

The Vicar's Letter

Dear Friends,

Several people have asked me to give the gist of my sermon on Sunday February 17, when I spoke about the Archbishop of Canterbury and the storm surrounding his comments on Muslim *sharia* law, so here it is, not word for word, but the general idea of what I said.

I want to talk about the row the Archbishop of Canterbury has got himself into, because I feel the matters he raised are important ones for all of us in this country to think about, and especially for Christians. Let me begin by recapping what has happened. On February 7, the Archbishop, Dr Rowan Williams, was invited to give a lecture in the Temple Church in London, on Islam in English Law. The Temple Church is within the Inns of Court and functions in some ways as the chapel of the legal profession based there. The audience – it was a lecture, not a sermon to a congregation engaged in worship – consisted of lawyers and theologians, as well as members of the general public. It is worth pointing out that the Archbishop was invited to give the lecture, and to speak on that subject, as one of a series of talks held by the Temple Church; he did not decide off his own bat to get up one day and talk about English and Islamic law.

The same day the Archbishop gave an interview to BBC Radio 4. It was probably this interview, more than the lecture, that sparked the row. The Archbishop was asked by the interviewer whether he thought parts of *sharia* law should be adopted in order to promote social cohesion, and he replied that it was probably inevitable. This was reported as ‘Archbishop proposes adoption of *sharia* law.’

Now there are several points I would like to make about all this. The first is that it is always important, when people get into hot water because of something they said, to find out exactly *what* they said before reacting to it. That is why I have put copies of the Archbishop's lecture and his interview by the entrance to the church. There are also copies of his address at the opening of the General Synod on 11 February. (There may still be some there – you can get copies from me at any time if you would like one, or for those on the internet you can go to www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/1575 for the lecture, www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/1573 for the interview, and www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/1583 for the address to General Synod.)

If you look at the lecture, you will find that it is quite hard to follow. It is written in academic language for an audience consisting mostly of academics, and to be honest I do not think it is as clear as it could be. The Archbishop's style is sometimes rather opaque. But I would defend the Archbishop in his courageous attempt to address a matter that affects the whole of our society whether we like it or not, and for the fact that in the lecture he gives no black and white definitions to a complicated picture. And although I think he could sometimes express himself more simply, we cannot always demand that an address

by one very learned person in public life to an undoubtedly learned audience, will be completely transparent in every phrase to the non-specialist. (I have been present when the Archbishop gave a short homily to a very mixed congregation, and it was beautifully clear and simple, though quite profound – and without notes.)

So I am glad the Archbishop did what he did, even if I am not always sure exactly what he meant. The main thrust of the lecture deals in general terms with how civic, secular law accommodates the religious sensibilities of various groups without violating the basic principles of justice and of equality before the law, principles that guarantee our freedom and that give a certain essential dignity to all. The Archbishop tries first of all to remove some misunderstandings about *sharia*. It is not a set of rules, of do's and don'ts, but a way of trying to apply Islamic faith to every area of a Muslim's life, and there are various traditions of *sharia*. (Rather curiously, the word *sharia* itself apparently means in Arabic, 'the way to the watering hole'. I suppose it might have something to do with the idea, found also very strongly in Judaism, that the law of God is a source not of bondage but of refreshment and life.) The Archbishop goes on to point out that the law of the land, English civil law, already makes allowances for the religious beliefs of several faiths. Orthodox Jewish believers in England have had, for a couple of generations at least, their own tribunals, called *Beth Din*, which are used to settle certain disputes within their own community. No doctor is forced to perform an abortion if doing so would violate his or her conscience. Sikh men are permitted not to wear motorcycle helmets, as they would otherwise have to remove their turbans. And the Church of England conducts weddings in which all the legal requirements of a marriage are carried out in an entirely religious ceremony. Furthermore, as a matter of fact there are already ten *sharia* tribunals which operate in this country, and many Muslims turn to them to settle financial and marital disputes.

What the Archbishop seems to be proposing is simply that the law of the land could find a way of recognising these informal arrangements which are already taking place. He is very clear on two points that have been widely misunderstood or misrepresented: no accommodation that the state might make with the application of *sharia* in certain specific circumstances would remove the right of anyone to resort to English law, and no accommodation could be made with any application of *sharia* that directly infringed English law or violated any rights anyone might have under English law. *Sharia* would not replace English law or run in parallel with it; rather, English law might recognise as valid some cases where all parties concerned had agreed to abide by the decision of a *sharia* tribunal. There would be no question of *sharia* ever being forced on anyone. In fact, bringing what is already taking place in *sharia* tribunals under the scrutiny of English law, might help to prevent extreme or unjust actions being taken.

