

DOES IT MAKE SENSE TO PRAY?

The Rev. Peter Dewey, from All Saints' Church, Isleworth, gave the fourth lecture arranged by the Hampton and Sunbury Council of Churches, entitled "Does it make sense to pray?". He asked whether there was need for communication with God - and if so, of what kind?

The answer lay in the relationship between God and Man, and he illustrated this in imagery of God as a sphere of LIGHT with particles moving outwards as CREATIVE THOUGHT, until they became his creatures. The particles become denser the further they travel from the Source, and DARKNESS emphasises the distance between God and Man. Could this be expressed as Raw Spirit becoming individuals, each of whom of their own free will would wish to return to the Source of Light, strengthened in character by overcoming the difficulties and temptations of the Darkness? The Garden of Eden story in the Old Testament presents a similar picture.

But experience of life shows us that it is not easy to leave the Darkness and we need continuing HELP from the Source. This is already available in the Darkness if we are willing to accept it through God's Total Love for his creatures and through his Total Forgiveness that holds no spiritual criticism against us.

God needs reciprocal love, and even one person looking upward away from "doing his own thing", each in his own way makes a difference. Such is God's need that if we do not look up the Light has to come down to us to make a communication.

This imagery gives us the elements of the Kingdom of God, in which there is complete freedom, and no rules, a Kingdom emerging from God's Plan, that allowed for Creation moving towards Darkness and for Spiritual Evolution taking man back to God. The friction coming from these movements gives the stimulus to keep us going.

How then should we pray to God? First we must desire it, then we need to be quiet and say 'Thy Will Be Done': we need to ask for help to grow spiritually and know God's will for us. The difficulties in the way are that we fear to leave the Darkness we know or of being asked to do too much. But real Sincerity will automatically release us from self-centredness and bring us the Promise that we shall never be let down. Then things begin to change and we are prompted into a direction where we can learn directly.

How can we discern what is going on within us? We can read the Scriptures as part of our foundation course, and find confirmation of what we have experienced through our direct contact with God. Re-reading them brings new insights and new light. We also find that in asking for help, it becomes necessary for us to sacrifice something.

Finally we are asked to think of prayer in three forms:- First, the LORD'S PRAYER, which gives the pattern for the relationship between God and man. When we say 'Thy Will Be Done', we are asking for the establishment of God's Kingdom based on his total love and total forgiveness but at the same time allowing for experiment and the come-back for all. If God cares in this way, then we also must care for others and this involves giving them sufficient freedom to make contact with God themselves. Pushing ourselves or others stops the flow of God's will. In the Kingdom everything we receive through God should be transferred into the world around us. When we say 'Give Us

This Day our Daily Bread' we express our need for help and spiritual sustenance. When we ask 'Forgive Others', our aim is to relate to others by refraining from criticism and being prepared to forgive. We are not asked to succeed. As we pray 'Thine Is The Power And The Glory', we sacrifice our own will and recognize our own place. We do not lose our will: they are transformed. So this prayer is a pattern of living, absolutely necessary to God's plan, and it will not work if we do not attempt to play our part.

Secondly, we should try to **PRACTISE THE PRESENCE OF GOD**. This is a quiet time, when we might be surrounded by Light, if only for a second.

Thirdly, there is **MEDITATION** - a stillness and relaxation of the mind and body, wherein we find the Centre of our Being, with its joy, its sadness, its depth. Then it is a Prayer of the Heart.

Essentially we find our own individual links with God, so that we pray in a way that is natural to us, to share in a joint relationship of complete friendship and trustful responsibility.

Questions

A question was asked concerning the **prayer of Jesus on the Cross**. It was suggested that the greatest level of prayer is when God's will is being done through us, and we have complete trust. For a moment the trust of Jesus in God was broken, and the Darkness was complete. The renewal of his trust at the same moment meant that all Darkness was overcome.

A **query about criticising others** brought the distinction between mere negative human criticism and spiritual criticism which never curtails the individual freedom and does not mean rejection.

Problems of Prayers for Peace were seen as friction between the knowledge and authority we have to rule the world perfectly and our unwillingness to use them. Perhaps other priorities need our prayers as a means to peace.

The problem of **relating to teen-agers** was seen in the need to accept them looking for spiritual experience, searching into areas that make us afraid for them. The danger lies in their remaining at any particular level. But they must discover for themselves as we do, and we must be patient, sow gentle seeds in season, and be there when they return. Perhaps our society is going to be changed in a way different from our ways of thinking.

R.M.D.

THE RANMORE RAMBLE

On Saturday May 14, at 2.30 p.m. twenty-one jumpered and booted parishioners of various ages met on Ranmore Common near Dorking for the Parish Ramble.

