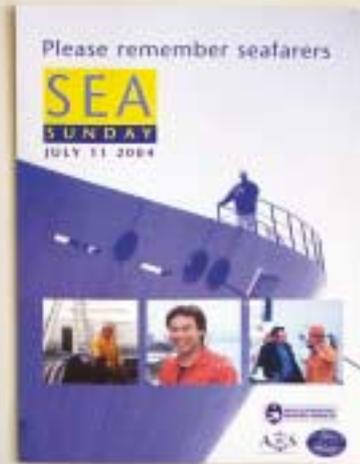


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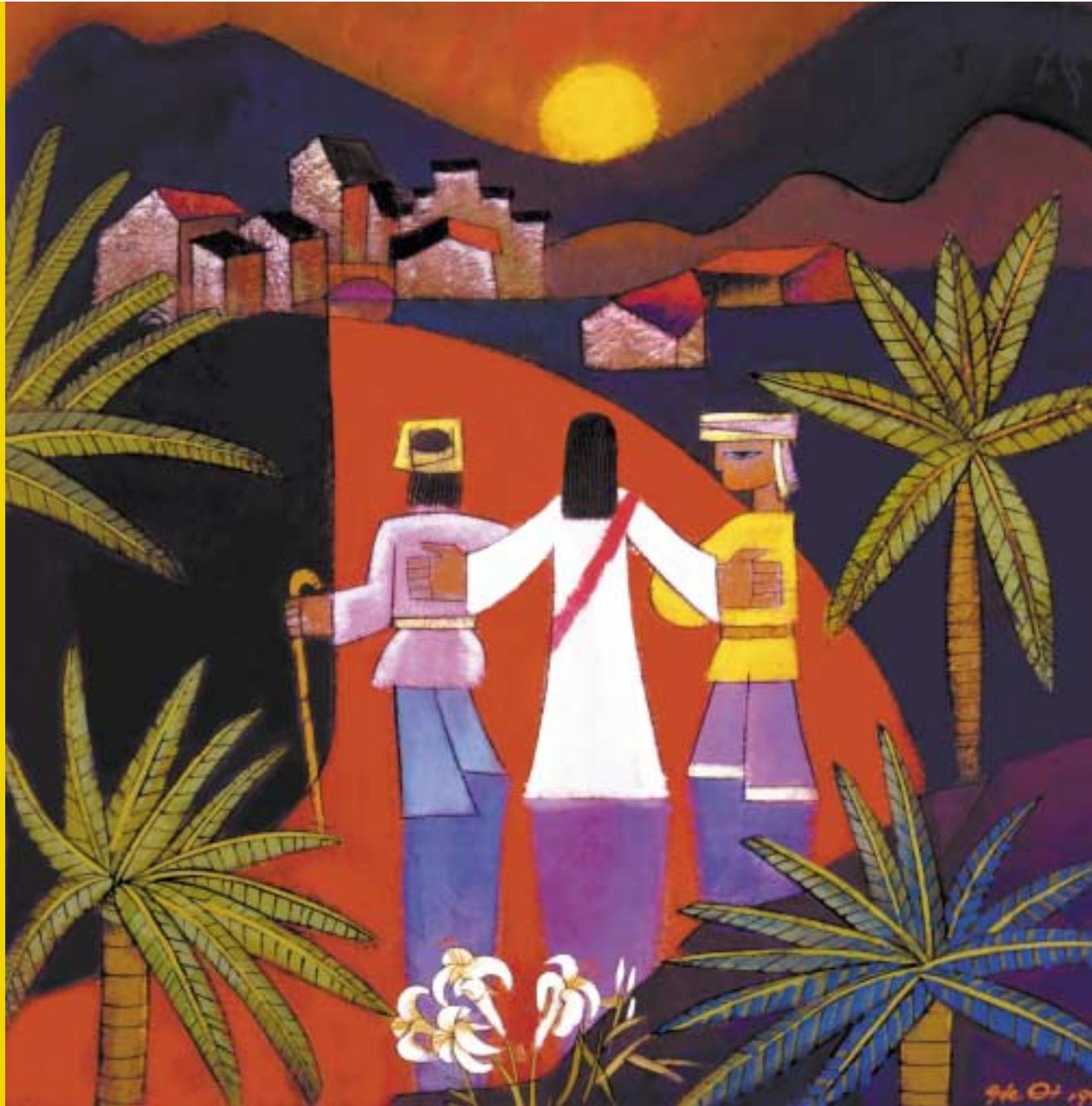
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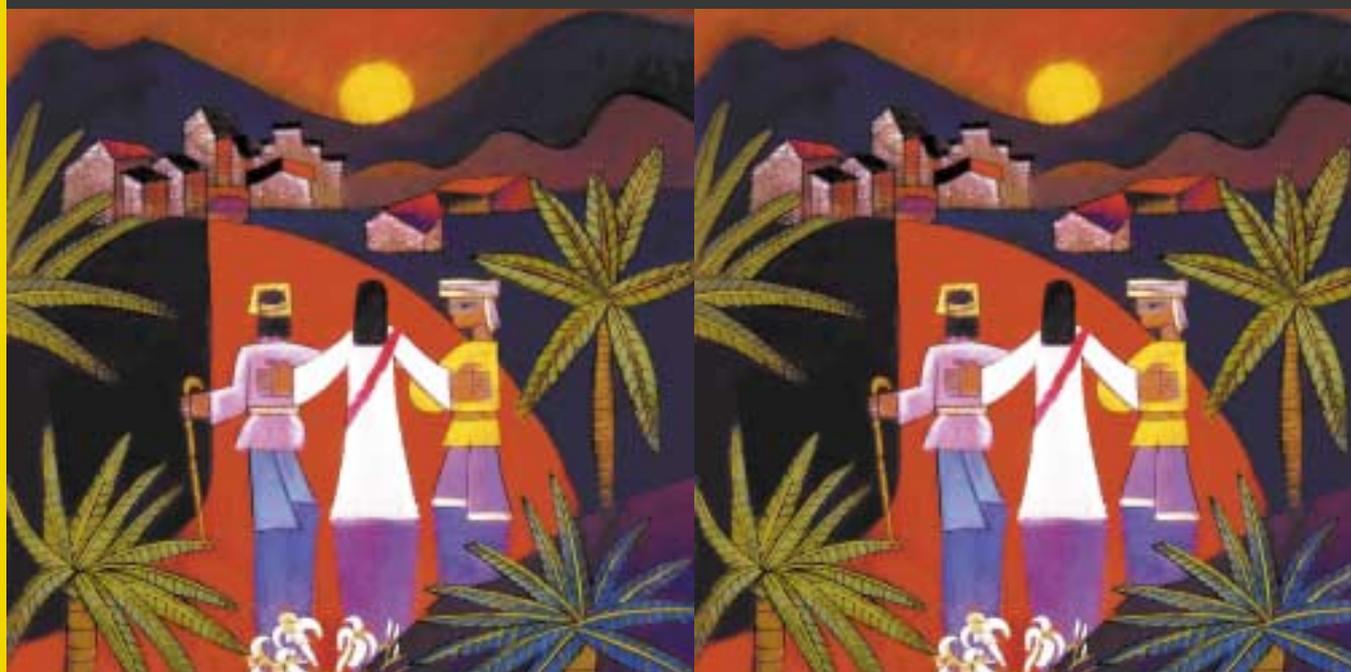


THE READER



Summer 2004
Volume 101 No.2
£1.75

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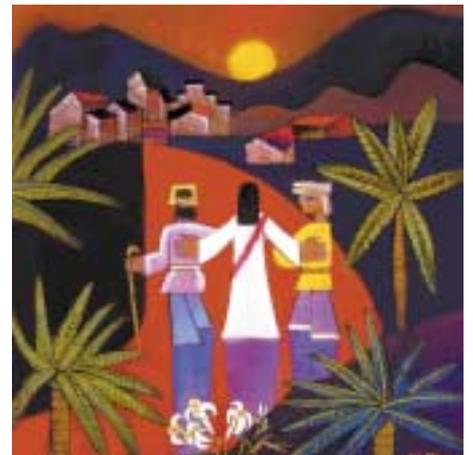
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Cover: 'On the road to Emmaus', © He Qi.
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THE READER



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What a stunning depiction of the meeting between Jesus and the disciples on the road to Emmaus graces our front cover this issue! It is by the Chinese artist He Qi and I first came across it on a website www.asianchristianart.org which contains other examples of work by He Qi, as well as by other Christian artists from Asia.

Apart from the vividness of the colours what really attracted me to the picture was the relationship created between Jesus and those two disciples. Jesus was one among them, and yet at the same time his arms also seemed to reach out to embrace them. And am I being fanciful, or does the artist intend to hint at a cross shape in those outstretched arms?

What is certainly true is that in an issue of *The Reader* which focuses on 'the family' the journey to Emmaus is a biblical story that is very appropriate to hold before us. It is a journey that we are called to make – accompanying Jesus himself down the byways of our own past, our own history, exploring it, coming to terms with it, until gradually the light of Jesus' resurrection begins to suffuse it. 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?' (*Luke 24.32*) I once preached on this story suggesting that this particular journey is one that has to end in the transforming of our own homes, our own 'dining rooms' – or else it is a journey we have never really made.

The encounter on the road to Emmaus is a good story to be bearing in mind in these post-Easter weeks. There is a sense in which while closing the Gospel of Luke it also acts as the curtain-raiser for the Acts of the Apostles. The road points away from Jerusalem and by taking seriously the past, as Jesus does in his conversation with his friends, he enables a new future to open up before them.

Of course around the time you receive this issue of *The Reader* Trinity Sunday will be upon us. That too is a good season to be reflecting on families, for the doctrine of the Trinity seems to be telling us that the very nature of God is to exist in relationship. To me Andre Roublev's icon of the 'Hospitality of Abraham', pictured on p.12 of our February 2004 issue, expresses this in visual form. I am grateful to those who took the time to share their thoughts about the Trinity with us in this issue (see p.22). I cannot do better than close with the striking words of Bishop Michael Hare Duke:

Love releases us for taking
One more risk than we might dare;
Glory breaks through dark and danger,
Shows the Lord transfigured there.
God who planted our affections,
Help your gifts to grow more free
Fan us in the fires of loving,
Daring, dancing Trinity.

Best wishes

Clare Amos

Clare Amos,
Honorary Editor



Living in God's Family



It is appropriate that in an issue of *The Reader* which focuses on 'the family' we hear from the Mothers' Union. The following thoughts were contributed by **Elizabeth Appleby**, Australia (General Trustee), **Abigail Tukulu**, Southern Africa (General Trustee), **Fleur Dorrell** (Head of Prayer and Spirituality) and **Reg Bailey** (Chief Executive). Reg is a Reader in St Albans Diocese.

For the Mothers' Union, the International Year of the Family 2004 is crucial! Our whole *raison d'être* is concerned with supporting and empowering family life around the world. To stress the significance of this UN initiative we altered our logo to include IYF 2004 underneath the strapline.

The Mothers' Union is a Christian organisation with over 3 million members in 75 countries across the globe. The MU exists to share Christ's love by encouraging, strengthening and supporting marriage and family life. To achieve these goals, we help to develop and support people's faith and spirituality; campaign on many family policy issues and support and run projects world wide. We help give families the confidence and practical skills they need throughout their lives.

We have five objectives:

To uphold Christ's teaching on the nature of marriage and to promote its wider understanding.

We believe that marriage is a relationship God has given in which those who are married can grow together in mutual love and understanding. Members of the MU recognise the value of marriage to society whether or not they themselves are married. The MU is active in marriage preparation and support, and many other initiatives that encourage a loving, stable environment in which to bring up children.

To encourage parents to bring up their children in the faith and life of the Church.



Jesus showed a special love for children and the MU is committed to making sure that parents and children are welcome in the Church family. Parent and Toddler Groups, crèches, parenting programmes and fellowship groups are among ways that members reach out to children and parents so that they are supported and can share the message of God's love.

To maintain a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer, worship and service.

Members everywhere are encouraged to join together in regular prayer, worship and reflection, and to participate daily in our Wave of Prayer. Resources are offered to enrich worship and Bible study, faith development and spiritual empowerment of women and families within their faith communities.

To promote conditions in society favourable to stable family life and the protection of children.

We believe that a good quality of

One of our expressions of God's love is to be available and supportive for those who find family life burdensome and distressing. Mutual support and fellowship are offered to all by MU members wherever they are, both within the Church congregation and outside in the community. We are involved in Child Contact Centres, Prison Visit Centres and offer holidays to those who could not otherwise afford them.

As part of our *International Year of the Family* year long campaign we are raising awareness of our successful UK parenting programme which we hope to introduce in an adapted form in Australia; continuing to promote our Literacy and Development programmes in Burundi, Malawi and the Sudan; launching a new Family Life programme in Uganda based on participatory community development principles; we will lobby government on family issues; and publish a book on the spirituality of marriage. We are creating showcase awards to celebrate the range and

We believe that marriage is a relationship God has given in which those who are married can grow together in mutual love and understanding.

family life gives stability to society. The MU plays an active role in influencing issues that affect our members around the world. We monitor legislation and social policy, making our voice heard in public debate on marriage and family life. We campaign on diverse social policy issues at local, national and international levels, we have consultative status at the United Nations, and work closely with other agencies on issues of international debt, violence against women and child poverty.

To help those whose family life has met with adversity.

diversity of how our members meet local needs. Each MU diocese will celebrate IYF in their particular context and spirituality around the world.

United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

The UN MDGs represent an unprecedented commitment by heads of state and government to set numerical and time-bound targets that address key elements of human development. By the year 2015, all 191 United Nations member states have pledged to meet the goals. The MU uses the MDGs to lobby the UK Government

and to encourage members to do so. The eight MDGs are as follows:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

IYF 2004 provides an opportunity for NGOs around the world to focus on raising awareness about families and to encourage respective governments to put family issues and policies on the political agenda in 2004 and beyond. We believe that our faith and political activities are inseparable and vital in addressing the needs of the world. This principle is based on the biblical idea of wise stewardship and in loving our neighbours as ourselves.

*The MU has produced a **Straight Talking** resource pack for increasing awareness and understanding of local, national and international politics; it shows ways of engaging with policy at diocesan level and explores the relationship between policy and faith.*

Our spirituality underpins all our work and this spirituality is defined in part by the recovery of dignity and respect for all people, but especially by empowering women who are often marginalized within and outside the Church. We research issues affecting families globally. We reflect on the theological implications of our mission including sexuality and relationships, and Christian-Muslim dialogue. Our spirituality provides us with the freedom to fulfil our potential around the world; it allows us to express our faith in creative and exciting ways; it supports us wherever we are on our faith journey.

We hold firmly to the idea that the Mothers' Union is a global family and part of God's greater family. For us: Strong families create strong communities...

Strong communities create strong societies...

Strong societies create a better world.

A Southern African perspective of the MU (Abigail Tukulu)

I come from the Province of Southern Africa which consists of several countries

– Angola, Namibia, South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland and Mozambique.

MU members face many similar challenges wherever they are, but they also have challenges that are different, and linked to specific contexts. Here are a few of the challenges we face in Southern Africa:

- *Poverty and Unemployment:* The majority of our members live in areas where poverty is rife. In the Eastern Cape (my province, geographically speaking), the unemployment rate is said to be 40% in some areas. While there are not enough skilled labourers, many people, especially among the blacks, are unskilled.
- *Violence against Women and Children:* This is widespread especially in

Our spirituality provides us with the freedom to fulfil our potential around the world; it allows us to express our faith in creative and exciting ways.

communities where females are socialized into a submissive role. All forms of violence such as physical, emotional, economic as well as sexual are present. Family murders, rape, and physical abuse are common.

- *Suicide:* In black communities this used to occur only in isolated cases but it is now becoming rife, especially among young people.
- *Substance Abuse:* Young people, both girls and boys are increasingly abusing alcohol as well as other substances. Children as young as 9 years smoke or sniff glue in some areas.
- *HIV and AIDS:* We are ravaged by HIV and AIDS – Southern Africa has the biggest problem of people living with AIDS. This is aggravated by poverty at every level. There are thousands of Christian women who are infected by their partners. Being HIV positive is not necessarily a sign of promiscuity. Most people who now live with AIDS are faithful married women whose husbands have given it to them. Many young, educated and skilled people are dying. Often parents had made enormous sacrifices to put their children through the education systems but now those very children are dying and leaving behind orphans that have to be looked after by aged grandparents. This also has implications for the economy. Our young democracy in South Africa is already jeopardised as workers are

demoralized and unproductive.

However the MU is addressing some of the issues. In March 2003 we had a conference for Anglican women where they were empowered to 'break the silence' and support one another. All of our parishes have been challenged by our Archbishop Ndungane to fight the stigma of HIV/AIDS, and offer support to those affected and infected. MU members volunteer in home-based care programmes and also initiate gardening projects to improve nutrition. Some have projects that help to care for the orphans. In some parishes support groups have been formed in order to help both the infected and the affected. In my own parish many families have

lost young breadwinners as a result of HIV/AIDS but we are working hard to encourage voluntary testing as well as 'wellness management' – a programme that emphasizes good nutrition, a positive attitude, exercise and a stress-free lifestyle. The MU Overseas Fund is vital as it enables the MU to address some of these critical challenges.

Southern Africa is multi-lingual, multi-ethnic, multi-religious but its underlying principle of existence is still based on the concept of ubuntu. Ubuntu means that one person's identity and *raison d'être* is dependent upon another person. Each person is because the other person is, each person exists because the other person exists. This mutual interdependence is the key to the African community and way of living. This is why secularism, capitalism and individualism are such profound enemies of this collective good. This principle is also evident elsewhere in the MU as we seek to support our diocesan links worldwide and in the multifarious support we give to each part of the whole.

*The MU has produced a **Living Positively** resource pack for increasing awareness and understanding of HIV and AIDS; using a participatory style and with accompanying worship and faith-based materials for group use.*



An Australian perspective of the MU (Elizabeth Appleby)

Australia is an increasingly secular society, a reality which challenges Christians, and of course MU members, in this International Year of the Family. Many MU members are grappling with the tension between Christian ideals of marriage and family and the realities of the life in which we find ourselves, a tension which does not have to be destructive but needs to be acknowledged. We have to work to understand modern society and to discern the call of the Holy Spirit to each one of us in our Christian discipleship.

contexts. We face many challenges to our unity in this great diversity. We face as many challenges from other faiths and denominations as we do from within our own Church, but unity is greater than uniformity. The dignity of difference is one of our strengths. The greatest challenge comes perhaps not from other faiths or cultures so much as from secularism. The mass media and internet explosion both creates and destroys communication; it uses competing ideologies and values to those of Christianity but never with the benefit of the community in mind – only the individual. And so, individualism now commands most attention despite the fact that it causes the deepest of fragmentations to all societies – namely, right at the heart of the family.