This is rather different from much of the reporting on the Archbishop's words. Some of the newspaper headlines have been simply abusive, and I'm afraid I'm one of those who have more or less given up hoping that our press and mass media might be able to deal with an

argument that cannot be reduced to slogans and sound bites. More saddening has been the reaction of some of the Archbishop's fellow Christians, and fellow members of the Church of England. Let me be clear that I believe we are all entirely free to disagree with every word the Archbishop has said – once we are quite sure we have understood him – just as you are free to disagree with me, and to do so forcefully. It is the spirit of the disagreement that matters. For those of us who are members of the Church of England, there is a question of loyalty here. Agree or disagree, he is our Archbishop, not some bloke who popped up and said something controversial. Some people have called the Archbishop a disgrace. He is not. You may think that what he said is wrong, but it is surely right for an Archbishop of Canterbury, the leader of the established church of England, with a duty of mission to the whole of the nation, to try to help us all think more deeply about how we live with our neighbours. I think he adorns our Anglican communion with his wisdom and leadership, doing a near-impossible job at great cost to himself, and I am proud to have Rowan Williams as my Archbishop.

The trouble is that, unwittingly or not, Archbishop Rowan pressed a few panic buttons both in our society as a whole and in the church. How many of us, if we have heard of *sharia* at all, think first in terms of its worst excesses? Do we see in our minds images of hands being chopped off for shoplifting and people being stoned for adultery or apostasy? These things have happened, and do still in a few places. But to judge the Islamic faith and the efforts of Muslims to be true to their faith solely by such horrors would be as false as forming a view of Christianity based on accounts of heretics being burned at the stake and the bombing of abortion clinics, both things that have been, or are still occasionally, carried out in the name of Jesus Christ. Sadly, I think, even the words 'Islam' and 'Muslim' also awake many of our prejudices and fears. Some of the reaction to what the Archbishop is supposed to have said, much of it a distortion or even an outright contradiction of what he actually did say, reflects the panic-button mentality to which we are all prone when thinking about a way of life and a faith that may sometimes seem to us alien and hard to understand. Where fear and panic lead, reason, that great gift of God, is driven out. The Archbishop has led the way in encouraging us to listen better to the Muslims who share our land. They are not going either to go away or to abandon their faith. Can we learn not always to focus on the worst, but to seek after the best in Islam (as we would hope Muslims and others would do for us?) We are so much closer to the Muslim faith in many ways than we dare to imagine. In today's Old Testament reading (Genesis 12: 1-4a), God promises to Abraham that through him all the nations of the earth will be blessed. Along with the Jews, Christians and Muslims are all descended, in spiritual terms, from Abraham. Has the world not been mightily blessed by Judaism, by Christianity, and by Islam? I believe the Archbishop has given us an example of the Gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ, in action – Jesus always strives to include people, to widen the circle of God's love. And isn't that what we are supposed to be about?

With love,
David

This month's cover

'The carrying of the cross' is taken from *Eric Gill: the engravings*, edited by his nephew Christopher Skelton, and published by The Herbert Press (1990). It is reproduced by kind permission of the publishers. See page 14 for details of the Churches Together Good Friday Walk of Witness.

Mothers' Union

At the February meeting Kay Coe gave a talk entitled 'Blind Faith,' which is the story of Helen Keller. Helen was born in 1880 in Alabama. Her family was middle class and Helen was a healthy child and learned to walk and talk in the usual way. When she was about 19 to 20 months old she had a fever, which left her blind and deaf. She became very naughty because she was so frustrated. She invented signs to communicate her wishes to others. Then an Irish girl aged twenty, called Annie Sullivan, came to be Helen's tutor. She had to work very hard trying to teach Helen the names of things. The breakthrough came on March 3 1887. Annie took Helen to the water pump in the garden and with repeated signing and pumping Helen at last understood. After that there was no stopping her. By the time she was thirteen she was learning French, Latin, German and Greek. She graduated with honours in 1904. She had also learned to swim, row, ride and cycle and she could play draughts and chess. Helen wrote books and articles and never let blindness and deafness stop her from

fulfilling her dreams. She continually demonstrated the capacity for leading a life worth living. During the war she visited the injured in hospital and her faith sustained her. She once said, 'I thank God for my handicaps for through them I have found my faith.' Annie Sullivan, who had been so instrumental in Helen's success story, did marry, but the marriage failed. She gradually went blind and died in 1936. Helen died at the age of 87 having lived life to the full and having been a great inspiration to many. We all enjoyed the talk very much and felt very thankful that we are all able to see and hear.