The weather was glorious as we set off along the top of a banked meadow with a panoramic view of Dorking and Leith Hill at our feet. On we went through a blue-bell carpeted copse, along muddy lanes carefully negotiated by adults, but irresistible to younger members of the party! Over cornfields and through farmyards we plodded, the children baying like hounds ahead of us, and on up through woods resplendent with huge trees. Finally we arrived back on the Common having covered five or six miles. Here we had a communal picnic and rounded off the afternoon by impromptu jousting on a low fence.

Come evening we bundled our muddy children and withered flowers into cars after a really wonderful afternoon.

Our thanks to Ron Bridges who organised this outing and without whose skilful map reading we might still be roaming the North Downs.

L.K.

C.M.S. TRIP TO SIERRA LEONE

This year the C.M.S. children's and young people's Lent Projects focused on a small country in West Africa, Sierra Leone.

The Archbishop of West Africa, the Right Revd. Moses Scott, thought it would be a good idea if a group of young Christians would go out to Sierra Leone for three weeks to take part in the Church's mission programme and to see at first hand the problems existing in that land.

I was fortunate enough to be included in the party of fifteen people who went to Sierra Leone on April 1 and would like to share with you something of our experience. We were sent off in twos and threes to work for two weeks in parishes all over the country. Each parish had different ideas of how to use its visitors and some people were involved in a lot of visits to parishioners' homes, others, like my partner and I, found themselves billed as visiting Evangelists, expected to take two or three services a day! It was a tremendous experience, and it showed me that God can use the humblest and most unworthy persons if they are willing to trust him completely.

For the last week we were able to visit people or places in whom we had a particular interest and I spent four days at a mission hospital in the middle of nowhere.

The final three days were spent in a guest-house on a beautiful deserted beach near Freetown and it was lovely just to swim and soak up the sunshine!

It was an unforgettable excursion to a developing country and one which I am sure was of benefit both to the people who went from England and to the people we met in Sierra Leone.

Hazel Gubbins

AROUND THE SPIRE

We are pleased to welcome Michael and Yvonne Childs, and their children, back into Hampton Hill. The family have long been members of St. James's, and are, of course, busily involved in running our Cubs and Scouts. They are now living in what was Mr. and Mrs. Casey's house in Connaught Road, whilst the Caseys have moved into a smaller place in Windmill Road. We hope that both families are now well settled in their new homes.

We are sorry to hear that Gillian and Harvey Kendon and their two children are moving out of the district. It has been helpful and we have enjoyed having a couple from the Chambery Estate becoming so involved in our church. Our best wishes go with them as they move to Bovingdon.

The Children's Poster Competition, organised for the Silver Jubilee Celebrations was very well supported, with over eighty entries. These were all on show at Windmill Road School on election day, and were kindly judged by Mr. Kenneth Elmes - the four winning entries were on display in the Post Office window, and no doubt many people saw the other entries round the Parish, being used, as intended, to advertise our Jubilee Day. Thank you children for such a colourful and well - presented display of artistic ability.

CHILDREN'S CHARACTER - INHERITED OR ACQUIRED?

That was the theme of a recent meeting of our Young Families Group. We were privileged to have with us Dr. N.K. Macrae-Gibson, consultant psychiatrist to "Mother & Baby" magazine. He gave us insight into the stages of development of our children, and it was challenging to consider just how much our own behaviour and attitudes can influence our children's characters. It was encouraging to have many new people present at that meeting. We hope we shall see some of them at other meetings.

F.B.

CHARCOAL-HOE-DOWN

Yep, pardners, jes' lay down them thar hoes, sickles, pruning-hoops and shears, and muscle along to join all the other critters in the garden of 63 Park Road on that warm sunny evening of Friday July 8 at 8 p.m.

We're gonna have music and good food under a summery sky. Tickets now available from the Social Committee (phone 979 6865) or at the door on the night.

Hitching rail for hosses jes' outside. Don't forget - we want a big crowd to get rid of all those sausages.

R.L.B.

CHILDREN'S CORNER

Nothing to report.

Children, if there is anything you would like to see in our magazine, please let us know.

H.B.

CHRISTIAN AID SERVICE

A United Service arranged by the Hampton Council of Churches was held on Christian Aid Sunday, May 15, at the Methodist Church in Hampton.

The Order of Service followed that recommended for use during Christian Aid Week, and was entitled "Hoping for Justice". One of its authors has a link with St. James's - the Rev. Kenith David, an Asian priest from South Africa, who celebrated the Eucharist for us about 3 years ago when the Vicar was on holiday.