We talk about the communion of saints, and we know that the New Testament refers to *all* the baptised as saints of God, not just the famous ones we remember through the ages. We are part of that 'communion', fellow members of the Body, and we keep company with those with whom we may well be in disagreement on a variety of issues. In this International Year of the Family we are well aware

practical and group exercises to try out, and invaluable ideas offered in this complex but critical area of our communication skills.

The MU is producing a new book on the spirituality of marriage which will explore marriage positively in the context of our faith and spirituality, examine the rise in cohabitation and the Church's response to the changing nature of relationships.

A Rwandan perspective of the MU

Rwanda has 7.2 million inhabitants. It is a land-locked country of 26,338 sq kilometres and its economy is predominantly dependent on agriculture. This year is the 10th anniversary of the genocide in 1994 that killed nearly a million Rwandans: a genocide in which Rwandans were slaughtered by their own people. This national trauma has destroyed whole generations of Rwandans; leaving behind abandoned children and widows everywhere.

It is calculated that about 400,000 children have been abandoned who now face the challenge of impaired development. These children have lost their parents because of war or genocide and are without support from a parent, guardian or other fit adult person. Some abandoned children are street children and orphans due to illnesses (mostly HIV and AIDS) or poverty. Most of these abandoned children end up on the street. They may be sexually abused, used as cheap labour and become involved in sniffing glue or using drugs.

The MU and the Church in Rwanda have been trying to raise awareness about the plight of these children and give material and financial support. Through Mary Sumner House, Revd Agnes Mukandoli has been involved with the *Grow Up Free From Poverty* coalition which campaigns at grass roots level on this issue. The MU has helped to put abandoned children in schools, providing uniforms, fees, and some food parcels. Because the Rwanda government doesn't want to institutionalise children, the Church encourages foster homes. Fostering helps children to grow up with dignity and self-esteem. It removes stigma, and brings a sense of identity. It maintains family unity where it is applicable. All these benefits reduce trauma and stress to children.

We hope that we can all be well informed and listen with respect to those who may differ from us, acknowledging that all of us are seeking to be faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Concerns about sexuality and relationships are part of the 'core' business of an organisation whose mission statement is 'Sharing Christ's love by encouraging, strengthening and supporting marriage and family life'. These issues are central to our own family lives, not just to 'outsiders'. MU members have children who are gay or lesbian: MU members experience broken marriages: MU members have children who are co-habiting. MU members are concerned about faithfulness in relationships, about commitment and permanence, about upholding Christian ideals. MU members want to affirm the qualities of love, acceptance, compassion and understanding which are present in different models of family life.

As MU members we seek faithfully to live out our membership of the Body of Christ, and of the Mothers' Union, in an amazing array of cultural

that we do have different views on family, marriage, sexuality and relationships. We hope that we can all be well informed and listen with respect to those who may differ from us, acknowledging that all of us are seeking to be faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ.

We rejoice in the diversity of our great Mothers' Union family and we thank God for the unity we share. There will be disagreement, but we go forward in faith, giving thanks to God for the vision and faithful obedience of Mary Sumner and MU members and leaders since 1876.

The MU has produced a Relationships Matter resource pack for increasing awareness and understanding of how to have healthy relationships both in the family and in the community. There are many

Building a new nation

The future of Rwanda lies in the way children are cared for, especially the orphans. The Anglican Church of Rwanda has joined other churches and other organisations in healing and community reconstruction, though there is still a long way to go. In Cyangugu the MU is very active working with widows and orphans from the whole community and of all faiths as a result of the genocide. Women in the diocese meet every Thursday where they share their fears and concerns, read the Bible and pray together. The MU is also training them in knitting, tailoring, handcrafts and home care.

The good news is that slowly progress is being made. Rwandans want to become one people, not Hutu or Tutsi, but Rwandans.

The MU has produced an Out of the Shadows resource pack for increasing awareness and understanding of all forms of violence; using a participatory style and with accompanying worship and faith-based materials for group use.

Yesterday, today and the future

In 1942 as part of *The Universal Declaration on Human Rights* Eleanor Roosevelt wrote the following, but it still stands today, perhaps even more so than ever before:

'Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home – so close and so small that they cannot be

seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person... where every man, woman and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerned citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.'

At Mary Sumner House, London, we have produced a prayer pack for the whole of the *International Year of the Family*. Included is a circular jigsaw prayer card with family images on one side and a prayer on the reverse. It can be cut into four pieces to rearrange the family, the idea being that very often families are broken. Sometimes we can put them back together again and sometimes we can't; either way they never go back together in the same way. But the Mothers' Union always helps to put families back together again wherever they are and whenever it can.

The Mothers' Union can be contacted at:

The Mothers' Union
Mary Sumner House
24 Tufton Street
London SW1P 3RB

Tel: 020 7222 5533

Website: www.themothersunion.org



Families around the Anglican Communion

Though the Mothers' Union is well known – the International Anglican Family Network is perhaps less so. But like all the varied Networks of the Anglican Communion it provides important opportunities for mutual support across continents and regions. **Sally Thompson**, the Coordinator of the Network, writes about its work.

The International Anglican Family Network (IAFN) was launched in 1987 at a conference held in Singapore. Some of the international delegates present said it was the most exciting meeting they had ever attended. Perhaps this was because the theme of 'family' crosses international and cultural barriers and the issues matter to everyone. Following the meeting, a series of international consultancies were launched from Melbourne, Australia, resulting in a major report for the 1988 Lambeth Conference.

The Bishops welcomed and affirmed the report, but it was not clear how it should be followed up. All felt, however, that the initiative should not be lost and the Network was moved to England and placed under the auspices of The Children's Society. It was recognised as an official network of the Anglican Communion and for several years was supported by The Children's Society.

Meeting a need

As with all the Networks of the Anglican Communion, the Family Network developed to meet a need and an opportunity. Basically, it seeks to utilise the worldwide resources of the Anglican Church to increase the knowledge

and understanding, in both the developed and the developing world, of pressures and changes affecting families.

Its work centres round the production of newsletters, which are now printed as an integral part of *Anglican World*, a main magazine of the Anglican Communion. This has a wide international circulation and is sent free to the Two-Thirds World. There is a small separate print-run of the newsletters. These are produced on strong paper and make use of carefully chosen pictures to add to their impact. The hope is that they will appeal to a wide readership and can be passed from hand-to-hand in countries where resources are scarce. There is evidence that this aim is being achieved. The Secretary General of the Anglican Communion, who travels widely, has reported that the IAFN newsletters turn up and are treasured in many distant countries.

When the Coordinator visited Zambia some years ago on a Diocesan Link visit, many people expressed their appreciation of the newsletter and the understanding it brought both of their problems and of those of other parts of the world. One woman whispered that before she read one issue she did not know that there was AIDS in the UK.



People at the grassroots

The articles for the IAFN newsletters are written by people at the 'grass roots' who are closely involved with families and projects to help them. Many contributors come from Africa and write with an urgency and freshness which sometimes contrasts with the more jargon-laden contributions from the developed world.

Each newsletter follows a particular theme – HIV/AIDS, single parents, fathers and families, poverty, cohabitation, strengthening marriage. Articles come in from a wide range of countries and the main task of the Coordinator is to fit as many of the good contributions as possible into the space available. Seeing an article in print about their work and the problems they face, can be a recognition and encouragement to those who are working with families, often with few resources and little acknowledgement. Learning of the achievements – and failures – of particular projects can encourage Churches and Christians both to start similar initiatives and to build on the experience of others.

A rich tapestry

Cultural differences and different attitudes add to the rich tapestry reflected in the newsletters. But there are also many similarities of theme and problems. The changing roles of men and women affect Africa and Asia as well as the UK and the Western world. The number of single parents seems to be increasing in many societies and the conclusion of many articles in a newsletter on *HIV and AIDS and Young People* was that the most effective way forward was peer-group education. In all the newsletters, faith in the Christian gospel and hope shine through the poverty and the struggle. In the most recent issue, on the theme of *Abandoned Children*, an article from Estonia tells of a small congregation who became very concerned about the plight of homeless children. After a summer camp organised by the church, many of the children said they did not want to return to the streets. A lot of hard work by the children and the church members has resulted in 28 youngsters living in the church building and going to school from there. There are showers and a proper kitchen and another 15 to 20 come regularly to the Day Centre.

Small but beautiful!

The Network budget is small, with one part-time member of staff. The work is made possible by an active Management Committee, on which the Church of England Community and Public Affairs unit, the Mothers' union and the Mission Agencies are represented. This group meets regularly and works hard to decide on appropriate themes and identify potential authors. Since the Singapore consultation in 1997, contact with those involved in the Network, either as readers or contributors, has been by post and email. The number of such contacts has grown steadily.

But in building up a Network, face-to-face meeting is clearly important. In 2003, there was an exciting expansion of IAFN's work with the appointment of Ian Sparks (former Chief Executive of The Children's Society) as the part-time organiser of a pilot consultation. This was held in Nairobi in June 2003 and was a great event. Through the generosity of an international trust, sufficient funding was available to pay for the fares and expenses of the delegates. This enabled 'grass roots' workers to attend and 32 people from 17 different African countries met in Nairobi to consider issues of *Violence and the Family*. Over the seven days of the consultation, the delegates considered three aspects of such violence:

- Violence between couples
- Violence against children
- Violence from the wider world.

In each case they drew on their experience and those of their fellow Christians in their home country to set out the nature of the problem and then made practical recommendations on tackling it. Some of the recommendations were specific to Africa and demonstrate how Anglicans there are being courageous in tackling religious practices such as bride price, female genital mutilation and the abuse of widows, as well as taking the lead in tackling new problems such as the AIDS pandemic and being active in promoting conflict resolution and peace-making activities.

For the delegates, the consultation was a great experience and this is reflected in their determination to take action. Nine months after the consultation, the list of follow-up action they are initiating in their home areas is still growing. For example, in Namibia the Director of the Human Rights

Centre heard about the Consultation and there are now plans to hold a seminar on violence and the family jointly with the government departments of health and development.

In Ghana, a Kingdom Ambassadors Group has been formed to encourage young people to be free from violence as they grow up. The Nairobi meeting was certainly not just a talking shop or a social gathering. The hope is that IAFN will be able to hold a further consultation in 2005 in a different part of the Communion.

Relevant round the world

Many of the resolutions of the Nairobi consultation are relevant to all parts of the Anglican Communion. Violence in the family is widespread. For example in the USA, a recent booklet produced by the ECUSA Commission on the Status of Women contained these figures: every 9 seconds a woman is beaten (4 million a year), approximately 4 women are murdered every day due to domestic violence (1,500 a year), there are between 2 and 4 million reported incidents of domestic violence against women every year. So the September newsletter of the Family Network took up the theme of violence, using the work of the consultation but also including articles in the UK (on in Britain) and other countries.

2004 is an important year for the Family Network marking as it does the tenth anniversary of the 1994 United Nations International Year of the Family. Work has already started on a special newsletter. In this, key people from different parts of the Anglican Communion are being asked to contribute articles answering the question 'What has changed for families in your area over the past ten years? What projects have been developed and what problems have intensified or arisen?' The newsletter will be published in the Trinity 2004 *Anglican World* and it is hoped it will be a resource for the many organisations and projects marking the anniversary of the Year of the Family.

For further information, or to tell of projects in your church concerned with families, contact the IAFN Network Coordinator (contact details on p.30)



Celebrating the 10th Anniversary of the 'INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE FAMILY'

Sue Burridge, Adviser (Marriage and Family Policy), Church of England Community and Public Affairs Unit tells us what is happening to mark the Year in England.

Do you remember 1994 – the Year of the Family? A decade ago the UN made 1994 the *International Year of the Family* to help focus attention on importance of supporting families both locally and internationally. Many churches focused on the family during 1994, holding special services and events. 2004 is the 10th Anniversary of that special year. Within the last ten years the profile of the family in society has undergone significant and rapid changes. Today there are more children growing up in lone parent families, more people living on their own, more mothers working, and an increase in immigrant and refugee families. During the same time span many churches have also experienced major changes in the demographics of their congregations, worship-styles, responsibility towards child-protection, and community projects.

Whereas 1994 was a year of national and international events to celebrate and support families, 2004 has a different focus. This year events are focussing on the grass-roots level, as local churches and groups celebrate what it means to be a family in 2004, and to reflect on how they can support different kinds of families, both in their churches and in their communities, and respond to them with creativity and compassion.

'So, what's special about your family?'

Churches Together for Families, a coordinating group of Churches Together in England, has produced a range of support materials for churches wishing to mark the 10th anniversary in different ways. There are four full colour posters displaying different aspects of family life and asking the question, 'What's special about your family?' These are available as downloads from the *Churches Together*

for Families website at www.churchesandfamilies.org, and they can also be ordered in a high quality format from www.cpo-online.org.

Churches Together for Families is a group of denominational representatives (whose own main remit often encompasses family work) and Christian family organisations. This group meets regularly for networking, focussing on different family-related

issues, and preparing materials to support churches in their work with families. They encourage churches to work together in different ways to support families.

Family-focussed worship resources

Different member groups of Churches Together for Families have prepared worship materials to support churches wishing to mark the anniversary in their programme for 2004. These materials cover a wide variety of family-focussed themes, such as families having fun, marriage, faith in the family, positive parenting etc. The monthly resource packs are available to download from their website, and include sermon outlines, hymns, prayers, readings, interactive ideas for all age worship, and seminar and activity ideas.

'Vision for the Future' Conference

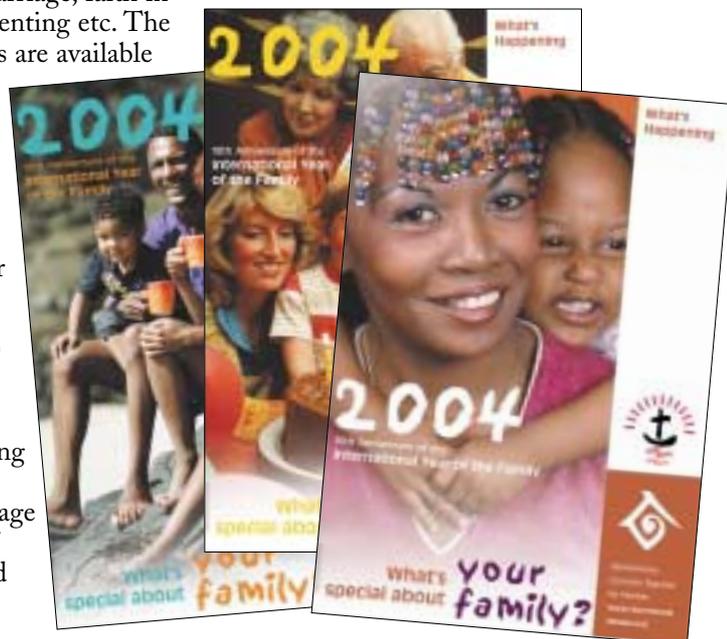
Churches Together for Families are also working together with the Family Life and Marriage Education Network of the Church of England (FLAME) to host a

conference. The aim of this conference will be to explore how churches can develop strategies for working with the diversity of family groups in our society, as well as maintaining Christian family values, in an atmosphere of dwindling resources and the decreasing availability of volunteers. The conference will take place from October 1-3 at Highgate House, Creton, Northampton. Keynote speakers include Duncan Dormor, Dean of St John's College, Cambridge, and Helen Cameron, who is a member of the Territorial Strategy Council of the Salvation Army, and a consultant on voluntary sector management and social policy. Over the weekend breakout groups will focus on specific kinds of families and family related issues, and consider how

To explore how churches can develop strategies for working with the diversity of family groups in our society.

churches can respond creatively and compassionately to the needs that are highlighted. For more information about the conference contact the FLAME office on 01622 755014. The cost of the weekend is £140 if you book before 1 June, £160 afterwards, £225 early bird for couples sharing, £260 afterwards and £75 for non-residential (but including food and use of facilities).

For more information about *Churches Together for Families* call 020 7898 1535.





Preparing for Marriage

In two complementary articles **Carol Davies** and **Sheila Fletcher** explore marriage preparation – particularly with the ministry of Readers in mind. Both Carol and Sheila have close links with FLAME (Family Life and Marriage Encounter).

Marriage Preparation: As it is

Carol Davies is Family Life Officer in the Diocese of Coventry since 1988, licensed as a Reader in 2003 and based at St George's church in Rugby.

It takes about 45 minutes to get married, during which short time the woman will (normally) change her name, there will be a change in legal status and, even in these days of cohabitation and single parenthood, marriage will alter the couple's social position, people will treat them differently not least their families. A lot of effort will have gone into planning the wedding, but the point of marriage preparation is to help couples see beyond the wedding day and to their relationship, which we hope will be a deepening of their love and commitment to one another.

Whether couples are about to enter a first marriage, they live apart or together, one or both have been married before, the aim of Marriage Preparation will include raising awareness and some self discovery of what the change from wherever they are now to being a married couple will mean for them. They may be unclear about what it is they are coming to. Is it to learn about the wedding service? Are they going to be confronted by intimidating and personal questions about their relationship? Whatever anxieties they have when they arrive, by the time they leave, almost without exception, they will express their gratitude and say how much they have valued the experience even if it was not what they had expected.

As Family Life Officer for the diocese I am fortunate in having the occasional opportunity to lead a group, but I see myself primarily as a resource to enable parishes to develop their own schemes. This might involve training of clergy and laity, working with

individual parishes to set up or revise their schemes or to direct them to helpful resources. Marriage Preparation should reflect the needs of the couples and the skills of leaders. Bespoke is the key word – off the shelf packages might be quick and easy, but the content or mode of delivery may not be appropriate to a particular parish.

Preparing for the future

We cannot see into the future but we can do something to help couples prepare for it. Rather like the wise man building his house upon the rock, marriage preparation should enable couples to put down the roots which will enable them to cope with life's challenges as and when they arise. It is not unknown for couples to discover that getting married may not be the right thing for them; if they decide to cancel the wedding at this stage then we need to see the marriage preparation as a success.