At our next meeting on March 4, David Busk will lead us in a meditation for Lent.

Jean Morgan

Wives' Group

Pat Wells-Johnson, our advertised speaker, was unavailable, so we were delighted to welcome Alexandra Weyman to talk on the subject of 'Taoist Tai Chi for Health and Relaxation'. Alexandra has been a Taoist Tai Chi instructor for almost five years and is a member of the Taoist Tai Chi Society, a registered charity with some 8,000 members in the UK.

She began by telling us a little of the history of the subject. Many years ago, a small, sickly boy in China, who was not expected to live beyond his early teens, was taken by his mother to visit a Taoist monastery. The monks treated him with traditional medicine and also taught him to do Tai Chi exercises, saying it

would improve his general health, strength and well being. The boy vowed that if he recovered, he would do all he could to spread knowledge of Tai Chi. He lived to be 68 and, true to his promise, moved first to Hong Kong and then to Canada, founding institutes to teach Tai Chi. Some of the basic movements (there are 108) had to be adapted to westerners, but the basic principles are the same.

Tai Chi is designed to improve flexibility and the thinking is that flexibility of body leads to flexibility and strength of mind. Classes can be tailored to suit the needs of disabled people or those recovering from illness and injury and the exercises can help with bone density problems or conditions such as arthritis. The benefits to mental health stem from the thinking that one is concentrating on getting the exercises right, so the mind is cleared of unwanted and/or negative thoughts.

After the talk came the action – Alexandra demonstrated the first few moves of the exercise sequence and then it was our turn. I think we all enjoyed having a go – maybe one or two ladies will be taking it up!

Our next meeting is scheduled for 11 March, when we are looking forward to a talk (and hopefully a few tips!) from local beauty therapist Louise Allen. All are welcome.

Kate Robinson

Of all the things that will surprise us on the Resurrection morning, this I believe will surprise us most, that we did not love Christ more before we died.

Jo Ryle

Men's Social Group

'A night with the stars' was how your usual correspondent – engaged elsewhere in *Parish News* this month – billed February's public meeting at the Cambridge University Institute of Astronomy. If only it were that simple. Thick fog and low cloud meant we didn't see the telescope let alone the Plough. But we did have the lecture.

'Hunting the most distant galaxies in the universe' was the theme, given by Dr Lindsay King. Galaxies are made up of gas, dust and stars. A star is a huge ball of hot, bright gases, and on a clear night we can see between two and three thousand in the sky. We can see many more through a telescope. The only star that is remotely near the earth (93 million miles away) is the sun. A galaxy is a vast 'island' of stars in space, the galaxy in which we live being called the Milky Way. We have to thank the Ancient Greeks for that. In our galaxy there are some 100,000 million stars. Distances in space are measured in light years (one light year equals 6 billion miles) and from one side of the galaxy to the other is 100,000 light years. Quite a long way, then.

But the Milky Way is not the only galaxy in the universe. There are millions of them! To search for other galaxies it's necessary to use a telescope, of which there are at least three different types. X-ray telescopes (used in satellites) pick up gas in black holes; UV (ultra violet) telescopes pick up star formations; and optical telescopes, such as the one in Cambridge, can identify the cooler stars.

Astronomers are able to discover new stars and galaxies because of the way light travels to earth. From the sun and stars we receive what is called 'white light', although this is actually a mixture of colours, as seen in a rainbow. The light gathered in telescopes is passed through a spectroscope that spreads the light into a spectrum. When the colours of the spectrum are widely spread thousands of lines can be seen in them. Some lines are dark, others are bright. These lines give astronomers two important pieces of information – the chemical elements present in a particular star or galaxy; and their movement. Are they moving towards earth or away from us? Lines in the spectrum that are shifted towards the red end indicate that the light source is moving away from the earth; and by calculating how much the lines have shifted over a given period of time astronomers can also calculate the speed of the light source.

