

Vicar's Notes

I have been editing parish magazines now for just over 24 years, without a break. The job was thrust upon me at the start of my second curacy, by a vicar who produced a few notes of his own each month—after due prodding—and then left the rest to me. I have never been able to free myself ever since. But this is the first occasion on which I have had to leave an issue out, though it may not be the last. It nearly happened once before, just after I had begun my editorial duties. I had to take a holiday at short notice, as the vicar was leaving the parish and I would have to be in charge until the new appointment was made. He said he would see to the magazine this time, and I was not to worry. But as no one sent in any contributions, he decided that there was no need for that month's issue—or else it could appear with most of its pages blank. Fortunately the previous editor, now vicar of a near-by parish, came to the rescue, filled up the blank pages with various odds and ends and the magazine duly appeared. Since then I have usually had to take the magazine on holiday with me to make sure that it would come out, but I have decided now not to do this again.

MANY CHANGES

Many things have changed in these 24 years. The appearance of parish magazines has greatly improved, and some now appear in the guise of newspapers. Printing costs have greatly increased, and most magazines are now heavily subsidised by Church Councils to keep them in being, even though 6d. is now the usual minimum charge. Ours at the moment is one of the few fortunate exceptions, and stands on its own feet. Last year it made a profit of £43. It did have a bad patch a few years ago, when it had to receive a grant-in-aid from the Church Council, but that has now all been repaid, and in 1959 a donation of £50 was made to the Council's Funds.

As well as increase in costs, the printing of a magazine now usually takes much longer, as most printers are these days snowed-under with work, and of course hours are shorter

and skilled men fewer. I heard of a parish only a few miles away where the September and October issues of the magazine were both delivered on the same day! Because of the difficulties, many parishes have stopped having magazines, and either have a duplicated news-letter or nothing at all. Others carry on with the help of subsidies, and often with a layman as editor. I still receive the magazine which I took over in 1937 and edited for 9 years. Its editor for some years now has been the former editor of one of the local papers, who likes to serve the church in this way in his retirement. There is much to be said for this, because a clergyman never knows when interruptions might come. I often get 10 or 12 calls a day, some short and pleasant; others pleasant, but far from short—such as helping a man from overseas discover his parents' grave, or searching through the registers for a dear old octogenarian who has travelled a long way to reassure himself that he was indeed really baptised by Fitzroy Fitzwygram (some old people become morbidly anxious about such matters) and satisfied about this, wants to tell me his life history; others more time-consuming still, serious and confidential, requiring every ounce of knowledge and skill and concentration one possesses, and sometimes leaving one almost exhausted. The most galling and unsatisfactory of all are from those who, either directly or by a long, roundabout approach, are seeking monetary help. I have had many hundreds of these in the course of my ministry, and the sad thing is that so few have ever been genuine—less than 5 per cent. I should say. Many have established a good case, and have promised to repay any money lent, but in all these 27 years only three people, so far as I can remember, have ever done so. There are not so many of these time-wasting scroungers about as there used to be, but those who are still operating are often first-class actors, with a technique that would move a heart of stone. I wish that the Welfare State would provide an emergency organisation to which one could refer such people, so that the genuine person who really does need £2 to get to Liverpool that night could be lent that sum, and the trickster checked on and if necessary prosecuted for attempting to obtain money under false pretences.

AN EXPANDING MINISTRY

Though some tasks, such as extensive poor relief, are fortunately no longer part of a minister's normal duties, in other ways the scope of his ministry has considerably widened in the last 30 years.

Before the war, very little preparation for some of the sacraments was provided in most parishes; people were often married, and their children baptised, by a priest who had never seen them before, let alone given them any help or guidance. There is still room for improvement here, but a good start has been made, and other agencies have also come in, such as the Marriage Guidance Council. The field of 'Pastoral Counselling,' as it is called in America, has been greatly extended, and it seems as though it will extend far more. The long-neglected Ministry of Healing is gradually taking its rightful place in the Church's life—this came out very strongly at the well-attended meeting at the Public Hall, arranged by the Hampton Council of Churches, on the subject of "The Church as a Healing Community." There is growing co-operation between doctors and clergy. This is all very much to the good, but it means that the pressure on the clergy, many of them single-handed in large parishes, and the claims upon their time, have greatly increased and will continue to do so. Even in the much easier days of 24 years ago, magazine and midnight were often closely associated, and I often thought what a suspicious character I must look, fumbling away at the printing firm's door in a dark alley in the early hours of the morning, trying to find the letter-box.