It was a moving service underlining the hope that men can live together in brotherhood, justice and peace.

"See how good and joyful a thing it is, my brothers, to live together in unity".

Psalm 133. 1.

But in our world of to-day this is not a present reality, though we aim at it in the future. At the service we were called on to be aware of the injustices in the world; the tragic divisions between those who are satiated and those who die of starvation; the lack of concern between the vast amounts of money spent on defence and the small proportions made available to encourage viability in the poorer nations. The readings helped our understanding, and led us on to think over our personal responsibilities and how effective action can be taken.

The address was given by Andrew Hutchinson from the Education Section of Christian Aid. He told us graphically of a recent visit he had paid to the

Dominican Republic in the West Indies, and described extreme poverty. One of the self-help projects supported by Christian Aid concentrates on trying to provide advice, support and legal aid for peasant farmers whose land is being systematically commandeered by the big sugar combines. This exploitation is a horror, imposing grinding poverty on the peasants who are forced off their small holdings, and have little hope of alternative work and no national assistance to turn to. The local churches see that legal advice is available and that cases are fought in the courts. In short, that some importance is paid to justice. Christian Aid money assists here. Another local project on the outskirts of Santo Domingo is the encouraging of local schools, and the training and provision of local teachers.

We have been impressed before, and were impressed again, with the personal involvement of the young Christian Aid staff, and we learned much from the description of the difficulties in one small corner of the world. At the end of the service, the leader, our host, the Rev. Harry Dodd, asked us to pause in silence to read the personal dedication at the end of the service; we then said this aloud reminding ourselves of our personal responsibilities in this global village.

Hanna Stanten

UGANDAN EVENING

On Friday, July 1, at 7.45 p.m. in the crypt of St. Francis de Sales Church Wellington Road, Hampton Hill, there will be an evening devoted to a better understanding of Uganda and its present difficulties, sponsored by the Hampton Council of Churches.

Clement and Cecily Pain, who have spent many years in Uganda, will be bringing their slides, and will give an illustrated talk. Some Ugandans will be present to contribute to the discussion. There will be an exhibition of typical Ugandan work, and also refreshments.

We want to raise some money to be sent to Kenya for the relief of Ugandan refugees who have escaped from Uganda and are undergoing much hardship. (See article in last month's Spire.) Donations therefore will be very welcome. Please book the date now.

Hannah Stanton.

DOES IT MAKE SENSE TO READ THE BIBLE?

Here are a few concluding remarks and reflections on the lecture out of the many that could be made.

We must beware of using the expression 'The Bible says . . .' In most cases it means that the speaker has found some passage which he quotes as authority for the position which he is maintaining, regardless of the fact that those who disagree with him may find others which support their views.

Whether we are dealing with the apostles, with the Old Testament prophets, or with any other characters in or writers of the Scriptures, we must remember that whatever they said or did or wrote was conditioned and coloured by the fact that they were people who saw with the eyes, thought with the thought-forms, and spoke or wrote in the linguistic usage of their age and culture. If we are rightly to understand these books we need all the help that

scholarly research can give us towards discovering how its authors and characters felt, thought and expressed themselves. This is preliminary to our asking what Professor Leonard Hodgson says is for us the vital question: What must the truth have been and be if men who thought and spoke as they did put it like that?

One way that many people find helpful is to 'hook on' to a passage that attracts or challenges them, to begin to explore it in depth, and to go on from there. But we must be prepared to give much more time and attention to God and to all that helps us to know and understand his purposes better than is now customary, or our faith will not be able to stand the tests to which it will be increasingly subjected in the years ahead.

Professor Evans also referred to the view which he has put forward very strongly in some of his writings that the Bible is essentially an adult collection of books, meaningful, only for those who know something of the bruising and battering of adult life: and just as we would not want to expose our children to the battering of adult life in the world prematurely, but on the contrary try to shelter them from this for as long as possible, so there are many dangers in trying to bring them into the adult world of the Bible before they are ready for it. One of these dangers is that we shall so adapt the Scriptures to what we imagine to be their needs that we shall have an increasing number of the young who grow into maturity immunized against the gospel because their abiding impression is of having seen through and grown out of this childish thing. He deplores the way in which the Church, because of its desperate concern to hold on to what it thought it had, is becoming increasingly child-centred, and therefore unable to appreciate the essentially adult nature of its gospel.

THE CHURCHYARD

The week of 11 - 18 June has been designated "Mass Attack Week".

Help in cutting back the overgrown vegetation will be appreciated at any time during that week, but particularly on the Saturdays.

If you can bring your own shears, rakes, or barrow, please do, but make sure they are marked with your name.