The speaker took questions – some from the *very* young. Well, it was half term. I wanted to ask Dr King if she believed in God but didn't have the courage. And then it was time for tea. Clutching our plastic cups, we moved into small groups for a de-brief, and for a few minutes it felt like being a scientist. After which it was outside again into that other black hole, the A428 pea-souper. Despite the early disappointment, the evening was an enjoyable social occasion, and a thought-provoking experience in the extreme, such was the scale of the subject matter. Many thanks to Andrew Fawcett for setting it up.

Next month. AGM. Please bring suggestions for the 2008/09 programme of events. AGM venue to be announced in the *Weekly Newsletter*.

Peter Irving

Charity of the Month

The Smile Train

Imagine how any of us would feel if our baby was born with a cleft palate. We, in this country, are lucky enough to have this condition dealt with immediately and successfully. Now, in many underdeveloped countries, children born with this condition can be helped.

Our charity for March is *The Smile Train*, probably a charity that many may never have heard of, but one that is focused on solving a single problem: cleft lip and palate. The charity is operational around the world but mainly in the world's poorest countries. Cleft palates are a major problem in developing countries, where there are millions of children who are suffering with un-repaired clefts. Most of these children cannot eat or speak properly; they are unable to attend school or hold a job. This awful condition makes their lives very difficult, filled with shame, isolation, pain and heartache.

The good news is that every single child with this affliction can be helped with surgery that costs little and takes no more than 45 minutes.

Since the formation of this charity several years ago it has provided free cleft

surgery for over 200,000 children. These children were suffering, not only because they were born with a cleft, but because they were born too poor to ever afford surgery. Being born with a cleft in a developing country is truly a curse. In fact, every baby born in Uganda with a cleft is given the name 'Ajok', which means literally 'cursed by God', and because of this no one knows how many newborns are killed or abandoned immediately after birth.

The ones who are lucky enough to find a *Smile Train* free cleft surgery programme not only survive, they thrive. After surgery lasting only 45 minutes, they are handed back their future, and a second chance at life, a chance that they never thought they'd get.

Bizz Thackray

Easter's early this year

A comment was made recently about how early Easter is this year; and maybe even as early as it could possibly be. This isn't in fact the case – but I only knew that because I'd been following a discussion on one of the COIN email lists about just this subject. It is, however, very close to being as early as it can be. This year Easter Day is on March 23, but it can be one day earlier on March 22. Both of these dates, along with the very late dates for Easter, are very rare.

Easter Day is always the first Sunday after the Paschal full moon, i.e. the full moon that occurs on the day of the vernal equinox (21 March), or on any of the next

28 days. This way of determining Easter was laid down by the Council of Nicaea in 325. The Eastern Church celebrates Easter independently, and in 1963 the Vatican Council declared itself in favour of fixing a date for Easter when agreement with the other churches could be reached.

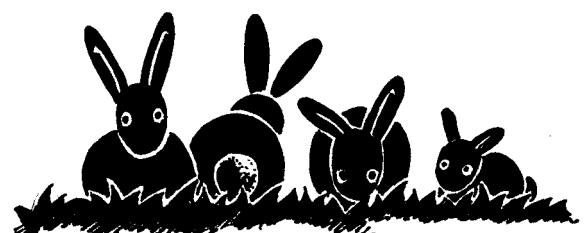
The next time Easter will be on the same date as this year will be 2160; so you can see that none of us reading this will experience it again. Neither will we ever experience the even earlier date of March 22. The last time Easter was on that date was in 1818, and the next isn't until 2285.

So what about the late dates for Easter? Readers are likely to experience these, and some will have done so already. The latest date for Easter Day is April 25. The last time it was on that date was 1943, and the next is as soon as 2038. We do get very close to that in 2011, when Easter will be on April 24.

Incidentally, it takes 5,700,000 years to cycle through the full sequence of Easter dates.