I still have to burn the midnight oil from time to time, but I do not now regard the magazine as having the high priority I used to accord to it, because I feel that other calls are often of more importance and more worth wearing one's self out upon. So sometimes the magazine just has to go by the board, and one has to put up with the complaints about the inefficiency of the Church and its officers. One could answer that it is not alone the Church which fails in this regard—many of us who have had dealings with civil bodies of various kinds, know what it is to wait months for an answer to a letter, or for any action to be taken. I do not wish to excuse the Church, or myself;

but I think the question for deeper concern and prayer is this—How can the Church fail to be inefficient in one direction or another, when there is so great a lack of manpower, money and equipment in face of the gigantic tasks with which it is confronted? Even in a parish, one knows that one can touch only the fringe of what ought to be attempted. So just as the Archbishop feels of his great task, that it is beyond all human strength, a humble vicar knows that it is true also of his smaller one—and that, without constant divine grace, and the company of a band of men whose hearts God had touched, he can accomplish little or nothing.

PERSONALIA

God had certainly touched the hearts of Elizabeth and William Thomas. They had been married nearly 61 years, and it seemed right that in death they should not long be divided. They were both of them staunch and forthright in faith and life, and towers of strength to others. Mr. Thomas had served the Church as a tenor chorister for many years, and then as a Reader for many more in several different dioceses. His voice remained clear and true and strong to the last, and he must have been one of the oldest readers regularly singing the morning service as well as reading the lessons. Mrs. Thomas was a well-loved member of the Mothers' Union in every parish in which she had lived. They will both leave a memory of outstanding personalities, who achieved a gracious and happy Christian marriage, and bore a vigorous Christian witness to the last. It seemed especially fitting that William Thomas should enter into the joy of his Lord on Ascension Day, a festival very dear to his heart.

It was good to have Dr. Rodney Bishop back with us for a Sunday after a year's medical work in Canada. He is now in general practice for a period in King's Lynn, but will be coming over to speak to us on St. James's Day about Canada and his life there, and to show us coloured slides.

THE MASS ATTACK

After the great spring-cleaning of the church, the mass attack on the vegetation in the churchyard. We have bought an expensive chemical grass-retardant, but it came through to us rather too late and in wrong

weather-conditions to be of much use to us this spring. So as many shears and hands to hold them as could be obtained were called for. From 9.0 a.m. to 9.0 p.m. on Saturday, May 27th, volunteers were to be seen doing their stint, and about one-third of an acre was thoroughly cleared of briars, bushes, nettles and grasses of all kinds. About 35 people turned up altogether, including a number of young children who worked as hard as anybody. Mr. Hawkins put in the longest stint, 7 hours, and next came two members of the Vicarage contingent, Clare and Francis, with 6. I had other chores and could manage only 4, as did several others. Since then members of the Y.P.F. have put

in several evenings of good work, and we hope others will come along when they have an hour or two to spare. Then, with another mass-onslaught in the autumn to back up Mr. Hawkins's steady, continuous work, the use of our retardant in October and again in the spring, and our churchyard should become as peaceful, pleasant and well-ordered place as any in the borough. I wish we could also organise similar attacks on the various over-grown verges in some of our roads, which are the grossly neglected responsibility of the Corporation, but this will have to wait until we have our own grass thoroughly under control!

AROUND THE SPIRE

being notes and news about
people, activities & organisation

MOTHERS' UNION

It was with deep regret that we learned of the 'passing' of Mrs. Thomas one of our oldest and most regular members who was loved and respected by all who knew her. Her passing will leave a gap amongst us, but also a lasting memory and a wonderful example.

Now Mr. Thomas has followed his wife, what a wonderful full life they have had together, so much so that one could not continue to exist without the other.

We were pleased to welcome one or two members of the Young Wives' at our May meeting. Mrs. Irwin spoke to us about the Marriage Guidance Council. It was a most enlightening talk but I'm afraid there was a very small attendance. I suppose that most of our members felt that the subject would not interest them personally but I am sure that they like me must know of cases where marriage has not turned out to be all that was expected. It is most gratifying to know that a society exists who devote their energies to solving these problems and the more we know of their efforts the better we should be able to help by advising of the existence of this society.

We had a well attended meeting on June 7th when Mrs. Latey spoke to us on "The Mothers' Union." That might sound a bit dull to non members, but it was most inspiring. I would like to say a bit more about this next month.

We have just heard of the death of Mrs. Childs of Mays Rd., after a long and lingering illness, for years she was a faithful member, and has been greatly missed during the past year when she was unable to attend our meetings owing to ill health. Our sympathy goes out to her husband and family in their very sad loss.

V.P.

THE YOUNG WIVES' GROUP

In May the Groups of this area arranged a joint meeting at a Brains Trust. The Brains were those of a doctor, a psychiatrist and a former secretary of Mary Sumner House, who is now working for the Servants of Christ the King.

