church  
(4-11-year-olds)

### Saturday 29 October

10.00am-12.00 Coffee Morning and  
Sale of Fairtrade Goods, Church Hall

### Saturday 29 October - Sunday 6 October

Bible Week (see separate flyer for  
details)

### Sunday 30 October

6.30pm Celebration of King James Bible

### Monday 31 October

5.00pm-7.00pm Party of Light  
(alternative to Halloween)

### Saturday 12 November

10.00am-12.00 Craft Morning in Church  
(4-11-year-olds)

### Saturday 19 November

10.00am-12.00 Christmas Market,  
Village Centre

### Sunday 20 November

6.30pm Churches Together Advent  
Carols, St Swithun's

## 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 Oct 2011**