It is always encouraging to see Parishes collaborating together, perhaps ecumenically. Here in Coventry Diocese the three parishes in Stratford-upon-Avon hold a 'preparing for marriage' morning about three times a year. The programme I have used here and in other parishes includes:

- Communicating expectations, needs and feelings to one another; we remind them of the words – 'All that I am I give to you; all that I have I share with you'.
- Faithfulness, which is about more than sexual fidelity. What does this mean in marriage? Forsaking all others – who might be the others? Where might the pressures come from?
- Conflict and how we deal with it, using the PINCH-CRUNCH helps couples understand the necessity of dealing with issues honestly and openly.
- Forgiveness - giving and accepting -

how does it feel to be forgiven?

- Life's changes – what they might hope for in the future, along with the unwanted situations and what roots they might put down to deal with them.
- Honouring (or dishonouring) and cherishing one another – some practical examples. What they might like and what they wouldn't like.
- Family and friends – the support they might receive from them and also some of the issues which can provoke differences?

A couple of evenings, a half or even a full day can only allow us to touch the surface of many of the issues, but if we concentrate on the principles, and plant the appropriate seeds then it will have been of enormous value. This is where one of the inventories such as 'Prepare-Enrich' can be helpful. Giving each couple a handbook or a set of questions to work through on their own and then share together will enable them to discover any areas in their relationship which may need further consideration. The relevant issues can then be discussed during a one-to-one-meeting with a priest, a Reader or another appropriate person.

Marriage Preparation: it isn't what it used to be!

Sheila Fletcher is a Reader in Exeter Diocese and Diocesan FLAME Officer

I have regularly facilitated Marriage Preparation sessions as a Reader for the last 15 years with anything from 2 to 50 couples together in groups, or to couples on their own. Also as Family Life and Marriage Education (FLAME) Officer for the Exeter Diocese I have trained clergy and laity to facilitate sessions for nearly as long, and have observed many changes taking place.

Marriage Preparation in the 21st Century?

15 years ago I was told that marriage preparation sessions were pointless because most couples who came were too much in love and starry eyed so unrealistic about their relationship. Much has changed. There are still couples who believe in no sex before marriage; they are encouraged and treated with great respect but today I have had couples coming for marriage preparation who have lived together for up to 22 years and have several children! So the idea that couples are

too naïve for marriage preparation to be effective, usually no longer applies. Indeed some people now come to get married because there is a problem in the relationship and they think that getting married will solve it. Also, we have couples coming for further marriage after divorce. As most couples come with so much experience, I find it is not helpful to call it 'Marriage Preparation'; in fact it sounds very patronising. I prefer to call it 'Marriage Exploration'. We have to be realistic and start from where couples are. The goal posts have moved.

How has marriage exploration (preparation) changed?

Over the last 15 years marriage exploration has changed. In the first phase clergy often used to chat about their own marriages, giving instructions and advice, which might, or might not have had any relevance to the couple concerned. In the next phase clergy invited a bank manager to talk about finances and a doctor to talk about sex etc. After that we had a phase when clergy or trained lay people facilitated sessions involving answering many questionnaires on various issues, such as money, sex, children, leisure etc., most of which assumed the couples were only just about to set up home together.

The marriage exploration that tends to take place now is relevant to all couples at whatever stage of their relationship. In fact I use many of the same exercises when leading marriage enrichment weekends. These sessions are skills based – the couples look not so much at the issues but ways of handling the issues. So the course is based on exploring and practising, for example, communication skills and ways of handling conflict. The usual issues will be involved but the emphasis is on dealing with them. Commitment is also a key area that is explored. The aim is to get couples talking together not listening to a speaker.

Any relationship is dynamic so we have to keep up to date with what our partner is feeling and thinking – the exploration is on going and encouraged to be so.

Is marriage exploration effective?

Comments from those who have attended sessions might suffice to say, 'Yes'. Here are some:

- We used to shout at each other all the time, but now we have learnt to listen to each other.
- Can we bring our friends to the next session? They have been married 6 months and are having problems – this is just what they need.
- We will keep these exercises and do them again every 6 months because our relationship will change.
- I was scared of getting married because my parents' divorce was so awful, but I now feel we have the skills to handle things that they didn't.
- Thank you for a very useful day, we feel we understand each other much better now.

Couples who stay in the area have come back to me for help when their relationship is in difficulties, because they have built up a trust with me during our session(s) of marriage exploration. Several couples have come back to me, some years later, and have told me that the exercises on commitment have enabled them to stay together. They were on the point of divorce and remembered what had been said at Marriage Exploration, had worked through the problems, and are still happily married today.

Marriage exploration – in my parish?

Some clergy in rural parishes may only have the occasional wedding, so say there is no point in doing sessions. In answer to this, in certain areas of our diocese, churches have teamed up, lay people have been trained, and a co-ordinated programme of marriage exploration takes place. Sometimes there is an ecumenical dimension, for group sessions are nearly always more productive than working with individual couples.

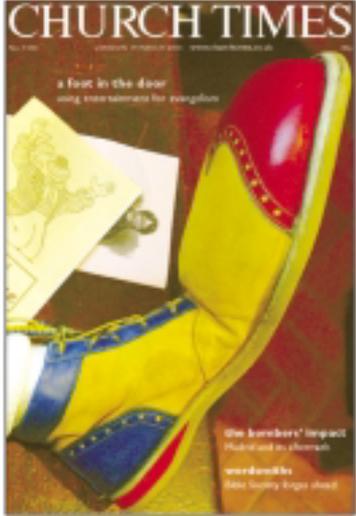
Others say, 'There are secular courses and inventories that people can do that are effective, aren't there?' Certainly there are an increasing number of good, secular courses available now, but the ones offered by the churches can add the spiritual dimension. With some of the exercises God can be brought into the dialogue easily and naturally, in a way that is accessible to the couples, no matter what their religious experience. The facilitators' handbook with photo-copyable handouts for couples, which I have produced for our diocese, includes such material.

Also the facilitator builds up a relationship of trust and friendship with the couples, so there is the development of on-going pastoral care. Marriage exploration should be seen as a process not an event. There may be many mission opportunities as a result. The care for the couple's unique relationship is obviously paramount, but several people come to faith as an indirect result of marriage exploration. What a privilege to be involved in this work!



FLAME (Family Life and Marriage Education) can be contacted at: **FLAME**, Robert Runcie House, 60 Marsham Street, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1EW. Tel: 01622 755014 email: flame@csr.org.uk website: www.flame.ukfamily.com

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Being Single for God

Olive Stephens is a parishioner of St. Stephen's Chatham, in the Diocese of Rochester.

Single people often feel marginalised within church life, especially by an over-emphasis on 'family worship' and the ethos which may accompany this. Yet single people differ greatly from one another in their gifts and their needs. Some of us may look to the Church for a particular blessing of our single state, and this is the path I have felt called to follow.

On 20 October 2000, in the setting of a Holy Communion Service, I took vows of Chastity, Simplicity and Obedience in front of Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali. This was a 'first' for Rochester Diocese – at least for a very long time, possibly since the Reformation – and not surprisingly reports which appeared in the media were unhelpful, if not positively misleading! So I was obliged to explain that I am not a hermit, nor a new age saint, or indeed any kind of saint, except in the New



for Healthcare and Ministry and I asked the chaplain to pray for me to be filled once again with the Holy Spirit. Later I received counselling, including bereavement counselling, and realised I had to let go of a particular maternal relationship which had ended, and also of all the children whom I had never had. I learnt to cry (which I had not

until death to the service of His Mystical Body, the Church.' I longed for this union and knew that God was calling me to become a Bride of Christ, which is now usually known as embracing the consecrated single life.

My vicar showed complete understanding and on Easter Day said a beautiful prayer of betrothal over me. We then consulted the nuns at West Malling Abbey (an Anglican Benedictine Order). They explained that I should seek the Bishop's permission to take a vow of life-long virginity. I did not feel called to enter a religious community. I was told that, in the early church, it was quite common for people to take vows and live them out in their own homes. The practice had died out but, since Vatican II, has been coming back into use, and, when I first made my inquiry, the Anglican Church was receiving requests at the rate of about one a month.

Making my commitment

I knew that I should continue my work in my own church and community. God also assured me that I was already a spiritual mother and had been exercising this role for some time in a variety of ways, including spiritual direction, for which I had received some training. We therefore formally sought the Bishop's advice. He decided that I should take temporary vows of Chastity, Simplicity and Obedience, which I did at Advent 1999, and after a year of testing my vocation I was permitted to make those vows permanent.

Is not your soul the fiancé of the divine Lamb and will it not soon be his spouse on the happy day of your ordination?

Testament sense that we are all, as Christians, called to be saints. I happen to live alone but am in no sense 'a solitary'. Incidentally, neither do I live in a council house, as one report represented – though why it should be so remarkable if I did, I don't know! I do watch and read material which is not religious, and I don't spend all day long reading the Bible and praying.

Why this?

Why have I felt this vocation to consecrated singleness? Because, through circumstances, not specific choice I am not married, my very deep-seated maternal instincts have been denied their natural fulfilment. This led to bouts of depression and illness but not, I hope, to bitterness. This culminated in a nervous breakdown six years ago. While I was recovering, I stayed for a week at Burrswood Christian Centre

been able to do previously) and allowed myself to experience emotions which I had habitually repressed. Shortly after this, five months after the laying-on-of hands at Burrswood, I was smitten with uncontrollable laughter (which I realised was a manifestation of the Holy Spirit) which continued intermittently for several days. This was a healing experience.

I was reading the correspondence between St Therese of Lisieux and a struggling young ordinand. In writing to him about his coming ordination she says, 'Is not your soul the fiancé of the divine Lamb and will it not soon be his spouse on the happy day of your ordination?' Therese refers to the true meaning of celibacy as 'not so much a promise to give up marriage as the choice of another kind of marriage... a spiritual marriage to Christ and through this sacred bond a celibate is committed

In a special and beautiful Holy Communion service in my parish church, I was presented by my bishop with a cross and a ring as signs of this new adventure and commitment on my part.

I might add that when a young African nurse whom I met heard that I had taken vows of chastity at the age of 80, she was amused! But because I was so at peace with what had happened to me I was able to share in her amusement, rejoicing in the new beginnings that God can bring to us at any stage in our lives.

My rule of life, which had been evolving for some years, was formally approved by the bishop. It is not a cast iron cage but a framework which continues to evolve and to be adapted according to my age and spiritual growth. It involves saying an Office two or three times a day, meditation, intercessory prayer, Bible reading, spiritual reading and keeping a journal, as well as time for recreation.

By taking on these vows I feel that I have entered into a sacramental union with Christ as my spouse, which

involves a life-long commitment to the Church and the community. In particular, I do all I can to foster the Church's Ministry of Healing and Renewal. Some people come to see me

commitment. I do not claim to be living on a higher plane. If I have given anything up it is because my tastes and interests have changed; there has been no sense of

God also assured me that I was already a spiritual mother and had been exercising this role for some time in a variety of ways.

for spiritual direction and discussion, and I spend time on the phone and writing letters and articles, keeping in touch with many people including some who are interested or involved in similar vocations.

Complementary paths

This is not a withdrawal from life but a fulfilment. It is an expression of love for God. Natural instincts are sublimated in order to be expressed in a spiritual way. It is not a reward for virtue nor an achievement, but a precious gift from God, a

extraordinary sacrifice or self-mortification. At my age of 83 I am fast approaching death, which for a Christian is the crown of life, and I need to get rid of unnecessary clutter and be discriminating in my use of time. I feel fulfilled and emotionally healed.

God has graciously met my special needs. Everyone is special to God and he meets our needs and calls each of us in special, differing ways. It may take a lifetime to evaluate but these are the different but complementary paths of our Christian journey as members of the Kingdom.

Cohabitation: a Christian reflection

Denise Mumford, a Reader in Southwark Diocese, convened a working party on the issue of cohabitation for the Diocese.

Debate about sexual ethics is, as we all know, difficult for the Church. Our Archbishop has called on us to be thoughtful about this, to listen to others and to read scripture afresh seeking guidance. As a community of moral discourse, the Church must try to understand the living Word of God, as it reaches us at a particular time and in a particular society, about issues of behaviour and how they affect human flourishing. As the Chief Rabbi has said: 'God's Word is for all time, but our act of listening is of this time.'

In 2001, a working party was set up by the Board for Church in Society in the Diocese of Southwark to look in detail at the subject of heterosexual

cohabitation. It was primarily a response to a question about the widening cultural gap between the church and the world in which young people live.

A serious study

The working party met over a period of 15 months. We studied Scripture and the tradition, and drew upon the experience of people in society today, both through personal contact and in the distilled form of social surveys. We did our best to reason our way through the complexities of what we had researched. Although we were a diverse group, which represented different traditions within the Church, we were able finally to come close to a common mind; indeed a number of us changed our views during the discussions. Our report was published in October 2002, and we then undertook to lead debates in as many deaneries as invited us. The report was discussed and commended by Diocesan Synod in July 2003, and plans made to further its pastoral recommendations. It is available to other Dioceses or individuals on request. Our working party does not claim to have reached a final view on cohabitation. Indeed one of our

recommendations is for more social research. We do believe that we have produced a solid and useful report, which will contribute to a wider debate in the Church.

Real humans

The process we undertook made me realise that, whenever we raise the issue of sexual ethics, we are inevitably dealing with human feelings and human pain. People reading this may have in mind a child or relative, a friend, or reflect on their own life experience. Any rational debate will be influenced by that personal experience, which both illuminates and obscures discussion.

One of our members had responsibility in her church for visiting those couples requesting the baptism of a child. In talking to a couple a while back, she discovered that they were not married. She asked gently why this was so. They were hesitant, then both admitted that they wanted to marry, but had not liked to mention this to each other! Their marriage finally took place alongside the baptism. This story tells us two things about cohabitation: one that it is very often an ambiguous relationship, in which even the couple themselves have



not talked about what it means to them. It also tells us that some cohabitants are very committed to each other – committed enough to marry, and that the Church may have a role in helping that to come about.

The spectrum of cohabitation

Cohabitation is a spectrum of relationships, ranging from the very committed to the uncommitted. Mentioning first the uncommitted relationships, working party members were quite shocked and upset when reading the studies of such relationships, which have accumulated since about 1995. People often enter

spectrum: committed cohabitation. Many young people make a serious commitment to each other (as indeed do older cohabitants) and may enter cohabitation prior to marriage for practical reasons. They intend to have a relationship of long-standing – perhaps for life, but haven't yet made the important public commitment of marriage. These people deserve our respect, and more than a half of such relationships do convert to marriage in due course.

If marriage is seen as a process rather than an event, some working party members argued that once the *private* commitment to a permanent, faithful, loving relationship has been

finally be fit to live with him forever. God gave us sex not only for procreation but to express and sustain a relationship, which reflects his kind of love – a love where each is given to the other within a covenant of unbreakable commitment. That is why, with all its fragility and risk, we are certain that marriage is by far the best framework for a man and woman to flourish and grow together in love, and for their children to do the same.'

We also believe that the Church must find the way to share this profound and joyful truth, so that it is heard as good news and not as condemnation.

...it's about commitment

Richard and Michelle were married in church on 9 August 2003, the fifth anniversary of the day they met.

Both of them believe in God, but they are not regular church-goers. They feel that getting married in church is symbolic of their devotion to each other.

They have been living together since a year after they met. Michelle says, 'Richard and I discussed our commitment to each other. We would not have moved in together unless we were sure that we wanted to spend the rest of our lives together'.

The reasons why they didn't get married right away were mainly practical ones: Michelle was still a student and later had student loans to pay off; they had jobs in different parts of the country. When they started to look for accommodation in the same area, Richard pointed out the logic of getting a place together. Financial and housing constraints suggested to them that they cohabit initially, and marry when they could afford it.

Michelle and Richard are typical of many young, committed couples, who are cohabiting, who come to their parish priest, wanting a church wedding and sometimes marriage preparation. The Report suggests that clergy should unreservedly welcome and support their decision to marry, rather than – as is still the case in some parishes – refusing to marry them because they are cohabiting.

Michelle says that her own vicar was more concerned about the reasons why they wanted to marry, rather than why they chose to cohabit first.

Cohabiting relationships are very unstable. Statistics show that 1/3 last less than a year, and only 1/10 last longer than 5 years.

into cohabitation in a very casual way, and see it as a relationship of social or sexual convenience. Cohabiting relationships are very unstable. Statistics show that 1/3 last less than a year, and only 1/10 last longer than 5 years. Moreover, uncommitted cohabitation is strongly associated with serious problems: domestic violence, depression, alcohol abuse and poor financial circumstances. The 1996 Child Development Study rated happiness in relationships between partners. Least happy were never-married cohabiting women. In all categories, the cohabitants rated their relationships less happy than did married respondents.

Our greatest concern was in relation to the children of such uncommitted partnerships. The National Child Development Study shows that: *'While some children may adapt well to more fluid family structures, there is a growing body of evidence that many do not... Those whose outcomes were poorest were the children of uncommitted fathers.'* Effects on the children were, for example, higher rates of delinquency and maladjusted behaviour and poorer educational achievement. These findings are replicated in other studies. Variables, such as social disadvantage, are significant, but even when they are controlled, the odds of dissolution for cohabiting parents are at least twice as high as for married parents. We were forced to the conclusion that this type of cohabitation is bad for society.

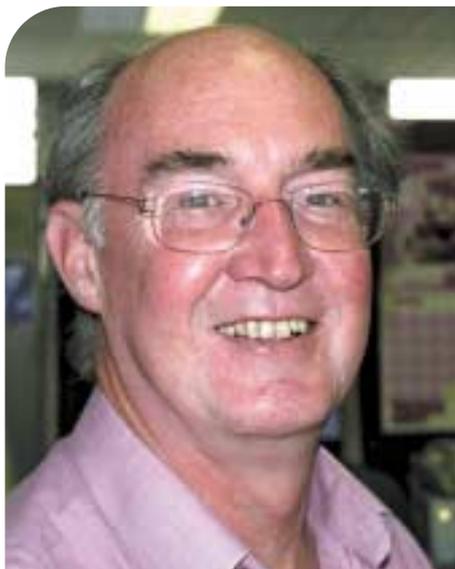
Turning to the other end of the

made, a committed cohabitation can no longer be regarded as sinful. The wedding is then the next important step in an on-going process, which continues throughout married life. Other members believed that neither sexual union nor cohabitation should take place before the wedding ceremony. In either case, the Church's position now and throughout its history, is clear. Christian marriage is a legally defined, publicly accepted relationship, blessed by God. It is the moment when a couple, before family and witnesses, make the unambiguous commitment to life-long fidelity.