AN IMPORTANT SUMMER FETE

On Saturday, 18 June 1977, commencing at 2.00 p.m., the BISHOP WAND CHURCH OF ENGLAND SECONDARY SCHOOL will be holding its Summer Fete in the school grounds at Layton's Lane, Sunbury-on-Thames. As many readers will know, the school draws its pupils from a very wide area, covering some 30 parishes, including our own, and since its founding in 1969 the school has rapidly achieved a name for educational 'forward thinking' in the widest sense, based on high academic standards and Christian principles. Needless to say, funds are urgently needed for the provision of facilities and equipment which are not financed by Church, State or Local Authority and all profits will be used for such purposes.

Please come and enjoy yourselves on this occasion and at the same time contribute to a very worthwhile cause. Admission is by programme, price 5p, which can be obtained from members of the school, or at the gate on 18 June. Car parking will be available in the grounds.

SOME DATES TO NOTE

- June
11-18 **MASS ATTACK WEEK IN CHURCHYARD**
12 15.00 Jubilee Service in grounds of York House (N.B. No afternoon or evening service here); 17.15 Members of YPF lead service at Laurel Dene
13 10.30 Editorial Board (75, St. James's Avenue)
14 20.00 Parochial Church Council (Vestry); Tuesday Club: Mr. Peter Lockyer - 'Banking' (W)
15 07.30 Holy Communion; 14.30 Mothers' Union: Intercessions in church, followed by afternoon tea in the Vicarage garden; 20.00 Liturgical Committee (63, Park Road)
16 10.30 Young Families' Group: Speaker - Mrs. Nicholls (W); 20.00 Prayer Meeting (69, St. James's Avenue)
18 14.00 Bishop Ward School Summer Fete (Layton's Lane, Sunbury)
20 20.00 Prayer Meeting (75, Burton's Road)
24 **NATIVITY OF ST. JOHN BAPTIST**; 19.15 Holy Communion (N.B. Choir Practice will not begin until 19.50)
28 20.00 Tuesday Club: Mr. Waltham - 'Stone-cutting' (W)
29 **SAINT PETER'S DAY**: 19.15 Holy Communion; 20.00 Discussion of Lecture (63, Park Road); Properties Committee (7, Blandford Road)
30 10.30 Young Families' Group: Mrs. Johnson - 'Sex Education for Toddlers' (W) 20.00 Prayer Meeting (69, James's Avenue)
- July
1 19.45 Ugandan Evening (St. Francis de Sales)
5 20.00 Committee of Hampton & Sunbury Council of Churches (venue to be announced)
6 07.30 Holy Communion; 14.30 Mothers' Union Service (Preacher: The Rev. Harry Dodd), followed by afternoon tea on the churchyard lawn.
7 10.30 Young Families' Group: 'Bring your own ideas' (W); 19.45 **NEWCOMERS' PARTY** - by invitation (Hall).
8 20.00 Charcoal-Hoe-Down (63, Park Road)

BAPTISMS

- April
24 Anthony Barnes, 13, Vincent Row
Stephen John Ernest Hoare, 5, School Road Avenue
- May
1 Timothy Edward Kendon, 150, Wordsworth Road (at the Parish Communion)
8 Julia-Jane Whelan, 79, High Street, Hampton (Adult)
22 Paul Stephen Andrews, 22, Ormond Drive
Scott Patrick Francis, 60, Hampton Road
Tanya Lee Kestle, 175, Bedford Close, East Bedford.

MARRIAGES

- April 30 Mark Geoffrey Dorsett to Shirley Kathleen Evans
May 7 John Michael Sillwood to Katherine Julie Brummitt
Peter John Jenkin to Susan Anne Rawlins

CHURCH COUNCIL COMMITTEES

Our Parochial Church Council, while retaining overall control, delegates much of its planning and work to committees, many of whose members are not members of the Council itself. Two committees feel the need of new members to bring their numbers up to strength and to bring as well fresh vision and inspiration - the Stewardship and the Liturgical. If you feel one of these jobs might be for you, please get in touch with the Vicar, or with the chairmen of these committees, Leonard Melville and Lesley Mortimer.