[Information gleaned from various internet web sites, and particularly the COIN Email lists(<http://www.coin.org.uk/>) and Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org>)]

Paul Sibley



Who's who in the parish

*This month we launch a series of articles in which members of the congregation are invited to introduce themselves. As well as providing a fast-track route for newcomers to break the ice, the articles may give readers an opportunity to discover who lies behind some of our more familiar faces. Many thanks to **Mary and Peter Dawe**, pictured here with granddaughter Eva, for setting the ball rolling.*

We were both born and brought up in



North London,
Peter in
Hendon and
Mary in
Winchmore
Hill and

Enfield. Peter went to University College School in Hampstead and Mary to Minchenden Grammar in Southgate. We first met at a Crusader camp where we were both involved in cooking for 120 boys! Following marriage in 1965 we lived in Pinner (in a house costing £5000!) where the first two of our boys were born. Our third son was born in 1971, 3 weeks after moving to Bishop's Stortford. We lived here for 28 years before taking a step of faith and moving here to Godmanchester in 1999 to fully retire! We have no regrets over the move and very much enjoy sharing in the life of St.Mary's and exploring the countryside with our wayward Jack Russell Billie.

After National Service in the RAF, where I trained as a navigator, I went up to Cambridge to read Mechanical Sciences. My first employment was as an

aerodynamicist with the De Havilland Aircraft Company at Hatfield. After a short while I switched to civil engineering and gained experience with British Rail (Eastern Region) and then with Taylor Woodrow Construction; part of my time with the latter was spent tunnelling under Euston Square to divert a main sewer! I joined the then Ministry of Transport in 1967 where I stayed until my retirement in 1994. My last 8 years there were spent as Head of Bridges Engineering, with responsibility for the engineering standards and policy for the design, construction and maintenance of bridges and other structures on the trunk road network., [earning him a CBE (Mary!)] When not busy in the churchyard I practise my civil engineering skills in our garden and DIY. I am involved with 'Tools for Self Reliance' and do the occasional piece of calligraphy. I much enjoy my early morning swims at St.Peter's, having been taught to swim as a boy by the first man to swim the English Channel in both directions!

Peter

I trained as a nurse and midwife at Lambeth Hospital, completing 2nd part midwifery in Colchester. I continued nursing in various hospitals, including two years in Canada, the return journey to England being five enjoyable weeks on a freight ship via the Panama Canal. When we married I worked as a District Nurse in Wembley until we had our first son; I then had several years 'child rearing', including a few short term fostered babies, before resuming nursing part-time at the Herts and Essex hospital, and with a local agency.

I spend a fair amount of time on the computer, including ebay 'trading' and playing with digital photos (mostly of our two young grandchildren!) I love pottering in the garden, both in our own and those of our sons in London and Bletchley – when requested! I am a 'befriender' for Age Concern and we are both members of U3A.

Mary

Next month: Jean Nicholls

Parish Praise

A change in the worshipping pattern of any congregation causes mixed emotions – we are out of our comfort zone and into the unknown. David Busk, at the Parish Meeting in the autumn, had outlined his vision for bringing the Christian message to those who might find the experience of coming to church rather intimidating.

So it was that, after much publicity and planning, St Anne's School opened its doors on 27 January to *Parish Praise*. The time of 11 am meant a lie-in for some, and for parents and carers a chance to get the children's breakfast ready without too much rush. The welcome was warm and personal and the school hall felt friendly – no chance of hiding in quiet pews or behind pillars! It was noticeable that before the service people chattered to their neighbours. There were many familiar faces but also a goodly number of new ones.

The service was simple but joyful, with carefully chosen modern hymns, the choir supporting the singing from the

congregation. The reading was from Matthew 4, 18-23 – Jesus calling his first disciples. David used a net as a visual aid, with the children enthusiastically helping to demonstrate how we are supported by God's love. It was wonderful to see so many children happily participating in God's praise.

At the end of the service we all had an opportunity to chat and make the newcomers feel welcome over a splendid buffet lunch. We need not have worried...it was all wonderful. Thank you, David, and all who helped you. We are looking forward to Palm Sunday on 16 March.

Liz Irving

Memories of St David's Day, Pembroke Dock circa 1983

March 1, St David's Day, was one of the most important days in our school calendar. We were encouraged to express our patriotism and take delight in the day's celebrations including an Eisteddfod (a Welsh cultural competition).

Preparation started after the Christmas break. Singing, poetry speaking, creative writing and other artistic activities were practised. Each week heats were held to find the final contestants for the Eisteddfod. Every morning our Welsh language teacher took individual classes rehearsing the Welsh national anthem. An award would be won for the best class performance on the day.