The questions were sent in by the groups and proved to be of interest to all members. Among the questions were ones about education—the purpose of—which provoked some thinking about fundamentals; mental health; suffering; the respective claims on parents of the last and the next generation; the male and housework. All the questions were sincerely and helpfully dealt with and our contingent would have liked to discuss to further length many of the issues raised.

The meeting took the place of the annual party and those of us who went, hope that this experiment will be repeated next year.

THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S FELLOWSHIP

'Boanerges,' the Y.P.F. boat was launched with due ceremony on Saturday, May 27th by the chief boat-

builder, Robert, who has done so much to complete it. Champagne was considered rather costly for such an occasion, so tonic water was poured over the bows. The Vicar of Hampton, Mr. Parkinson, has been kind enough to allow us to moor our launch by the jetty at the end of his garden.

Whit Saturday was devoted to a cycle ride to Guildford Cathedral. We arrived safely, though felt very shabby dressed in jeans etc., whereas the many other visitors were dressed in their "Sunday Best." Nevertheless, we were very impressed by this new building and agreed that there were very few alterations we would make. The journey back was more eventful as we collected many punctures in tyres, skin and jeans all of which were fairly successfully patched up.

Swimming is once more in season and Thursday evenings are being devoted to this. This activity should be popular now because of the rule that those who use 'Boanerges' must be able to swim 100 yards. This is not because we think it is going to sink. (Believe it or not, it's still afloat!)

Initial plans to do more boating at Easter, on the Broads are now going ahead. This may seem a little early, but we are afraid that all boats will be booked as they were this year.

Activities now will probably subside for a few weeks now, as many of us have exams and feel that we must start working. R.M.

SOME DATES TO NOTE

- July 9.—No service at 8.0 p.m.
 9.0 a.m. Confirmation and Parish Communion, followed by breakfast at Wayside for candidates and friends.
 11.45 a.m. Matins (said).
 6.30 p.m. United Service at All Saints, Hampton.
- July 10.—8.0 p.m. Hampton Council of Churches (Methodist Hall).
- July 12.—8.0 p.m. Stewardship Committee (Vestry).
- July 20.—8.0 p.m. Church Council (Vestry).
- July 25.—St. James's Day: Patronal Festival Holy Communion at 7.15, 10.30 a.m. Evensong (said) and Intercessions at 7.30 p.m.
 Illustrated talk about Canada by Dr. Rodney Bishop at 8.0 p.m. at Wayside.
- July 26.—8.0 p.m. Young Wives' Group (W).

BAPTISMS

- Apr. 23.—John Owen Doddrell, 181, Uxbridge Road.
 „ 23.—Susan Jane Feltham, 98, Percy Road.
 „ 23.—James Wyatt Robertson, 26, St. James's Avenue.
 „ 23.—Mark Stephen Ward, 10, Dean Road.
 „ 23.—Barratt West, 101, Stanley Road.
 „ 23.—(Received into the Church) Claire Vickers, Derby Lodge, Anleby Road.
- May 28.—David Ivor Charles Bell, 73a, Uxbridge Road.
 „ 28.—Michelle Elizabeth Manton Brown, 5, New Broadway.
 „ 28.—Philippa Ann Garmston Hyde, 40, Connaught Road.
 „ 28.—Christopher Michael Manns, 18a, School Road.
 „ 28.—David Jonathan Manns, 18A, School Road.
 „ 28.—Wendy Ann Meades, 2, Hanworth Road.
- June 25.—David Anthony Greening, 28, Wellington Road.
 „ 25.—Elaine Snelling, 25, Laurel Road.

BURIALS AND CERMATIONS

- Apr. 11.—Mary Louise Heather, Laurel Dene, aged 82 years (at Teddington).
 „ 19.—Mary Ann Ellis, 8, Wolsey Road, aged 69 years.
 „ 28.—Elizabeth Johnstone Thomas, 40, Gloucester Road, Teddington, aged 86 years (at S.W. Middlesex Crematorium).
- May 3.—Alice Ward, 18, Eastbank Road, aged 89 years (at S.W. Middlesex Crematorium).
- May 18.—William Thomas, 40, Gloucester Road, Teddington, aged 85 years (at S.W. Middlesex Crematorium.)
- June 15.—Laura Elizabeth Childs, 24, Mays Road, aged 53 years (at Teddington).
 „ 22.—William Harrison, 4, Chelsea Close, aged 63 years (at Teddington).
 „ 23.—Thomas William Cushen, 40, Wolsey Road, aged 66 years (at Teddington).