One flesh

Jeffrey John's chapter in the report, *Loving in God's Image*, explores the biblical case in detail. In Scripture, this relationship of commitment and love is expressed in the phrase *'one flesh.'* The quotation comes from Genesis 2.24: *'Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.'* Jesus himself spoke of the union as an unbreakable bond: *'They are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God joined together let no-one separate.'* (Mark 10.8-9 and parallels) This is a hard saying, as the disciples in Matthew point out, but it also offers hope in God's grace.

We conclude in the Report: *'The most profound and joyful truth about us is that we are made in God's image, and created for eternal life in love with him. He wants us to learn to love as perfectly and selflessly as he loves, so that we will*



Surprised by Jonathan

Stuart Buchanan is Overseas Personnel Officer for CMS and a Reader in Southwark Diocese. He became a father for the first time at the age of 49.

God's sense of humour; how else can you explain that after 12 years of childlessness, as soon as you become churchwarden during an interregnum, you find yourself expecting your first child? As well as Kate, my wife, being churchwarden, I was responsible during the interregnum for co-ordinating our monthly worship for all ages, had just started Reader training and begun writing a book.

Any parent will tell you that having children makes big demands upon your life, your sleep patterns and energy levels. We had both reached the age where energy levels had dropped and

preached on more than one day in the same church, had, I like to think, more to do with the nature of the one-off requests to represent the Church Mission Society at different supporting churches, than with the quality of my preaching.

Preaching regularly at your own church is quite different from representing CMS. The challenge of always relating the lectionary to mission has given way to allowing it to speak to other aspects of the Christian life. There is also the challenge of exploring different ways of structuring sermons and giving them a different feel and style, rather than sticking to a tried and tested format. However the biggest challenge has been that while I had the luxury of writing CMS sermons during CMS time, my Reader sermons need to be written during my own time, and time is

of lectern, altar and pulpit from the north aisle worked both ways; wherever you led the service from, you weren't distracted visually by the babies and toddlers in the north aisle.

Now that Jonathan is in the Sunday school, we have edged our way closer to the centre again, but still keeping firmly to the north of the central aisle. Moving to the margins may narrow your view of the pulpit, but broadens your perspectives. It meant that we got to know the others who worshipped at the northern margins. Worshipping at one of the margins also gave us a deeper



understanding of why people worship at some of the other margins of the church. From the back you can get out quickly; from the south aisle you can escape shaking hands with the vicar.

Age-wise, as a couple, we would more naturally relate to those whose children are in their mid-to-late teens or older. Hopefully we are still in touch with them and their aspirations as well as those of the parents of young children. Jonathan has been good at breaking down barriers; he is one of the most regular members of the congregation and feels at home within the church. After the service, he ranges widely, and occasionally wildly, whilst his parents are caught up in

We had both reached the age where energy levels had dropped and sleep was a much-needed commodity.

sleep was a much-needed commodity. Somehow we saw the 18-month interregnum through and I managed to keep the momentum going to complete successfully the Reader course. Now as a Reader and the father of a five year old, because of family commitments, I probably do less in the church than before I was licensed, but I do different things.

Doing differently

Preaching has generally replaced teaching through house groups and parish days, although I did recently lead a short course; leading Part One of the Eucharist has replaced the monthly informal worship group that we hosted. I first preached whilst at university, 30 years before being licensed as a Reader, and had preached reasonably regularly for the next twenty years. The fact that I rarely

something I definitely have much less of now, compared to five years ago.

Life at the margins

Being a parent changes your perspective in other ways. We used to sit centrally within our church. We would avoid being creatures of habit and regularly alternate sides of the central aisle. Avoiding the edges, we would move up and down the church, allowing us to relate to different members of the congregation. As pram-pushing parents we migrated to the north aisle, where the other pram and buggy pushers worshipped. The north aisle allows space for the pram or pushchair and easy access to both the crèche and the junior library.

As I preached, and led worship, there was also the realisation that the pillars that restricted our family's view



conversations. To new families he helps give the church an impression of being a child-friendly place. To many of the congregation I am primarily defined as being Jonathan's dad, rather than being the Reader.

God talk

One of Jonathan's favourite books in the junior library last year was about Joseph. The intention of it keeping him quiet for the last five minutes of the service usually failed as he repeatedly asked the question "Why did the brothers put Joseph down the hole?" My whispered answer, that it was because they were jealous, obviously did not satisfy his curiosity, as the question would be repeated

again the following week. It was shortly after that, whilst preparing a sermon around a Genesis passage about Joseph, that I realised that this answer did not satisfy Joseph's curiosity either. Joseph must have lived with this question throughout his time in Egypt, probably asking the same question over and over again, finally seeing the answer as God's purpose was worked out within his life, and that of his family.

Jonathan has reached the age of asking theological questions – those really deep ones that adults wouldn't dare ask, about heaven and about death and many questions that begin 'why...?'. These, and my growing understanding of fatherhood, often

stimulate and inform my theological understanding more directly than Christian books do; a good excuse for spending more time being a father, and less reading Christian books!

An understanding that it is when he is too tired to bombard me with the question 'why', that Jonathan resorts into the 'it's all your fault daddy' type of comment, helped me realise that I, and most adults do exactly the same thing to God; blaming him for what happens when we are too tired, or cannot be bothered to make sense of his answers.

Having reached the parent's traditional last resort, during Advent, of telling your child that Father Christmas only comes if he or she is good, brought home to me in a new way the contrast that there is between Father Christmas and Jesus Christ. Jesus only comes because we are not good. Having found the starting point it was easy to find a couple of other big differences between Christ and Santa in order to make a three point sermon.

Becoming a parent late in life means that my Reader ministry has not unfolded as I imagined; it has been different, but I think it has been much more rewarding.



The Tiny Tots Service: how and why and is it worth it?

Margaret Hopkins has been a Reader in Peterborough Diocese for 12 years and has run Tiny Tots groups for 24 years. She is a wife, mother and grandmother and a member of the Mothers' Union.

If it's Thursday it must be Tiny Tots.

Well, that's the way it's been at our church for several years now. Every Thursday morning some twenty local and not-so-local mothers, grandmothers, child-minders and the occasional father

bring their children to our church hall for two hours of toys, talk and tantrums, and in the middle of it we all go into the church for a service with more of the same, not even the tantrums being noticeably absent.

And every Thursday afternoon both myself and the other leader usually sleep the sleep of exhaustion.

So is it worth it?

This is something you may not believe unless you have tried it. I think it is

worth it, hence this article. The vicar thinks so. It is something we offer to our local community, both socially and spiritually, and also lets them meet him and other church members as human beings in a human setting. The mothers think so. Many say they prefer our group to others they have tried partly because it seems friendly but mainly because we include a church service and they want that for their children.

A new mother arrived and asked if there was any compulsion to abandon

the hall and its contents in order to move through into the church. Then she saw what happens when I come into the hall bringing the baskets of shakers and bells. It is the signal for the opening procession. The toddlers come running to collect an instrument to wave, bang, chew or disregard as they surge gleefully down the corridor to the church ahead of the adults. They would feel seriously deprived if they were prevented from going into the church! I have even been told of tears of frustration when they are shopping on a

Many say they prefer our group to others they have tried partly because it seems friendly but mainly because we include a church service and they want that for their children.

day that is not a Thursday and they are made to walk past the church without coming in.

Not every minute of the service is sunshine and light! There are children who wander off (perhaps our pulpit needs a stair-gate). There are those who want to show you their new shoes in the middle of the prayer. There are those who kidnap Baby Jesus out of the manger, or insist on picking up the lost sheep every time he falls over the precipice and gently returning him to the fold, thereby robbing the tale of a certain crucial point. But I make it clear to the mothers from the first that this is a service for the children and they should not feel unwelcome or threatened.

Aim 1: to show church as a welcoming place

We always follow the same routine. To an older age group this would be boring. But for the pre-school age it gives a sense of security. We have caused great distress when we have been foolish enough to change it. They know that, even if they cannot join in the words or follow the story, they are part of the whole because they know what comes next. They join in the opening song, which is always *Praise him, praise him*, with vigorous instrumental accompaniment, always followed by trotting out to hand in the bells and shakers with amazingly few tears at the parting. Then a story (see below) a couple of songs, a prayer and

a collection. There is a birthday candle ceremony, mirrored by a baptism birthday candle ceremony of equal status, with the same prayer and singing of *Jesus bids us shine*. And the same closing song: *Wide, wide as the ocean* with much stretching upwards, downwards and sideways.

Aim 2: to show church as a place of security

Joining in is important – in whatever way they can. They take such pride in toddling out to the front with their fistful of pennies and putting (most of it) in the collection basket.

Indeed, it is the first thing that newcomers learn, so we are making good Anglicans of them! Joining in the words is not important.

Most of them cannot (or will not) say or sing anything while with us. In fact, at that age words are a second language. It is actions that are the main means of communication, and that is why every song has actions, even if it is only clapping. That is the communal worship.

Aim 3: to show that church is a place where all belong

One aim we do *not* have is for the children to remember the individual Bible stories since most nowadays leave us for Nursery School soon after their third birthday. We certainly include a story each session, usually of Jesus or about Creation. Toddlers need more than spoken words alone, so it is illustrated with pictures or models or acting. We have pretended to be seeds growing in the rain and sun; hunted for lost coins under the chairs; cuddled soft cottonwool balls and pretended they are sheep that need looking after, or each child has been given a cut-out lollipop-style tree and a few red and green circle stickers to peel off and put on as apples. One vicar, raiding the toy-box for characters for one parable, realised that if he included the lurid lime-green Teddy among those who went from Jerusalem to Jericho he could brilliantly illustrate the contempt the Jews felt for the Samaritans. The stories are there, but their significance is often more for the parents than the children. For the children, our hope is that we build up a picture of Jesus as someone wonderful and kind to whom we can talk. And the prayers are just that – talking to Jesus. It helps if the

prayer is introduced by a short song. There is usually a sense of unity and a nanosecond of quiet at the end of any song (so I often introduce one if things are getting out of hand) and a simple *Father God in Heaven, hear our prayer* sung to *Kumbaya* does create a sense of worship... on a good day.

Aim 4: to show that God cares for me

Hopefully God's care is reflected in our care for both the children and the mothers. It is acknowledged that parent-and-toddler groups are important for the social development of the children and are often a lifeline for the stay-at-home mother. Having worship time as well as play time sets our caring in context. Only a few of our mothers are Sunday church goers. Tiny Tots is often the only time when prayer is suggested to them, yet when at the start of the Iraq War I said a prayer for those involved there, the sincerity of the 'Amen' was powerful. It matters when a mother makes a point of coming on the anniversary of her child's baptism so he can blow out his candle and be prayed for by name. It matters when a mother whispers how her oldest child is not settling at school and asks if we can include a prayer for all the children who are starting school. It matters when another begs to stay on in the church for a while to remember a bereaved friend far away. Over events big and small, words and actions show that to God we matter. Our routine suits our particular layout and resources. Each church is different, and would evolve a different pattern. I was at one where the service was held in their hall at the opposite end from the toys; at others the whole session happens in the church with the toys in one corner. Some churches light candles at the start, taking turns with wielding the taper and with blowing out at the end. Some use the hassocks to good effect. Some have musical accompaniments – lucky people. One of our vicars was a genius on the piano, and could improvise storm music and peace-be-still music, or raindrops-falling and seeds-growing music at will.

Yes, it is worth all the effort. One little boy was asked by his father what he had done in Tiny Tots that day. He replied, 'We listened to the lady and we listened to God'. When his mother told me that I thought it just summed up all our hopes. Even if he did detract from it somewhat by adding 'And then God played the piano'!



More than the Family Service: Enabling children to hear the Gospel message

Margaret Withers, Archbishop's Officer for Evangelism among Children, shares some important reflections.

Being a child today

The last twenty years have seen more changes in a child's life than at any other time in history. The world has been through the fastest technical revolution in the life of this planet, with accompanying changes in life-style and economics. This has had a major effect on every single person but children have been influenced the most.

In 1991, the report, *All God's Children?* was published stating, 'Children's Evangelism in Crisis.' During the years since that report, family life and a child's culture have changed beyond recognition but the issues of how the Church engages with children remain the same. Although thousands of children and their parents have made an initial contact with the church, through midweek activities, imaginative worship, and our Church schools, nearly half of our churches claim that they have no children at all.

Beyond Sunday morning

The immediate reaction to a statement like that is to ask whether it is strictly true. It is true that the youngsters who come to church on Sundays are almost entirely the children of the adult congregation. It is true that numbers are often small. If we look beyond Sunday morning, however, we see a more optimistic picture.

Contrary to popular opinion, children do come to church, but they are not always noticed or counted. They come to weddings, baptisms, and occasionally, funerals. Children worship regularly with their parents at Family Services, parent and toddler clubs, and in our Church schools. Children come to the Christingle, Mothering Sunday, and Harvest services, and the uniformed organisations come on Remembrance Sunday and the Sunday nearest to St George's day. Local schools use the church for carol service, RE and history lessons.

Once we look at the whole year and the number of children and their families that have contact with the church, instead of counting the few youngsters that come through the church doors on Sunday morning, our whole perspective changes. There are

far more opportunities than we had imagined, and in most of them, a Reader can and does exercise a powerful and valuable ministry.

Leading worship with children

In many churches, the Reader is expected to plan and lead the Family Service and to take special occasional services: Mothering Sunday, Harvest, Christmas carol festivals etc. Most of the congregation will be young families, and for many of them it will be the only time that they will enter a church and hear the Christian gospel proclaimed that year. The welcome and the quality of worship that they receive will make them decide whether to come again.

When I was a diocesan children's adviser, I used to lead a seminar for Readers in training entitled, *Planning and Leading All Age Worship*. One of the first things I warned the participants was that a Family Service was probably the most difficult service that they would ever lead! Such worship should offer inclusiveness, quality and depth. That needs skill, planning and resourcing. (See article by Diane Craven in *The Reader*, February 2004)

If you see a child, you are doing children's work

One role a Reader has with children cannot be avoided! A child sees the Reader's robes and scarf as representing the Church, and the way that a Reader behaves will tell that child what it is to be a Christian, how the Church regards him and even how God regards him far more than the most eloquent of sermons. That is an awesome responsibility.

Looking beyond Sunday, there is work in schools by witness through service as well as helping with assemblies and RE. Readers can help with leading worship at buggy services, holiday clubs and festivals. Through prayer and Bible study a Reader can also provide support to the children's leaders who are often over-stretched.

Training Readers for ministry among children

During the last year, I have been in contact with every Reader training

officer and diocesan children's adviser to find out what training in children's work is offered to Readers in each diocese. The results have presented an exciting and varied picture.

Nearly half of the dioceses incorporated sessions on a teaching ministry with children, worship, and spirituality. A smaller number held sessions on a ministry in schools, and a few offered evangelism and Godly Play. It was sad, however, to find that, in spite of the large number of Readers that are involved with children and their families through worship, some dioceses offered no training in any aspect of a ministry among children.

If the Church is to reach children and their families effectively, value them and encourage them to come to faith, we have to resource our Readers as well as our clergy and children's workers. Not all are called to a direct ministry with children but leading effective all age worship, engaging with young people, and maybe offering practical help take time and practice and need resourcing and training.

Hope for the future

There has been a great deal of gloom and doom about falling numbers of children in the last decade, even a suggestion that the Church in this country will not be viable in a couple of generations. This is, I believe, a lack of recognition of the different way that groups of children and young families are being Church, and a negation of the power of the Holy Spirit to work within the people of God.

Among the changes in our children's culture, there is recognition of children's natural spirituality and a new openness to experience of worship. Schools are developing relationships with churches, and the number of parishes where the children's ministry reaches beyond Sunday morning is growing daily. These are signs of hope but changing the way that the Church regards its children is long-term work.

It is part of every Christian's baptismal calling to proclaim the gospel to each generation. The future of the church lies in our children. Those with a teaching and preaching ministry need to be in the forefront of this vital work among our children and their families and need resourcing to do it effectively.



The era of the third age

Ann Morisy, of the Church of England Commission on Urban Life and Faith, writes about the 'Third Age' and its implications for society and the churches.

Never before has it been like this: The age profile of the British population clearly shows how old we are becoming. Demographers (students of population patterns) describe Britain and about fifteen other nations as third age societies, because over 20% of the population is over 65, with a growing proportion of people in their 70s, 80s and 90s. For the first time in human history the number of seniors in the population is larger than the number of children.

There are a number of things that have brought about this growth of the third age. The most obvious being the increased longevity for both men and women. However, women continue to live six years longer than men. The gerontologist, Grimley-Evans, suggests that four of these six years are due to the difference in lifestyle between men and women, and two years of the difference are due to women's biological superiority (linked with the number of times a woman's immune system has been triggered through malnourishment). The greater longevity of women means that just as fat is often said to be a feminist issue, so too is ageing.

Demography doesn't lie!

The difference in longevity between men and women is worth scrutinizing because it betrays the often unacknowledged cost of marriage and family life to women. For it is spinsters who live the longest, followed by married women, followed by married men, and those with the shortest average lifespan are bachelors. You don't have to be a whiz at algebra to work out who gains and loses in the marriage and partnership stakes. In an era when women can live life on their own terms

it should not come as a surprise therefore that eight out of ten divorce proceedings are initiated by women. Likewise the popularity of marriage has taken a hit because of these unspoken and challenging dynamics. Demography doesn't lie. Demographic information is the public manifestation of private behaviour. The imbalance of the benefits of marriage to men and women is probably one of the most significant negative forces in western society, and it is rarely acknowledged.

The other thing that has brought about this increase in the proportion of people in their third age is the reduction in family size. However, it is

The imbalance of the benefits of marriage to men and women is probably one of the most significant negative forces in western society.

not simply that there are, on average, only one or two children within the family compared with five or six children at the beginning of the twentieth century. There is another dynamic at work – once again rarely acknowledged. In Britain, one in five women reaching the age of 40 has not had a child. For the first time in human history women have both the ability and the desire to eschew fertility. This means that the average number of births per woman has fallen to 1.64 – the lowest figure ever recorded by the Office for National Statistics.