NEWCOMERS' PARTY

The next Newcomers' Party will be on Thursday July 7 in the Parish Hall, beginning at 7.45 p.m. We started these parties on a very modest and limited scale nearly 25 years ago, usually taking only one road at a time, but in the early 'sixties we began to make them parish-wide. These gatherings are not held in order to gain new members for the church; some people find it hard to believe, but there is no catch, there are no strings attached; it is just representatives of the Christian community in Hampton Hill welcoming new residents to the district, telling them something of its background, history and development, giving them any information they need and telling them where they can get more if they want it, and introducing them to one another. We now think the time is ripe for making the welcome more ecumenical - representative of the **whole** Christian community and not just the Anglican section of it. We have found that there are newcomers in at least 250 houses in the parish, and we should like a team of 50 people to call on them to follow up the letter and invitation which we hope to send them in the name of all the local churches. We expect 25 of these to be members of St. James's, and we hope to link up each one of us with a member of another church, so that we may go out in pairs, and then we would have ten houses to visit. If you would like to be a member of this team of visitors, please let the Vicar or Leonard Melville know as soon as possible.

DEANERY INTERCESSIONS

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|------|----|-------------------------------------|
| June | 19 | St. John Baptist, Hampton Wick |
| | 26 | St. Peter & St. Paul, Teddington |
| July | 3 | St. Mary with St. Alban, Teddington |
| | 10 | Hospitals that serve the Deanery |

SEED THOUGHTS

The following text, beautifully printed on a little card, was handed to one of our parishioners by her grandfather when she was a young girl. She has treasured it ever since and tried to act on this valuable advice whenever appropriate.

Alabaster boxes of human sympathy:

Do not keep the alabaster boxes of your love and tenderness sealed up until your friends are dead. Fill their lives with sweetness. Speak approving, cheering words, while their ears can hear them, and while their hearts can be thrilled and made happier by them; the kind things you mean to say when they are gone, say before they go. The flowers you mean to send for their coffins, send to brighten and sweeten their homes before they leave them. If my friends have alabaster boxes laid away, full of fragrant perfumes of sympathy and affection, which they intend to break over my dead body, I would rather they would bring them out in my weary and troubled hours, and open them, that I may be refreshed and cheered by them while I need them. I would rather have a plain coffin without a flower, a funeral without a eulogy, than a life without the sweetness of love and sympathy. Let us learn to anoint our friends beforehand for their burial. Post-mortem kindness does not cheer the burdened spirit. Flowers on the coffin cast no fragrance backward over the weary way.

Last summer one of our family had a fall and hurt her hand; it seemed possible that a bone might be broken, so we went to the West Middlesex Hospital casualty department and had the hand x-rayed. In fact the bones were intact - so we went home relieved and in time the hand stopped hurting. Quite casually we remarked: 'what a good job we have this service available'. It was only quite some time later that it struck me how very fortunate indeed we are in this country to have full hospital facilities at our disposal for all needs.

True, everything is not perfect with the National Health Service, and we do pay for what we have. But just think, if you lived in darkest Peru, the African jungle or remote mountains of Afghanistan, you could be very seriously ill, in great pain, and there would be nobody at all whose duty and job it was to help you.

Here in Europe we regard it as our right to be relieved from pain and cured of illnesses within the scope of medical skills.

Should we not occasionally stop to think that this right is a great blessing which we owe to the fact that we have for centuries had a Christian culture? Is it not an illustration of Exodus 20.6: "But I show my love to thousands of generations of those who love me and obey my laws."

H.B.

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**STATISTICS: REMARKS BY OUR ARCH DEACON FROM
THE MIDDLESEX ROUNDABOUT MAY - JUNE 1977**

DULL AS DITCH WATER

I don't know much about ditch-water. Presumably it's pretty miserable stuff, since it has attracted the phrase . . . 'Dull as . . .'

It's stagnant, and apart from those spidery flies which are able to walk across it, it's not able to sustain much in the way of life or promote very useful growth. Certainly we hate having to complete questionnaire forms & we may not value or trust the statistics which are said to flow from them. However I think the following may say something to some of us about growth and priorities in our Kensington Area. The information relates to the 102 parishes in this area from the returns relating to the year 1975.

18,399 on our Electoral Rolls (to obtain a rough average 50 parishes have had per parish divide by 100 Diocesan directed Stewardship, throughout) though some too long ago to remain effective.

£372,633 received by direct giving.

£35,464 received in tax refunds on Covenants. Many accounts are obscure on this point but 40 parishes do not seem to use this opportunity. (Our Recorder has just received such a refund of £1285. - Ed.)

£65,144 is . . . just given away. £24,470 goes to the Church Overseas, though 9 parishes contribute £13,700 of this total.

£22,585 is spent on insurance of the Church buildings.

£36,590 is spent on Music and Singing.

50 parishes provide more money for Music & Singing than for the Overseas Church.

£87,000 + of P.C.C.'s income is accounted for by Gift Days, Bazaars, Jumbles, Fairs, Special Appeals & from rents & letting of property.

Sorry if all this is no more than Dull as Ditch-water. Yes, I've got a little calculator.

Please

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