More demography – and more tough realities

It won't be until about 2025 that the proportion of older people in the population will peak. This is when those born during the post-war baby

boom will reach old age. However, the high number of old people in 2025 will be the product of low fertility: they (I mean we!) will not have brothers and sisters alongside them, because of small family size that has predominated for the last fifty or sixty years. Added to this, there are now increasingly *confused lines of obligation* due to serial marriage, and what sociologists call 'non-formalised conjugal relationships' (people in partnerships rather than being married). These two factors mean that the support needs of people in the future will be even more complex and intense than they are today.

A new map of life

'Life's views are shaped by a regnant gestalt of low-high-low proportions, an iconic illusion that pre-sorts all perceptions of the life course into a tri-phasic sequence'. So writes Paul H Pruyser. Underneath this jargon there is something important: Our attitude to the life span is dominated by the idea of there being three stages, and the middle stage (when we are creating our own household and doing well at

work) is always assumed to be the pinnacle or peak of life. It is then followed by an inevitable *decline* into the third and final stage of life – old age. This perception of the lifespan has been dominant throughout human history. However, within a period of just 50 years there has been a new development: No longer does our map of life consist of three stages, it now consists of four.

After the second age – that of creating our own household (generativity), the new third age is no longer associated with relinquishing or a diminishment of capacity. These things now belong to the fourth age, which on average last only four years – the final years of our life. This leaves most people with almost twenty years – the new third age, without any clear

idea of what the purpose or fulfilment of those years may be. Even the media are unsure of how to portray this new third age: Grumpy ‘One Foot in the Grave’ or the devil may care ‘Golden Girls’? There is a very clear task for the church to help people to understand and engage with the opportunities that this third age presents. It is also important that this third age is used to prepare us for demands and challenges that come with the fourth age.

Grandparents: biological value

Bob Martin is a zoologist at the University of Zurich. He speculates why it might be that menopause is part of the life experience of only two species: Homo Sapiens and the large sea mammals. In all other species the female’s metabolism degenerates rapidly once fertility declines. So why should humans and the large sea mammals invest in the longevity of barren females? Martin speculates that the older, barren females must therefore have a contribution to make to the nurture of the next but one generation because the complex social environment into which the youngster has to be socialised requires the input not just of the parenting generation. Biology endorses both the reality of the wisdom of the old – and the importance of the involvement of grandparents in the lives of children. Research from many quarters highlights the positive contribution that grandparents make to the lives of grandchildren. For example, studies of the children of the crack-cocaine epidemic in Harlem in New York indicate that those youngsters with a grandmother closely involved in their lives were most likely to be able free themselves from the chaos of addiction.

Dialectical logic

One of the reasons why grandparents make such a positive contribution to the next but one generation may be due to the capacity of older people for *dialectical logic*. Very little attention is given to this distinctive style or approach to thinking because in our society greater value is ascribed to ‘formal logic’. Formal logic relates to the ability to analyse a range of factors acting on a situation and arrive at a right answer. This type of logic was first expounded by Piaget and this remains the focus of teachers in training, not least because those who demonstrate prowess in the application

of formal logic invariably command high status and financial rewards. Klaus Riegel suggests that as adults we have the potential for dialectical logic. Dialectical logic ends up with a question rather than an answer. It requires the ability to tolerate contradictions and paradoxes in order to discover more profound questions. Dialectical logic takes seriously the fact that life is too complicated and rich to be held within our thinking, and this awareness goes on to entice, tease and energise the thinking process. Dialectical logic is one of the clear attributes of the third age, and there are others. But first the losses associated with ageing need to be acknowledged.

The losses due to ageing

There are very clear and definite assaults that we experience as we age. The loss of dignity as the body fails, and the loss of paid work and the associated status are very obvious losses. However added to these is the loss of relationships, sometimes through bereavement and sometimes through moving to new locations. These are major challenges as loving and working are the twin pillars of mental health. Whilst the *loss* of independence might be an assault that characterises the fourth age, there are other losses that can come from the freedom of choice that characterises the third age. The first of these is the loss of time. Although the third age and associated retirement brings lots of

defining our own status and thus become less afraid of the slurs of eccentricity. With this security about ‘who we are’ we become less defensive. A reduction in defensiveness brings with it new energy and stamina as well as emotional robustness. A further boost to psychological robustness comes as the compartmentalising of life falls away. No longer are we required to ‘present’ ourselves in different roles and devote energy to the task of ‘impression management’ as we move between those who have different expectations about our performance.

The third age also provides the opportunity to seek *creative* work – work which brings out the best in us. I recollect from schoolgirl French that there is a term, something like ‘disponibilité’ which combines the idea of competence plus availability. No wonder the government is beginning to recognise the economic significance of the retired, and the wastefulness of imposed retirement. Sadly our churches have been slower to recognise that age related boundaries are indefensible and improvident. This is particularly so given the significant gains in relation to spirituality that come with the third age.

Older people have greater ability to live in the present than other age groups. This is at odds with the prevailing assumption that older people are preoccupied with the past. The preoccupation of older people with the past is nothing compared with the

It is important that this third age is used to prepare us for demands and challenges that come with the fourth age.

time, the absence of any structure (deadlines and expectations!) can result in a loss of time. The second pernicious assault associated with the ‘please one’s self’ nature of the third age is the loss of opportunities for reality testing. Because one can choose where and when one goes anywhere then one’s perception on the wider world gets shaped by media descriptions of places and people and is never tested out in actuality, resulting in stereotyping people and places and a narrowing of encounters.

The gains due to ageing

The gains associated with ageing are rarely acknowledged, and there are many, including the capacity for dialectical logic referred to earlier. As we age we become more adept at

overwhelming preoccupation of younger people with a future perspective. This ability to be ‘here now’ is a very helpful attribute in relation to prayerfulness and pastoral care. However, those in the third age have a further gain that is relevant to the Church’s mission: the ability to share personal credos. The most effective missionaries in our churches are likely to be in their third age because of the ability to reveal one’s innermost thoughts. No longer is there fear of mockery or retaliation. What is more, those best placed to commend the Christian faith are those who have experienced the ups and downs of life and still choose to follow Jesus.

For further reading see p.30.



Readers in the Family

For **Molly Dow**, married to Bishop Graham Dow of Carlisle (and the Chair of Central Readers' Council) Reader ministry is a 'family business'.

'The only pregnant Lay Reader I have ever licensed'

In 1969, when my husband, Graham, was setting up a course to train Lay Readers in our house in Tonbridge, I suppose I was an obvious target! Not that he needed more targets as he had about ten already. Perhaps he was suffering from shock at being allowed to train Readers at all, only a year and a half after being ordained.

Anyway, Graham suggested that I consider training as a Reader too. I think this was partly because the training course was to meet in our home, partly because he was aware that it had recently become possible for women to be Lay Readers and partly because he had heard me giving some talks on a mission some years earlier. After some persuasion, I agreed. We discovered that my Diploma in Theology would exempt me from three-quarters of the training – I only needed to do the Church History with Liturgy module. I duly did this and was admitted and licensed in June 1970, aged 28.

By then I was three months pregnant with our second child. Since it had only been possible since 1969 for women to be licensed, I was one of the first two women to become Readers in Rochester Diocese. I don't remember which of the two of us was 'done' first, but as the other woman was not pregnant at the time, David Say, the then Bishop of Rochester, was correct when he used to call me 'the only pregnant Lay Reader I have ever licensed!' I don't know how long it was before he had to change it to 'the *first* pregnant Lay Reader ...'

The first father and daughter Readers in the Church of England?

My father was a committed Christian and always very involved in the Church. In Edgware, North West London, he had been the Sunday School superintendent, a leader of a young people's Bible Class, church treasurer and had filled several other roles too. In 1963 we moved from London to a Hertfordshire village, where his ministry took a different turn and in 1966 he was admitted and licensed as a Reader in the St Albans

diocese. When I became a Reader in 1970, my father and I wondered whether we were the first father-daughter combination of Readers. I still don't know, but this may prove to be the moment for someone to tell me that we weren't!

A Reader married to a clergyman

After Tonbridge, Graham's next two jobs were college posts in Oxford and Nottingham. Obviously, this meant changes for my Reader ministry too: not only change of parish, but also of diocese. Although he came to church with me in vacations, in term time Graham was even less available than in a parish to help with the children. We tried church after church looking for one where all four children would be well catered for in Sunday School or crèche, while I could enjoy an adult service. Finding one meant that I was free to lead services and preach, even when Graham could not be there. After Nottingham, Graham became the vicar of Holy Trinity Church, Coventry. They had never had a woman Reader, but agreed to accept me in that role. There were one or two people who avoided receiving the chalice from me at first, but I did not take it personally and no one made an issue of it.

When Graham became a bishop

In 1992 Graham was consecrated as Bishop of Willesden in London. What was going to happen to my Reader ministry now? I felt, and the Bishop agreed with me (!) that it could be awkward for me to be licensed to a parish, in case the incumbent felt threatened, or 'spied on'. Even if the present incumbent was happy to have me as a Reader, when they moved it might be very difficult for any new incumbent who felt differently. So I was licensed to the Area Dean. Gradually my ministry became more focused on spirituality and I became Spirituality Adviser for the Episcopal Area, which led to invitations to preach. Being a Reader forestalled any questions like 'who does the bishop's wife think she is, standing up to preach?'

In 2000, Graham became Bishop of Carlisle and, for the same reasons as in Willesden, I was licensed to the Rural

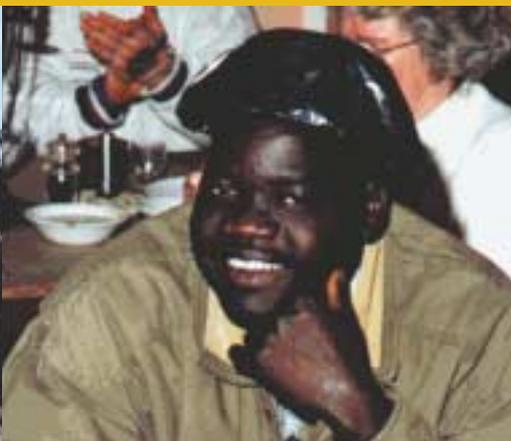


Dean. Again, so far, most of my preaching has been in the local church. I am doing even less of it than in London, but this is fine as I have plenty to do, both as bishop's wife and Spirituality Adviser (again!).

Three generations of Readers in the family

My father died in 1983, having loved the Lord and served him for over 50 years in the Anglican Church. He delighted in the fact that I was married to a priest. So, at Graham's consecration as a bishop, I kept thinking wistfully, 'How Dad would have loved this!' And so he would. Now something else is happening that he would have loved: our daughter, Lindsay, is training to be a Reader. I delight in the prospect of three generations of Readers in the family and the sense of continuity of ministry down the years and generations. Yet I know that Lindsay is not just continuing a family tradition, but following her own sense of call and desire to serve the Lord. She is in the Sheffield Diocese, at St Mary's, Doncaster, where her husband, Mark, is the vicar. I can only assume that seeing me as a Reader married to a priest was not too off-putting an experience for her.

I have now been a Reader for over 30 years. Over the years the focus of my ministry has changed, but I am still glad to be one. My motivation is primarily about giving more than receiving and I hope that I can still serve in ways that God can use. Yet I haven't only given, I have gained a great deal too, for which I am very grateful.



Seven whole days – not one in seven: A FAMILY WITH A DIFFERENCE

Valerie Hill is a member of the Pilsdon community and a licensed Reader.

In the Spring 2003 issue of *The Reader* the editor wrote of *The Reader and Lay Worker* magazine first published 100 years ago. She stated that Readers were involved in the social and political concerns of their day. As a Reader I would like to think that this is still true today. We live our lives and our ministries in the context of the 'real' world; we do not insulate ourselves from the issues of poverty or hopelessness or the developing world. Readers are as committed today in their quest for truth and vision, of ways to bring Christ to those in need, as at any time in the past.

I have been a licensed Lay Reader since 1997: first in the Derby Diocese, in a parish setting, but since 2001 as a member of the Pilsdon Community in Dorset.

A condition of complete simplicity

The Community was founded on the ideals of Nicholas Ferrar who in the 17th century founded the Little Gidding Community in Huntingdonshire. He wanted to live, in a gospel way, in an extended family with his own family and those on the fringes of society. Along with George Herbert, the priest and hymn writer, Nicholas Ferrar had left a Parliamentary career in 1625 in protest at the warmongering of King Charles I with France and Spain. Nicholas and George were to search for lives of integrated worship, work, and a peaceful existence with all people. At Pilsdon we strive to live the ideals that they would have advocated, 'following the gospel'.

The Pilsdon Community in West Dorset is a Christian working

community set in the heart of the Marshwood Vale. The members, who form the basic community consists of nine people; three priests, one deacon, one Baptist minister, one Reader and husband, a retired teacher, and a young man who gardens and is considering whether his vocation is to be a monk. We endeavour to live a simple life based around a framework of prayer and daily Eucharist; our days being punctuated by work, meals, and recreation. Recreation can comprise pottery, art, basket making, playing cards, and board games, reading etc. During the winter months people sit around the log fire in the common room and chat, write letters, read, or just 'be'.

A place where prayer is valid

The people who come to live alongside us as an extended family are known as guests. They are invited to share in the life of the Community. They may be homeless, having difficulties with mental illness or addiction or need to reflect on the next stage of life's journey. Coming from all sorts of backgrounds the guests do not need to be Christians and could be from another culture or religion or may subscribe to no faith.

Life as a Reader here has been very different from that in a parish. Until 1997 I had been a full time Social Work Manager for a number of years. Here I am part of a working farm and garden, cooking for the community (we bake all our own bread, make our own butter and soft cheeses), take services, work alongside guests and help them in practical ways, run a small shop, help in the pottery and embroider. Life is never dull and very rewarding.

I have learned about myself during my time here, found practical skills I had no idea I possessed, and become aware of what makes for 'social glue' in any group of people. No one lives or eats in isolation and there are many ongoing interactions throughout the day. Large open spaces and ten acres of garden and paddocks surround us so there is plenty of space for rest and quiet. Our nearest village is four miles away.

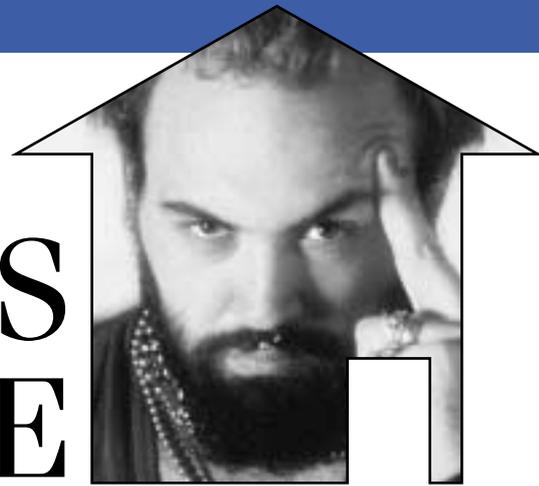
The issues of homelessness, drug addiction, and unemployment are very real here. We stand alongside those who suffer as a result, listen and pray but redirect them towards appropriate assistance (*eg* Alcoholics Anonymous, our local mental health team) in nearby towns.

Sunday morning may find me in a local parish church taking Matins but my sermons are grounded in my life and ministry in this place. In a society that battles with individualism and competition we aim to put forward a holistic way of living. However, our main work is not preaching the Word from the pulpit once per week but in the minute of each day as we balance prayer and work; integrating pilgrims, strangers, families and friends.

During the past year we have had an increase in interest by people wishing to express their discipleship in this way. We are now opening another community at West Malling in Kent, later in 2004.

Why not test such a vocation for yourself or perhaps you know of someone who would like to spend time here as a visitor or guest? For details please contact the Warden, Revd Peter Barnett on 01308 868308. Website: www.pilsdon.org.uk

THE HOMELESS CHALLENGE



In an issue of *The Reader* which focuses on 'the family' **Ian Wallace's** reflection on his work offers an appropriate counter-balance. Ian became a Reader in 1986, licensed to the Parish of Leagrave, Luton. He manages a hostel for the homeless in Luton.

During my last year on St Albans Ministerial Training Scheme, all my projects and placements were to do with homelessness; initially that was because I couldn't get onto the projects I had wanted. I spent some time in London working alongside the Parish Priest in Soho. You may think you know Soho, but you probably don't, it is a village in London and like any other parish has people who need visiting: the sick, those in domestic crisis, the house-bound and the bereaved. I was sent to help out in St Botolph's where there is a day centre, and also to St Martin's-in-the-Fields.

I will never forget the day I first discovered St Martin's, travelling by train to London, arriving at St Anne's Church and being directed to St. Martin's by a young woman. I was then led by a man through a rabbit warren of corridors and rooms, until we came to a cellar where we made sandwiches and soup.

When we opened the doors a whole mass of humanity crowded in, all wanting something to eat and drink and to get warm. The smell from some of these people overpowered the smell from the soup. This was like something from Dickens.

On arriving back at St Anne's the young woman apologised for sending me there, saying, 'It must have been awful'. I told her, 'No'. After working with homeless people all these years it is clear to me why I had to see it. We cannot imagine people living like that in this day and age.

At God's service

Encouraged by my wife, I had gone onto the St Alban's Ministerial Training Scheme with a completely open mind. I felt very strongly that I was being called by God, but for what purpose? I have to admit that I didn't take seriously the time we spent on preaching – which I thought was something I'd never have to do! At the end of my training they said that I'd have to have a title – so I became a Reader. What a surprise to find myself in the pulpit! Actually, I had put some thought into it and felt that whatever it was that I was being called to do I could do it under this title.

Whilst working for a company in Luton, managing the transport department, in my lunch breaks I would put some old clothes on and go across to the park to sit with the homeless and the alcoholics to chat with them. They accepted me, even offering me a drink! One evening a week I would

go out with a group who ran a soup kitchen; we collected bread from a local bakery, took it to a hall where people could come and warm up before returning to the cold.

When the first Bosnians came over to the UK, 'Shelter' contacted me as they found I had a lock-up full of domestic furniture. So for a while I was involved with helping these people. When I went out in the evening I would tell my wife, 'I'm off to Bosnia'. I filled and emptied that lock-up five times!

Then an ecumenical group who decided to open a house for homeless people. While they were refurbishing a house to become a hostel, they advertised for a warden, which is what I became. I worked for three months getting the place ready for our first clients. 'West Hill' hostel was born.

I was homeless and...

The house takes nine single homeless men who stay with us for around nine to twelve months. Referrals come from various agencies around Luton; some men will turn up at the door. We have an interview procedure; we will not accept those dependent upon drugs or alcohol. Over the years we have had men stay with us simply because they have split up with their partners and have nowhere to go. The residents share the cooking and cleaning and are encouraged to develop their domestic skills. Some have started work or been on college courses; some are now living independently. We have opened two more homes for

homeless women. I have been working with the homeless for thirteen years and am now Senior Project Worker. After giving a talk on homelessness I became involved with 'sleep-

outs' in St Albans, with a local Church youth group and with a school in Luton.

Two years ago I cycled from John O' Groats to Lands End cycling 75 to 97 miles a day in 12 days and raised over £2,000 for the hostel. My overnight accommodation was offered by retired clergy and church people and was supported throughout by June, my angel from the Isle of Man.

I realise that I have a very valuable ministry. In an ideal world there would be no need for this work, but sadly, I have seen the problem grow over the years. To think that all those years ago I did not know what God was calling me to do! Through my own experience, I firmly believe that if God calls you to do something, you will do it. As I have implied, I did not set out to be a Reader, but it is a ministry I have thoroughly enjoyed: being able to *minister* in the church, but having the freedom to carry out the Lord's work in my secular occupation. When I look back, it seems ironic that I used for my first sermon a text which had hung over my bed for years: 'Many are called, but few get up'. I thank God that I heard God's call and that I did get up!

I felt very strongly that I was being called by God, but for what purpose?

Behold, I tell you a mystery

illustrating the Trinity

Alan Walker's suggestion, in the February 2004 issue of *The Reader* that we should ask for Readers to share their thoughts on how they explain the 'Trinity' clearly struck a chord. Over the last few weeks my mailbag (post and electronic) has contained a number of suggestions from Readers who have had to tackle this tricky topic. I am reliably told that, along with Low Sunday, Trinity is a week in the year when Readers often get asked to preach – because the clergy they work with are only too happy to pass the challenge of reflecting on the Trinity to someone else! There were so many letters on this topic that it seemed right to give a whole page over to them.

Shayne Ardron writes: I have just received my first copy of *The Reader*, (I am only in my first year of training), when Alan Walker's suggestion caught my eye... If I have to explain the Trinity or when I think about the Trinity I picture water, ice and steam. God as water, Jesus as ice and the Holy Spirit as steam. Each in essence the same but bringing different qualities because of their form.

From **Sam Pearce** in Chichester Diocese: Our House Group has been studying seasons of the Church's year, and the themes associated with them. I was asked to deal with Trinity, and I offered this explanation – I am the father of my daughter, Rosie; I am the son of my parents, Edgar and Florence; I am the brother of my sister, June. Three 'functions', but still the same individual. It probably doesn't work at all levels, but I think it helpful, and I hope my fellow Readers may find it so.

The contribution of **John Whitaker** from Lancaster: Might I suggest that a useful way is to refer to the Church dedicated to the Holy Trinity in Stadl-Paura, Lambach, in Upper Austria? This Church was built as a

thanksgiving for sparing the town from the plague. In its design the Church represents the Holy Trinity, everything is in triplicate, there are three facades, three portals, three organs, three towers and three altars equally spaced round a circular nave.

John Slater, a Reader emeritus in Coventry Diocese, mentioned that 'as my work in the field diminishes, I enjoy maintaining contact with my brothers and sisters through articles in



The Reader. John commented on a couple of the analogies we have already referred to above, but also added: I would suggest a picture or diagram of the Trinity Shield – a pictorial statement of the doctrine of the Trinity, rather than an explanation of it. To many it gives security. A tangible picture of relationship within the Trinity. Children can draw it, colour it, and in so doing, accept it. Adults realize that there are more ways to represent truths, than by a mathematical calculator. Recently in Coventry Cathedral we exhibited medieval stained glass representations of the Trinity Shield, damaged in the 1945 bombings, but carefully preserved and restored...

... An attempt to break into the mathematical mystery of 'three' and 'one' may be helped by the fiscal fiction of the three brothers who had a Joint Account at the Building Society. There was £1000 in the account. Any one of the three could draw out £1000, 'and

yet there are not three Grand, but one Grand'. (Not too sure about that last one! Ed.)

And from **David Halsey** a whole series of illustrations – again, some of which are referred to above. But he also suggests: It is (of course?) the fundamental doctrine about the nature of God himself – about how God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit relate to each other within the unity of the Godhead. And we can learn much – at a theological level – from the Creed of St Athanasius. But the challenge, as Alan implies, is illustration. The problem is that as God is beyond our understanding and any human illustration will necessarily be inadequate. So, perhaps perversely, the key thing with any illustration of the Trinity, is to be clear about what is lacking in it as well as what is good about it.

Three examples. An egg is made up of yolk, white and shell. The good thing about this is that there is clearly only one egg, just as there is only one God. But the problem is that none of the three elements of the egg are in themselves an egg – which denies the fact that each Person of the Godhead is fully God.

Or a blend of three different varieties of tea. Each variety of Tea makes a distinctive contribution to the whole as well as each of them being fully Tea. But the weakness – I feel obliged to find one – is that it does not fully recognise that the three Persons of the Godhead are of the same substance as each other. Although all three varieties of teas are tea they have different flavours and are in that sense essentially different from each other, whereas the three Persons of the Godhead are not.

And last but not least, God's work in salvation: God the Father willed and planned it; God the Son won it for us through his work on the cross; God the Holy Spirit communicates and makes it real to us and enables us to live in it.

So thank you to our contributors whose letters we have extracted from, and to Alan for making a suggestion that stimulated a number of people. For those of you with web access if you go to the downloads section of the website of **Churches Together for Families** you will find a couple of further examples of the Trinity. <http://www.2-in-2-1.co.uk/php-bin/jump.php?linkid=23&showservice=1>

Black & White

PARTNERSHIP



Joan Addison, a Reader in Leicester diocese, has had a challenging life. It includes 36 years living in Zimbabwe. She reflects on a particular experience of friendship which lasted all those years.

‘As I see it, there can never be any real friendship between a white person and a black person.’ The words were spoken in a bar in Salisbury, the capital city of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. The year was 1958 and the speaker was a clean-cut young white man. I was puzzled by what he had said and asked him what he meant. ‘In true friendship, there is equal giving and receiving, but between white and black the giving is always one-sided. The white person does all the giving; the black person all the taking. Hence is never real friendship.’

I had gone out to that country on a scholarship at the end of 1956 at the end of my three years at the University of Durham. The government of the Federation was encouraging graduates to spend a year at the new university college which was to be opened in 1957 in Salisbury though the college campus was still a building site. When it rained, it became a sea of sticky yellow mud and hungry mosquitoes arrived in large numbers.

An invitation and a challenge

Three years in the beautiful city of Durham and a heady taste of a life that was very different from that on a council estate in Huddersfield in the prosperous but dirty West Riding of Yorkshire had left me craving more excitement than I had any right to expect in Yorkshire in those days. When I saw a notice inviting new graduates to come out to Africa, to a brand new university, I was seriously tempted. I looked up Southern Rhodesia in an atlas and an application resulted in my being invited to Rhodesia House in the Strand for an interview. I was young and brash and Trevor Huddleston’s newly-published book *Naught for your Comfort* had made a great impression on me. At the interview, I questioned the policy of the Federal government.

Was the Federation going the way of South Africa to a situation of *apartheid*? In spite of my outspokenness I was offered a Fairbridge scholarship to cover my passage out to Africa by ship, tuition and board at the university in Salisbury. In return, I was to teach for three years for the Federal government after which I could sail home to England at the expense of the government.

In London, I had been assured at the interview that the concept of Federation involved partnership among all the people of the countries of Northern and Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Partnership, I was told, meant equal opportunities for all the people, black white and coloured. This sounded good to me. It never occurred to me that all this was a complete sham, so off I sailed on the Union-Castle mailship *Stirling Castle* for Cape Town in October, 1956.

A portent for the future

As I waited with my parents on the platform of Huddersfield Railway Station amid a crowd of people for the train that would take me to Southampton, I noticed a



tall figure in a black cassock striding along. ‘That’s Father Huddleston!’ I whispered in awed disbelief. ‘Are you sure? – why not walk up the platform and have a closer look?’ said my dad. Indeed it was he, and since he turned around and saw me staring at him, we engaged in conversation until the train arrived. In later years, I looked back on this meeting as something of a portent of things to come. When I boarded the *Stirling Castle* I discovered that Father Huddleston’s successor at the

Priory of Christ the King in Johannesburg was one of my shipmates. We had several conversations during our time on board.

My brief encounters with these two priests resulted in my spending my first Christmas in Africa not in Rhodesia, but in Sophiatown, that troubled black township on the outskirts of Johannesburg which was later bulldozed by the South African government to make room for new houses for white folks.

To Salisbury... and Sarah

Soon after Christmas and back in the Federation, I left the school in the bush near Gwelo (now Gweru) where I had been doing some temporary teaching, for Salisbury and the university up on the hill at Mount Pleasant. Already I had had a few misgivings about relationship between the black and white folks that I had met at the school in Gwelo. The white folks were English people like me from a working-class background and yet, although they were very friendly and hospitable towards me they seemed to be very tough on the black servants whom they employed. Perhaps things will be different in the capital, I thought.

On the Mount Pleasant campus I met the other students. There were only first-years and graduates that year. Most were young white men and women, just a few were black. There were three halls of residence; Swinton Hall for the women, Manfred Hodson Hall for the (white) men and Carr Saunders Hall for (black) men. Nobody seemed to

have any problems with that arrangement. But there was one big problem: there was one black woman student.

Looking back it seems incomprehensible that this should be a problem at all, but it was at the time. We were made to understand that the general public would object to a black girl sleeping in the same building on equal terms with white girls. So Sarah was allotted a room in an empty wing of the black men’s residence. Apparently this was considered less scandalous than having her share the white women’s residence. Dr Walter Adams, the

principal, did his best but could not go against public opinion. Those in authority feared that the new university would be closed down if the public thought we were too outrageous.

Since Sarah – who had quickly become my close friend – was not allowed to come in with us, I asked Dr Adams if I could transfer myself over to Carr Saunders and move into the room next to hers. He just laughed. ‘What do you think would be said at the idea of a white woman living in a hall of residence with black men?’. I still remember the sad little note that Sarah wrote to me when she heard that I couldn’t go and live next to her.

Not to be thwarted, I managed to get permission to go across the campus every morning early and join her for breakfast.

In the end Sarah *did* come to live in Swinton Hall after much discussion and agonising among the girls who were under pressure from their parents not to give way. Even so, it was hardly a triumph. She was relegated to an empty corridor by herself. That was the agreement. When the Queen Mother visited, others were asked to bring down their things and put them in the rooms along the corridor so that it

appeared as if Sarah had people living alongside her. I was disgusted at this deception – especially since the girls who had brought down their belongings were the very ones who had kept her out of the residence for so long.

A lifetime of friendship

At the end of that year, Sarah was my bridesmaid when I got married in the Anglican Cathedral in the city. She looked lovely in a long dress of turquoise taffeta with matching hat. This made headlines and two leader-page articles of condemnation in local and national Rhodesian newspapers. It was this publicity that provoked the remark reported at the beginning of this article. The person speaking genuinely believed what he was saying.

After that year, Sarah and I shared many adventures as we took a stand together against the colour bar that still operated in spite of the stated ideals of the Federation. Then the Federation came to an end and the country became Rhodesia again and in 1980, Zimbabwe. Sarah married a Malawian and became a diplomatic wife serving in Pretoria, New York and London.

After Independence in 1980 she became a Permanent Secretary in the government of Robert Mugabe. Her son – perhaps ironically – was awarded a Rhodes scholarship at Oxford.

When I left the country after 36 years, Sarah and her husband came to the airport to see me off, appearing, to my surprise, through the doors that led out to the tarmac where the planes were taking off. Seeing my amazement, Sarah grinned and said ‘Diplomatic privilege!’ It was a wonderful send-off.

During the following year, after I had arrived in England, the Zimbabwean government refused to release my container from the warehouse in Harare, even though the costs had already been paid. It was Sarah who, in the end, managed to talk a government official into releasing my goods which ultimately, after more than a year, arrived in England.

That young man, all those years ago, was quite wrong in saying that there could be no real friendship between black and white.



Canon Pat Nappin – an appreciation

Ven Gordon Kuhrt, Director of Ministry in the Archbishops’ Council, pays this tribute.

Not an obituary! – but a warm and sincere appreciation from many colleagues to a very lively and vigorous friend. Pat has been a major figure on the Reader national scene for some years. However, this *national* ministry emerged out of many years as school teacher, headmistress and immersion in Reader ministry in her local parish of St Margaret, Barking. The vicar John Parsons says ‘Pat has always taken a full part in parish life at ground level as well as holding high office. In addition to preaching and leading worship Pat exercises her Reader ministry as leader of our Baptism preparation group, chair of the International Committee, group leader and speaker at our Alpha course and is a person who plays a very key role in the day to day ongoing ministry of the church’. The appreciation in the diocese of Chelmsford led to her appointment as lay Canon.

Pat’s colleagues say...

Pat was appointed Deputy Secretary of the Central Readers Council in September 1997, working with the then Honorary Secretary Geoff Mihell who really valued her support. On his retirement in January 1999 Pat was promoted. Christopher Mayfield was, at that time, Bishop of Manchester and Chairman of the CRC. He writes, ‘Her appointment was not automatic, but a recognition of her vision and commitment. She has seen through a number of significant developments in

A pleasure to work with

Reader ministry. These include the revision/updating of the *Bishops’ Regulations for Reader Ministry* and further work on the Training, Continuing Education and the Deployment of Readers. She has also continued – with CRC – the pattern of national and regional conferences that are such an inspiration and encouragement to Readers. Meanwhile

the number of Readers has passed 10,000! Personally I have always found Pat to be welcoming and joyful. She was of tremendous support to me during the time I served as Chair of CRC. It was good to work with her’.

The present Chairman is the Bishop of Carlisle, Graham Dow, who offers these bullet points:

- A pleasure to work with
- Very good team player
- Keeps me on my toes!
- Always abreast of the decision needed
- Very committed to the Lord, the Church of England and to Reader ministry.

The current Vice-Chair is Gloria Helson who reminds us that Pat was the first woman Honorary Secretary. She has particularly valued her contributions to the Reader magazine. Well, I think, these testimonies have said it all. In the Ministry Division we are grateful for Pat’s distinguished service. She leaves her department well organised and in good heart!



WENDY THORPE

and the Moderation of Reader Training 1999-2003

Peter Watkins, Reviews Editor of *The Reader* (and someone himself to whom Readers owe a considerable debt!), sheds light on the role and motivation of Wendy, until recently Moderator of Reader Training.

Readers constitute a huge unpaid resource for the ministry of the Church of England at parish, diocesan and national level. The three key people involved in aspects of Reader ministry nationally are the Secretary of the Central Readers' Council, the National Moderator of Reader Training – until December 2003 Wendy Thorpe – and the editor of *The Reader*, Clare Amos. All receive a modest honorarium for what is deemed to be only part of a week's work but turns out to be very much more than that. We owe them all an enormous debt.

Wendy Thorpe's role as National Moderator is perhaps the least known to most Readers. Wendy became a Reader in 1986. She and her naval husband Tony had just returned from a stint in the Philippines where Tony was military attaché. Their parish priest appealed in the parish magazine for Readers. Wendy thought he meant reading the lesson in church and as a teacher of long standing had no hesitation in volunteering. When the Rector told her he had more ambitious ideas she at first demurred but agreed subsequently to attend a selection conference and leave the decision to the Holy Spirit and the ten clergy who made up the interviewing panel. She was selected and embarked on what in those days was the standard training, writing sixteen essays on theological and biblical subjects and with no practical training. Her early sermons she recalls were like essays read from the pulpit though she had to preach frequently since there were two daughter churches as well as the main parish church.

Making it better

It was Wendy's dissatisfaction with her own training which led to her becoming involved in Reader training in the Portsmouth diocese. She

contrasted her secular experience as Principal of a large Adult Education Centre and responsible for the training and assessment of her tutors with the antediluvian methods then employed in Reader training. Wendy became Director of Reader Training in the diocese and revolutionised the training offered to would-be Readers. Her trainees included her husband Tony, who was admitted and licensed in 1995, and whose essays, he recalls ruefully, Wendy scrutinised with particular rigour – though he passed!

Wendy's work in the Portsmouth diocese brought her to national attention and in 1998 she agreed to apply for the five-year appointment as

All receive a modest honorarium for what is deemed to be only part of a week's work but turns out to be very much more than that. We owe them all an enormous debt.

National Moderator. She was appointed and she and Tony moved house so as to be accessible for the vast amount of travelling which the job involved. Tony had by now retired so was able to be Wendy's chauffeur and home secretary.

Will travel

There are 43 diocesan moderations to be coordinated and in this round the Diocese of Europe and the Armed Forces were also included for the first time. Reader Moderation is organised through eight regional groups. Wendy attended two meetings of each regional group each year – 80 meetings in total over the five years – held in places as far flung as Preston and York, Exeter and Cambridge. She often left home at 5am and returned at 10 pm only to face a day's office work the next day. Each moderation concludes with a meeting attended by the National Moderator and the diocesan moderators and officers involved in training along with the diocesan bishop at which the report is discussed and the recommendations of the moderation are considered. Only a handful of bishops have been too busy to attend this meeting.

Moderation for the new millennium

The National Moderator is a member of the Ministry Division of the Archbishops' Council and is responsible to the Theological Secretary. The Moderator reports to the Central Readers' Council of which he or she is a member. This involves a plethora of committees many meeting at Church House.

Wendy is rightly proud of her achievements in the course of her five years. It is no reflection on her predecessors that so much has changed in the early years of the new century. In 1999 almost no moderators were on email; now most of them are. The impact of this on the efficiency and

professionalism of the reports is huge. Wendy was herself the first moderator to computerise office procedure and training data. There is now a database of those involved in training for each region accessed at the touch of a button.

Wendy's first and urgent job on appointment was to rewrite the criteria for the training of Readers which was accomplished in *Reader 2000*, subtitled *Reader Ministry and Training 2000 and beyond*. Her last job was to write the report of the Moderation cycle for which she had been responsible entitled *Equipping the Saints* (reviewed on p.26 of the current edition of *The Reader*). In between Wendy has encouraged bishops to appoint appropriately qualified people as moderators and gently harried those who were dilatory. She has attended Selwyn weeks, preached at admission services in Bristol, Winchester and Southwark cathedrals, and conducted training days and a weekend conference for Readers in Wales.

Reader ministry in the Church of England owes a great deal to Wendy Thorpe – and to her husband Tony. Wendy will be a challenging act to follow.



For your bookshelf

P
Equipping the Saints

Wendy Thorpe
Church House Publishing
£5 pbk.
0 7151 2627 x

If, like me, you have been a Reader for a quarter of a century or more, you may not be aware of the dramatic changes which have taken place in Reader training in recent years. Since 1990 each diocese has devised its own training scheme which must however meet stringent national criteria. Once every five years the diocesan scheme is moderated by a team of moderators from neighbouring dioceses and a report written and delivered to the diocesan bishop. The third quinquennium 1999–2003, has just ended and *Equipping the Saints* is the report of Wendy Thorpe who was the National Moderator of Reader Training during that period. It is a document which should be read and pondered by all involved in Reader training whether they are clergy, Readers or other lay people, and its recommendations implemented. The report covers every aspect of the training of Readers. The report, like the moderation it describes is rigorous without being judgemental. Moderation has not been allowed to become an ecclesiastical OFSTED!

There are two recommendations about Reader training. First 'dioceses should bring the same vision, energy and resources to the task of preparing Reader trainees for their role as teachers and trainers in the Church as they have given to improving preaching training'. Second 'tutors should receive training in adult education theory and skills and should be regularly assessed to ensure they are good role models'. There are also recommendations on post-admission and CME provision for Readers.

There are a number of suggestions in the text of the Report which fall short of recommendations but which should be heeded by those to whom these criticisms apply. In some dioceses there is too much reliance on academic essays. Not all dioceses have clear, up-to-date, accurate information for potential recruits to Reader ministry. There is too much variation between dioceses on meeting the expenses of training, robes, books etc. Collaborative ministry is not it appears yet understood everywhere. The report cites a diocese (un-named) where a day on collaborative ministry was run by two priests and the opening prayers were led by another priest! This report is seminal and exemplary. It sets the standard for the next stage in the development of Reader training.

PETER WATKINS

B W
What St Paul really said

Tom Wright
Lion Publishing
£7.99 pbk.
0 7459 3797 7



This reprint of Bishop Tom Wright's book, first published in 1997, is a fine example of his accessible style of handling theological issues. From a Reader's point of view, the book is a valuable resource for teaching, rather than preaching. As Bishop Tom puts it, he 'sets out a view of Paul, his work and his thought in terms of the way in which the Jewish agenda and theology of Saul of Tarsus was radically re-thought, but not essentially abandoned, in the Christian agenda and theology of Paul the apostle'. The book is helpful in treating Paul's work thematically rather than letter by letter. Tom Wright focuses on 'the gospel' and 'justification', explaining what they meant for Paul and what they mean for the Church today. Finally, the book deals with the question 'Was Paul really the founder of Christianity?' We must

welcome the re-issue of this thought-provoking book which is recommended reading.

TONY THORPE

B T P
For all the saints

NT Wright
SPCK £7.99 pbk.
0 2810 5620 X



The Bishop of Durham has ventured into an area we wonder about – life after death. He analyses beliefs: protestant, catholic, and eastern orthodox. He does not believe in purgatory but all 'saints' are Christians just like us and that the worst of us may be like the thief on the cross who at the last minute was with Christ. He has no objection to prayer about those we loved who died. He insists it is natural to want to talk to God about them. He believes we are waiting for the resurrection of the body and to that extent there is an intermediate state. He even ventures an opinion on Osama Bin Laden and Adolf Hitler. This book is well worth buying whether you agree with him or not for its excellent analysis of belief.

CHRIS PORTEOUS

P T H
The Angry Christian: A Theology for care and counselling

Andrew D Lester
Westminster John Knox
£20.00 pbk.
0 664 22519 5

Emotions generally, and anger in particular, have long been dismissed as part of our carnal nature; anger is listed among the seven deadly sins. Andrew Lester has written this deeply scholarly book to redress that view, arguing that our capacity for anger is one of God's good gifts. Lester aims to develop a pastoral theology of anger; to help individuals, families and churches to handle anger; and to provide guidance for Christian carers. To do this he takes seriously the physical and social sciences, and Christian tradition in Scripture and theology. He refers to neuroscience and psychology, and quotes

Christian writers from Basil the Great to Pannenberg. I was disappointed to find no mention of Ignatius, an omission which reflects the protestant tradition from which the author comes. In later chapters, he argues that we have more control than was previously supposed over both why we get angry and how we express it. The book is a textbook. The contents are set out clearly and the various chapters can be read independently of one another. The indices and bibliography take up approximately 1/6 of the book. It is also full of scholarly jargon eg 'A Constructionist Narrative Understanding of Anger'.

At £20 this is a book for the specialist rather than the general reader, or Reader.

Margaret Baxter

P
Memories of Bliss: God, Sex and Us

Jo Ind
SCM £9.99 pbk.
0 334 02885



I found this an unusual and startlingly honest book about sexuality. Jo Ind talks frankly about her own sex life and, from that and from material she has gathered from a large number of sources, she attempts to answer, 'What is sexuality?' and 'What do we do with it?' She looks at the physical responses and the way it impacts on the mind. Adult sexuality is developed and formed by our childhood experiences and this shapes our different needs and responses, but we are all set in our own culture and this will also affect us.

The later chapters, *Love Yourself, Love Your Neighbour* and *Love God* are the most challenging and in places very moving. At the end she poses the question which few of us may think to ask, 'What does it mean to love the Lord my God, here, where I am, with the sexuality that I have, right now?'

At a time when the Church is trying to face questions about sexuality, this provides helpful background reading.

HILARY UNWIN



S H

The house of my friends

Eric James
Continuum
£16.99 hbk.
08264 7062 9



Canon Eric James celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of his priesthood at Michaelmas 2002. Born and brought up, like Archbishop Carey, in Dagenham, he left Dagenham County High School at the age of 14 and became an office boy. Twelve years later he was ordained to a curacy at St Stephen's, Rochester Row, whose incumbent was George Reindorp. Four years later he became Chaplain of Trinity College, Cambridge. Later appointments included Vicar of Camberwell, Director of Christian Action, a seminal part in *Faith in the City* and for 18 years Preacher of Gray's Inn.

This volume he describes as a kind of autobiography but of an unconventional kind. It consists of lectures and essays into each of which he has woven personal reminiscences. Some of the subjects he knew, others he felt close to although they had been dead for many years. There are for example essays on Lancelot Andrewes, Sidney Smith, Father Dolling and Charles Gore as well as Eric Abbott and Trevor Huddleston. The chapter entitled *Better to hear a good sermon twice than a bad sermon once*, is concerned with the notorious Cambridge eccentric, FA Simpson, who to the chagrin of the Archbishop of Canterbury was invited to preach at the consecration of Mervyn Stockwood as Bishop of Southwark. It ranks in my view alongside PG Wodehouse's *The Great Sermon Handicap* as a masterpiece of comic prose – better perhaps, since it is fact not fiction. Many of the essays in this volume will fascinate anybody attracted to the personalities and eccentrics of the Church of England. There are perhaps rather too many and too lengthy quotations

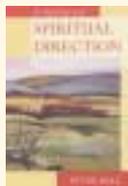
though some are both relevant and apposite, for example, the extract from the closing paragraphs of *The House at Pooh Corner* at the end of the opening chapter.

PETER WATKINS

S

Spiritual direction

Peter Ball
SPCK £8.99 pbk.
0 281 05518 1



This book is primarily for people who have heard about spiritual direction, are wondering what it means and whether there might be something in it for them. The first part of the book is largely taken up with the comments of people who are receiving spiritual direction. Some are happy with their spiritual director, others not, even to the extent of not going back after one visit. I found these chapters somewhat tedious. I enjoyed the two chapters on prayer – praying and growing into quiet – more than those on spiritual direction. An SPCK leaflet briefly reviewing this book describes it as 'A practical and profound guide for anyone interested in the ministry of spiritual accompaniment'. I wonder if it is more suitable for those thinking of becoming spiritual directors.

ANGELA TIPPETTS

P

Why siblings matter

Anna Brookner
BRF £7.99 pbk.
1 85101 260 2

Families are an endangered species. The divorce rate has risen inexorably in recent years; more people than ever before live on their own; cohabitation is now normal and same sex partnerships are increasingly recognised. So a book on the family seems timely. Anna Brookner's title does not sufficiently convey the breadth of her treatment, which extends beyond siblings to other aspects of family life. In a series of eight chapters she considers phases of family life covering topics such as adjusting to parenthood, sibling

relationships and rivalries and the teenage years. Each chapter is accompanied by questions for group discussion and a short prayer. Each chapter also includes what the author describes as a Bible focus in which she draws on Biblical models, mostly from the early chapters of the Old Testament and the Gospels. She does not however include the well-known passage on the family in Ephesians 5. The style is emollient rather than challenging and the tensions and challenges of family life receive only casual mention. There is, for instance, no reference to what happens when parents divorce and children are torn between the two partners nor to teenage pregnancy or to a gay son or daughter. Anna Brooker concludes with books for further reading as well as books for children and an index of scriptural references. Readers might find useful material for a discussion group for young parents.

PAUL WILLIAMS

P T

Why I am a Christian

John Stott
IVP £7.99 pbk.
0 85111 407 5

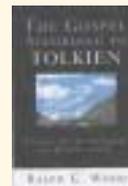
This is a very personal account, drawing on the experience of many from the first to the twenty-first century. John Stott's chapters give full answers, and he stresses it is not just because of his upbringing and conversion experience. First it is because 'the hound of heaven' sought him. Then because the extraordinary claims of Jesus about himself are true, because of all Jesus did for us on the Cross and because the answer to the paradox at the heart of our humanity and the key to our true freedom and fulfilment are found in Jesus Christ alone. An invitation is extended to each of us and the reader is challenged to RSVP. It is good to find a book which is simple yet profound, clear and with extensive notes. It is an excellent resource for bringing others to Christ and ideal for lending to enquirers. Add it to your bookshelves.

JOHN TAYLOR

E B S

The gospel according to Tolkien

Ralph C Wood
WJK £9.99 pbk.
0 664 22610 8



There are three reasons why preachers should persevere with a book on a series of novels about a pre-Christian world of men, hobbits, elves, dwarfs, goblins, and wizards; novels with no apparent hint of religion, written by an expert on, and passionate about, pagan Norse mythology albeit a devout Roman Catholic. First Tolkien's trilogy topped the BBC's 'The Big Read'; second the three films are phenomenally popular, with the latest sweeping the Oscars at the recent ceremony; third Tolkien's current popularity provides a God-given chance to meet people where they itch. The horrors of Middle-earth mirror those of our own times, and Tolkien is enjoyed because people still need to hear, and are attracted by, a story of age-old virtues along with good conquering evil. Professor Wood has done a marvellous job of exposing Tolkien's miracle of writing profoundly Christian books in a totally non-Christian setting. He links the narrative to scripture and vice versa, culminating in showing that the ultimate hero (the unexpected Sam Gamgee) is a prime example of devoted Christian service. This book provides a fresh approach to scripture and I believe wonderful background for a sermon series. Incidentally, it helps if you read *The Lord of the Rings* and perhaps some of Tolkien's other works.

DEREK REDMAN

H P

Invading secular space

Martin Robinson and Dwight Smith
Monarch £7.99 pbk.
1 85424 640 2

The authors of this book describe the decline of Christianity in the western world and contrast this with the enormous growth of the

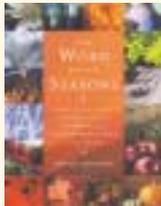


church in South America and China. In the west a gap has developed between the values of the church and those of the population in general; there is a decrease in goodwill and sympathy for the church. What is needed is a reformation in the church which will then start to invade secular space demonstrating its social value and attractiveness in terms of love in the community. This reformation will come through an emphasis on cells and groups rather than on buildings. Church leadership will be communal rather than hierarchical and be expressed through servanthood. The Spirit is given to the whole people of God in community. The church is dispersed through the community rather than in a gathered centre. If the answer to public decline in Christian faith lies in the reformation of the institutional church then Readers will need to rethink their place in the ministry structure and that possibility makes the reading of this visionary book a priority.

HOWARD SAINSBURY

W
The Word for all Seasons

David Graham
Canterbury
£9.99 pbk
and CD Rom
1 85311 489 8



This book provides a ready made liturgical service for the Sundays and major holy days of the church year. Each service is set out clearly and can be used as it stands but also provides the basis for adaptation if required. It comes with a CD Rom, which can be downloaded so that each service in the book can be printed off and photocopied for congregational use. Each service is preceded by a short explanation of comment on its content to assist preparation and the Liturgy of the Word leads naturally into the Liturgy of the Sacrament. The layout is clear and straightforward and an appropriate illustration is provided at the top of the page.

GILL McLAREN ROW

T P
The difficult doctrine of the love of God

DA Carson
IVP £4.99 pbk.
0 85111 975 1

The author is disturbed by the tendency to see God in sentimental ways, as someone who would not punish or fail to save anyone. He insists that God's sovereignty and wrath are compatible with his love. He finds in the Bible five aspects of God's love: the mutual love of Father and Son in the Trinity; his providential love over all that he has made; his loving offer of salvation to all people who repent and believe; his special and effective love towards the elect and a conditional love when he disciplines his people. The author expounds these aspects and asserts that we must not place any one above the others, nor must we ignore any one of them. He concludes that all are invited to accept the offer of salvation but that Christ died effectively for the elect alone. This is difficult to understand except on the basis of God's sovereignty.

JOHN TAYLOR

B
Bible mapbook

Simon Jenkins
Lion £6.99 pbk.
0 7459 5125 2



Originally published in 1985, this new edition illuminates not only Bible text but also the contemporary world in historical, geographical and political terms. Its pacy introduction proves compelling and page turning. The layout is clear with vivid colours, key and graphics. Each chapter has a full-page word summary of its pages and boldly highlights memorable quotations. We are guided helpfully through the maps by directive arrows and numbered locations reinforced with pithy narrative. Interest and momentum are maintained with a newspaper type banner headline on each page whilst a

helpful index enables the user to find required page quickly. A copy would be an asset in any church, school or Reader's library. I recall the Bible coming to life for me on a visit to the Holy Land when we passed a signpost to Nain. This book is full of signposts for armchair travellers of all ages.

JOAN H SMITH

S T
CS Lewis at the BBC

Justin Phillips
Harper Collins
£8.99 pbk.
0 00 710436 7



As the title suggests this book is not only about CS Lewis but also about the effect the BBC had on him. Two people in particular, by their dogged determination and patient persuasion, managed to influence Lewis sufficiently to agree to a series of broadcast talks on religion. These two were Dr James Welch, Director of Religious Broadcasting and his assistant the Revd Eric Fenn. Together they overcame Lewis's love-hate approach towards broadcasting. Their persistence paid off and Mere Christianity – the broadcast talks in print – was the result. The author of this book, who sadly died soon after completing it, pays tribute to Lewis *For the seeker after truth, he is still able to prise open the door of faith that follows the corridor of doubt.*

COLIN NICHOLLS

W E
Literary companion for festivals

Mark Pryce
SPCK £14.99 pbk.
0 281 05560 2



Christmas came early for me with the arrival of this delightful book. Sub-titled *Readings for commemorations throughout the year*, it contains a wonderfully broad selection of poetry and prose from translations of the early fathers to modern writers. Bound in one volume you will find Martin Luther King and

John Keble, RS Thomas and Thomas Traherne. I was interested to learn that we Anglicans share our liturgical year with the Lutheran church. We have many commemorations in common and in this work the author has written an introduction and a reading for some 113 special days in the church year. In his stimulating introduction Walter Brueggemann says *What an offer...saints in poetry*. If, like me, you are a dipper-in then this book is for you, treasure chest of fresh shafts of light on the lives of the saints.

RICHARD NEWNHAM

B
Exploring the Old Testament: Vol 3 The Psalms & Wisdom Literature

Ernest Lucas
SPCK £16.99 pbk.
0 281 05431 2

This book is an excellent resource for Readers in several respects. First, as a commentary, Lucas brings together recent scholarship in an accessible form, with transliterated Hebrew only when there's a point to be made, explaining clearly the different interpretations and claims that reverberate around academia. To stimulate the preacher he includes a number of 'Think About' sections which offer ideas with which to challenge contemporary congregations. He then includes sections that could be the basis of a study course e.g. p.52–65 *Theology in the Psalms* and p. 97 – 101 *A Thematic Study of Words in Proverbs*, such as gossip, flatterer, sluggard. There are two general chapters on *Hebrew Poetry* and *Wisdom Literature* and five specific commentary chapters. Job is likely to be most familiar to Readers but many will find the one on Song of Songs fascinating for its insight into coping with life in any age and culture, particularly the comparison with Tamil love poetry. The chapter on Ecclesiastes assists with the identification



of themes which resonate with the rest of Old Testament, despite their contemporary agnostic humanism flavour. The longest chapter is on Psalms and draws on the great scholars of Old Testament studies and explores the major debates. There is a crisp analysis of the many types of psalm while not denying the value of varying interpretations and sources of religious inspiration from the time of the Exile to 21st century Christianity. But despite the mysterious word 'selah' occurring 71 times in 39 psalms Lucas concludes that, still, nobody knows what it means!

DAVID SELLICK

B
Reverberations of Faith: A Theological Handbook of Old Testament Themes

Walter Brueggemann
WJK £ 25.00 hbk.
0 664 22231 5



Brueggemann says he was encouraged to write about 100 topics of theological interest. The 'Contents' lists 105 topics and Brueggemann claims he is offering 'interpretive coherence' rather than 'dictionary definition'. He admits the topics are fairly obvious; Baal, Circumcision, Exile, Holiness, Kingship, Plague, Remnant, Suffering Servant, Torah and Wisdom to mention just ten. The entries I read were interesting and informative with some cross-referencing. Each concludes with a bibliography which includes some English texts among the US. As a Professor of OT at Colombia Theological Seminary the author demonstrates his extensive reading and ability to distil it into accessible language but I didn't get an impression of 'interpretive coherence' but more of the 'dictionary' style. There are Scripture and Author indices but no specific Subject index apart from the 105 topics in the Contents. If I hadn't already got it I would

put my £25 towards SCM *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* edited by Richard Coggins and Leslie Houlden who draw upon the skills of 150 authors to write between one and ten entries each and has indexed topics not given individual entries.

DAVID SELLICK

T S E
I Stand at the Door: The Advent Sermons of Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Edited and translated
Edwin Robertson.
Eagle £9.99 hbk
0 86347 572 8

Whilst this small book contains sermons delivered at Advent (and a few letters), of the highest standard, are they still relevant given that the most recent was written almost 60 years ago? The book gives a little background to assist understanding of each group of writings. However do they still speak to us in 2004? Bonhoeffer faced hard edged persecution

leading to martyrdom, whilst we tend to face more gentle but persistent temptations anyway from Christian discipleship. Yes, because they particularly address the deeper eternal themes suitable for Advent and would help any preacher with ideas to make relevant a season of the church calendar often in danger of being undervalued and swamped by Christmas.

John Munns

P
Counting people In

Richard Thomas
SPCK £8.99 pbk.
0 281 05397 9



Society has arrived at an age of 'unbelonging'. We find that the traditional structures aren't generally working. Whilst a majority in society still identify themselves as Christians, they are what Thomas calls 'associates' rather than 'participants'. In this age of the internet, they see no reason for the



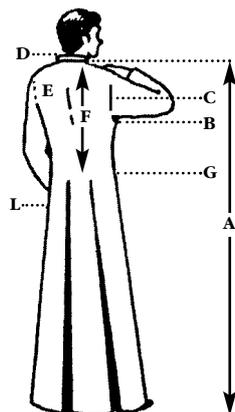
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'middleman' of the structured Church with an apparent priority in maintaining those structures rather than bringing release to the captives and succour to those in need. The ministry of Jesus and of the great prophets emphasized inclusion. Our attitude towards 'associates' is judgemental and exclusive. Generally, we 'participate' in the church that we have selected because it meets our doctrinal needs. Has that church the strength to hold those who question?

Thomas develops a vision for reform based on a radical gospel, relationships rather than duty or geography, meeting the needs of the nation, operating a centre set theology, developing networks and residence and restoring the place of the family. Read this book!

JOHN BOTTERIL



Public Faith

Edited Paul Avis
SPCK £16.99 pbk.
0 281 05531 9



In this book *Belief and Practice in Britain*, Paul Avis and a distinguished group of colleagues address the problem of declining church attendance. This is becoming a growth industry, with many contributors taking space to

comment on what the others write, sometimes using such regrettable jargon as 'endogamy', 'voluntarism' or 'social capital'. It is not all so specialised. There are sensible comments on the inadequacy of statistics, opinion polls and the latest census, and the dangers of comparing unlike data from different surveys. The general trend of decreased churchgoing is countered by the belief in belonging still shown in inner cities or rural areas, though these may not be quite the same, and the continued opportunities we have in funeral ministry. There are also some striking letters sent in response to the 'Seeing Salvation' exhibition. These show spirituality is alive in the land, even though it tends to be 'individualised' rather than people joining their local church.

PETER THORNTON

And finally...

The Methodist Church has published *The Energy Study Pack* (£7.50 text and CD Rom, no ISBN) John Smith says -

It provides a well researched and well written 'pack' which

addresses environmental issues for those who have no previous expertise. The pack is divided into six sessions - *What lies in the future, Energy resources, Transport, Energy resources, Weighing the risks, What do we do about it?* Supporting the excellent papers is a CD Rom, which incorporates material from Professor Ian Fells, Sir John Houghton, Dr Donald Bruce and others. Though prepared for the Methodist church to increase understanding of creation theology and its practical applications this pack is a valuable resource for churches of all denominations. It can be purchased from Methodist Church House, 25 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5JR.

Tom Wright, now Bishop of Durham continues his series of commentaries on the books of the New Testament published by SPCK. Two further volumes are entitled *Hebrews for Everyone* (0281 05307 3) and *Paul for Everyone: the Pastoral Letters, 1& 2 Timothy and Titus* (0281 05307 3). Each is published in paperback at £8.99. About Hebrews Tom Marriott writes 'The author has provided a new translation which is contemporary, easy to understand yet not colloquial, and has given us a commentary which explains the difficult parts of the book which so easily deter

those wishing to study it.' About the volume on the Pastorals Robert Russell writes, 'Each passage includes discussion supported by anecdotes and illustrations from his own teaching and preaching ministry.'

The House of Bishops has published the third edition of its policy for child protection entitled *Protecting all God's Children* (Church House £5.95 pbk. 0 7151 3867 7. 'It is' say its authors 'Essential reading for all who work with children in the Church of England'.

Recent Grove books likely to be of interest to Readers include P96 *How to learn through conflict* by Colin Patterson (1 85174 547 5); B30 *Is the New Testament reliable?* By Peter Head (1 85174 548 3; R15 *Restoring broken walls* (sub-titled *A prison ministry exposition of Isaiah 61*) by Philip Ireson (1 85174 553 x) E32 *Homosexuality and the Church of England* by Andrew Goddard (1 85174 552 1) written after the publication of *Some Issues in Human Sexuality* and W178 *Preaching a sermon series with Common Worship* by Phillip Tovey (1 85174 554 8) They can be obtained from Grove Books Ridley Hall Road, Cambridge CB3 9HU or by calling 01223 464748 at £2.50 each including postage and packing.

IAFN Network

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Somerset TA24 7WD ENGLAND
Tel/Fax: 01643 841 500
email: mail@iafn.net Web site: www.iafn.net.

The text of recent newsletters (without pictures and contact addresses) is available on the web site. Some of the separately printed copies of the following IAFN newsletters are available on request.

- Education and the Family (Trinity 2001)
- Women and the Family (Trinity 2002)
- The Burden of Care (Michaelmas 2002)
- Food and the Family (Advent 2002)
- Children and Work (Trinity 2003)
- Abandoned Children (Jan 2004)

Copies of the Report of the Consultation on Violence and the Family are available from Ian Sparks at iansparks@bt.internet.com

The era of the third age: further reading suggestions

- **Becoming a Better Grandparent** by Robert D Strom and Shirley K Strom (1991) Sage (A whole series of resources available under the theme of grand parent education)
- **A Fresh Map of Life** by Peter Laslett (1989) London, Weidenfield and Nicolson
- **The Changing Contract Across the Generations**, Edited by Vern L. Bengtson and W. Andrew Achenbaum (1993) New York, Aldine De Gruyter
- **Journeying Out** by Ann Morisy (2004) London, Continuum
- **The Old Wise Woman** by Rix Weaver (1973) London, Shambala
- **Have The Men Had Enough?** by Margaret Forster (1990) London, Penguin
- **The Christian Council on Ageing**, Epworth House, Stuart Street, Derby DE1 2EQ Tel. 01858 431115



Gazette of newly admitted and licensed Readers

BIRMINGHAM

10 JANUARY 2004

Admitted and licensed

Juliet Bakker, St Peter and St Paul, Coleshill
Janet Beare, St Thomas, Garretts Green
Amanda Butler, St Luke, Birmnigham
Caroline Dixon, The Ascension, Hall Green
Patricia Johnston, St David, Shenley Green
Susan Larkin, St Thomas, Garretts Green
Julian Phillips, St John the Baptist and St Laurence and St Anne, Knowle
Richard Priest, St Peter, Hall Green
Alan Sherrin, St Martin, Birmnigham
Philip Taylor, St Faith and St Laurence, HARborne
Jill Williams, St Peter, Tile Cross
Licensed
William Sumner, The Ascension, Stirchley

BRISTOL

4 OCTOBER 2003

Admitted and licensed

Brian Blancharde, Holy Trinity, Horfield
Frances Brealey, St Edyth, Sea Mills
Angela Cattell, Stoke Bishop
Anthony Everitt, Bedminister
Helen Fensome, St Peter, Chippenham
Richard Gaines, Lyddington and Wanborough & Bishopstone with Hinton Parva
Sheila McKay, St Philip and St Jacob with Emmanuel, Bristol
Wulstan Perks, Yate, New Town
Susan Robinson, Holy Trinity with St Gabriel and St Lawrence and St Jude, Easton
Pauline Shaw, St Saviour with St Mary, Cotham & St Paul, Clifton
James Tucker, The City of Bristol
Barbara Wilcox, Dorcan, Swindon
Licensed
Diana Benbow, West Swindon & The Lydiards
Penelope Moynihan, Holy Trinity, Horfield
Richard Willerton, Stoke Gifford

HEREFORD

2003–2004

Admitted and licensed

Graham Bennett, Hereford Cathedral
Barbara Bourne-Tuplin, Hope
Michael Clark, Ford
David Jones, Madley
Culain Morris, Leintwardine
Michael Wells, St Peter, Hereford

LICHFIELD

10 JANUARY 2004

Admitted and licensed

Susan Armstrong, Christ Church, Tilstock
Margaret Barber, Hanley Team Ministry
William Bowen, St Oswald, Oswestry
Helen Bowes, Shawbury, Moreton Corbet and Stanton upon Hine Heath
Christine Broad, Biddulph
Jane Brough, Tettenhall Wood
Mark Cadwallader, Codsall with Bilbrook
Lindsay Clowes, Biddulph
Christopher Corbet, Shawbury, Moreton Corbet and Stanton upon Hine Heath
Bryan Evans, St Oswald, Oswestry
Gareth Evans, Meale Brace
Jeanette Hartwell, Penkridge Team Ministry
Janet Holmes, Forton
Norma Lloyd, Horninglow
Andrew Ritchie, Penn Fields
Sheila Simpkins, Shenstone and Stonnall
Anne Smith, Ruyton XI Towns
Christine Startin, Branston
Graham Stokes, Forsbrook
Graham Sutherland, Brownhills
Susan Tilt, St Joseph, Penn Fields
Barbara Warren, Rochester and Croxden with Hollington
Alan Wheeler, Brereton



In Memoriam

The deaths of the following Readers have been notified to us:

Birmingham

Elmer Greaves

Blackburn

Margaret Wallis

Chester

George Stafford
 James Stanway

Chichester

Brian Graebe

Coventry

Alex Cranston

Derby

Mr J Bush

Kathleen Cresswell

Dr J Critchlow

Keith Allison

Durham

Margaret Tonks

Ely

John Mobbs

Vince Osler

Exeter

Mr J H Barley

Angela Parish

Desmond Hobbs

Guildford

Mark Birchall

Hereford

John Dodd

Lincoln

Paul Tucker

David Jackson

Liverpool

Mr T R Buxton

Louie Dickson

Jean Mercer

Manchester

Dorothy Forrest

Mr J R Eglan

Newcastle

Derek Govier

Ron Bell

Sheffield

Gillian Houldsworth

Roy Parrott

Charles Scholey

Winchester

Bryan Morris

John Whitham

Worcester

Gloria Moy

John Gray

We give thanks for their work and witness and remember those who grieve.



GLEANINGS

Lay Reader's sermon

I found this reflection in verse by Sonia Berry, a Reader emeritus in Canterbury diocese, very moving:

What is next Sunday's theme?
I write it in large letters, then pick through
Three Bible readings, published for the day.
Where is the phrase, the word, the verse, the line
Encapsulating past experience –
My Lord's or mine?

Now for the happy scrabble hours,
Digging in texts, concordance, commentaries;
Here comes the box of scruffy index cards,
A jackdaw swag of sayings by the wise,
The admired, inspired.

Some pattern urges, emerges,
Not of my planning but a welcome guest.
Completing follows in the quiet night,
Sometimes arrived at with a rippling ease –
Often a wrestling match.

Look at the timing
But in the cutting, don't remove the guts.
God: help me sort it out. Always I ask you late.
The typing: I shall never see the words.
My ribbon is so old.

'May I speak, may you hear...'
Most of the hard-of-hearing choose back pews,
So, lots of voice. Faces upturned, alert,
Our Vicar laughs just where I hoped he would.
The most dear face looks sad when I describe
Mother Teresa's love.

Oh, fortunate woman that I am
To be allowed all this. To praise you,
Saying again how glorious is Love.
I'm walking slowly down five twisting steps
And bread and wine are to come.

Atonement conference

A major conference on Atonement is being organised at High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire, 5–7 July 2004. The conference is sponsored by Coventry Cathedral in association with the Centre for the Study of Forgiveness and Reconciliation at Coventry University.

The aim is both theological and practical. There is a rising awareness of the centrality of this theme in the Christian faith at the present time. The aim of the conference is to create dialogue between different approaches to Atonement in an ecumenical spirit, getting back behind well stated positions and seeking common ground, convergence and mutual enrichment.

The three major speakers who will address the conference are:

- Dr Christina Baxter, Principal of St John's College, Nottingham, and a member of the Archbishops' Council
- Revd Arlington Trotman, Commission Secretary for the Church's Commission for Racial Justice
- Professor Frances Young, Edward Cadbury Professor of Theology at the University of Birmingham

The conference will also engage with practical expressions

of mission and reconciliation which use the language of Atonement, directly or indirectly. This will take place through workshops which will make the conference an inter-disciplinary exercise, in which theory and practice illuminate each other.

The conference costs £150 per person with a supplement of £20 for a single ensuite room.

Further information and booking forms can be obtained from: Coventry Cathedral Office, 1 Hill Top, Coventry, CV1 5AB.

Information can also be obtained from the Bishop of Wolverhampton (01902 824503) or the Bishop of Warwick (02476 416200)

Letters received

First of all may I congratulate you and *The Reader* magazine on reaching 100 years of publication. That is an amazing record. Well done! Praise God indeed.

As a firm friend may I offer a comment on the way the magazine has been developing over the last few years. It certainly has improved enormously in its presentation and the quality of its production. That is a real plus. But I must say that I have been somewhat disappointed that it has become so 'churchy' in its contents, both in the articles and the book reviews. You will see what I mean if you glance through the title pages of the issue that has arrived this morning.

I have always seen Readers as a marvellous group of men and women who live at the cutting edge between the church and the world, in a place where they above all people must make their witness count for something in the enormous missionary task facing the church at this time. Would it not be a real help to them if they could be helped and encouraged in that mission by means of the articles and reviews? They need to see themselves as role models for all lay people in their daily task of proclaiming and living the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Give them some help in leading funerals, children's worship, 'flour' festivals, and so on, but please move Readers away from being mini-clergy towards being mission partners in the cause of Christ.

Colin Bazley, Warden of Readers, Chester Diocese

You must be doing something right! Although I'm only in my early 50s, I've been a Lay Reader for 30 years and *The Reader* has never ceased to bore me to tears – until now!

For many years the magazine went, unread, into the bin as it was so tedious, traditional and tenuously linked (sorry I had to get another 't' word in!) to what Lay Readers really do. More recently I had begun to turn the pages and glance at the book reviews but the February 2004 issue was like a breath of fresh air, simply because it was relevant to my ministry. The article by Stephen Wright was excellent and I also read the articles by Susanne Mitchell, Diane Craven and Derek Walker plus, of course, glancing at the book reviews.

I couldn't help thinking that we used to be called Lay Preachers and it was that title which was so well addressed by the current edition of *The Reader*. I should have thought that any future articles about preaching or leading worship would be welcomed by many other Lay Readers. Your two correspondents on page 32 seem to share this viewpoint.

So thank you for turning *The Reader* from its corpse-like nature and, with Easter in mind, bringing it to new life.

Bob Forster, Reader, Oxford Diocese



The Last Word

So this is my last word and I want to introduce Dr Alan Swakely, who takes over on May 1st as my successor. Alan has been Deputy Secretary since July 2000 and will continue to be in the office one day a week for the foreseeable future. He will be joined by Philip McDonough as Associate Secretary. Philip has had ten years experience as secretary for the Diocese of St Albans and will be available two days a week.

Five years on...

Much has changed in the last five years. When I was appointed I did not have a computer for my own use. Now I process my own letters and documents and send and receive a constant stream of emails. Five years ago the magazine 'database' was actually a series of index cards maintained by Rosemary Matthews who came into the office one day a week for the purpose. Now it is a computerised database of 11,000 names including many overseas. The database is emailed direct to the printers each time the magazine is published.

Five years ago the magazine was published in a modest A5 size with its familiar blue cover. Now it is a bright full colour A4 magazine professionally edited and designed. A magazine which is applauded by all who read it. Five years ago there was no thought of a website. Now it is about to be redesigned and a web-site editor appointed in order to keep it up to date.

Five years ago the Reader office was tucked away at the end of the Ministry division corridor. Now it is in a visible position as befits a lay ministry of over 10,000. Post-Turnbull, Readers are represented on all Ministry Division committees.

Five years on there have been two national conferences, a newly designed introductory leaflet for Reader ministry and even a book *Bridging the Gap - Reader Ministry today*, the first for thirty years.

Now for the future...

And the future beckons – a conference for younger Readers is planned for June 2006. Planning for the next national conference in July 2005 is underway with Bishop Graham Cray agreeing to be the keynote speaker. Reader ministry itself has grown over the years. Readers no longer 'only' teach and preach though that is at the heart of our ministry. Readers also exercise their ministry in hospice, hospital, school, industrial and prison chaplaincies. A few are in charge of parishes and some work in the Central Readers' Council office.

And that, finally, brings me to the staff of the office to whom we owe so much. So thank you to all those with whom I have worked over the past seven years (and I include my two years as Deputy Secretary in that total). So to Geoff, Sandra, Rosemary, Alan, Janice, Patsy and Gordon, the Director of the Ministry Division, my grateful thanks for all your work and support.

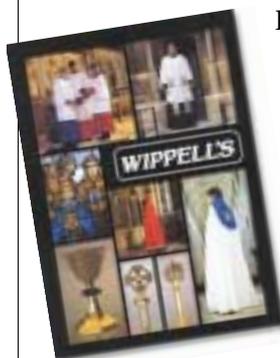
My best wishes and prayers to all Readers – and now to have some fun: the fun which Bishop Christopher Mayfield, former Chairman of CRC advises, and which I hope you will all find.

Pat Nappin

Pat Nappin



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