Our costumes were unpacked from storage and checked. The traditional Welsh lady's costume was a tall, black, stovepipe hat with a white, lace-trimmed cotton cap worn beneath it, a white blouse tucked into a black and white checked flannel skirt and a white, lace-edged petticoat prettily showing slightly below the skirt. A red wool paisley shawl was worn round the shoulders and held with a brooch (usually a leek or daffodil). A white lace-edged apron, worn over the skirt, completed the outfit.

On 'the day', with great excitement, the girls would dress up as 'Welsh ladies' in full regalia. We girls also wore real daffodils pinned to our shawls. The boys dressed as either rugby players or coal miners, and wore leeks. We always felt that the boys drew the short straw there; however they enjoyed their mischief, chewing a bit of leek and breathing over us, making us scream.

The whole school day was spent in celebration of Saint David. A religious service was held in the morning, we enjoyed a lunch of traditional Welsh fare including cawl (lamb broth) and Welsh cakes then, in the afternoon, cultural activities took place, including the school Eisteddfod. Tired out we would go home to tea.

Megan Macdiarmid, with memories provided by Rachel Beckett, her daughter.

The way some people love to find fault, you'd think there was a reward.

Mothering Sunday – 2 March

Our grateful thanks to the members of Children's Church, who have not only raised the money through a very successful cake stall, but are also making the floral posies for all the mothers who will be in church on Mothering Sunday.

Godmanchester in Bloom

John Thackray is leading this initiative, and spoke to a public meeting in the Queen Elizabeth School on 31 January. Below John outlines what he has in mind. Please get in touch with him (telephone no./email address below) if you would like to be involved or have any ideas of your own for this project.

As we all know comparisons are odious, but as you go round the ring road in Huntingdon in the summer, you cannot but be impressed by the flowerbeds, which bring extra colour and enjoyment to the town. We would like to extend this initiative to Godmanchester. Fortunately the many historic buildings in the town have not changed much, and if you were here for a holiday and walked along the river bank and looked across at the houses along the Causeway you would be struck by the quality of these buildings and many others like them in the town.

Perhaps we are not making the best use of all these assets. If you go to Austrian and Swiss towns, flowers seem to be the very essence of enhancing striking buildings. A lady wrote to me recently talking of Godmanchester as 'this special place'.

How good it would be to further enhance the town with more flowers, trees, and shrubs!

However *Godmanchester in Bloom* is not simply about flowers but also about involving everyone in the community. The Town Council, and the Town Clerk in particular, are being most supportive and have already given us £1,000 towards start-up costs. Councillors Carol Godley and David Brown are on the committee. The Deputy Mayor, District Councillor Colin Hyams and Paul Smith of HDC – the ‘Anglia in Bloom’ judge – have already arranged for Godmanchester to have 1000 plants in new beds, and you will see these planted in May and early June. They will not interfere with the daffodils. We are under the helpful umbrella of Godmanchester Community Association as we work in tandem with both the town and district councils. HDC sends its team of litter pickers to the town every Thursday, and the litter-bins are emptied every day – or should be.

Betty Turner and her colleagues, with the help of Luminus, are going to upgrade the flowerbeds at Rectory Gardens. At McCartney House, Jackie Vickery and the Muir Group have asked for estimates to take out and replace the old shrubs. At the same time they are looking to put large hanging baskets on the end of each block of flats to soften their look; and to replant shrubs and tidy up the nearby car park. We are also looking to see if the Osier beds can be restored to help the kingfishers and warblers. What about a hide for spotting the bittern and the nightingale? What about a wild garden in our churchyard?

From all those who came to last week’s meeting we now have nineteen active helpers. I understand members of our Youth Group want to assist, as do the youngsters from the Baptist Church. Why don’t you come and join them and bring along some of your own ideas? The Town Council has asked us for a list of priorities as we look to Godmanchester’s 800th Charter Anniversary in 2012. Rome wasn’t built in a day, but as we move positively towards an ‘Anglia in Bloom’ Gold Award in Olympic year – with the prospect, perhaps, of flying flags for a royal visit – Godmanchester could become an even more special place!

John Thackray

(Tel: 457722 email:

jcthackray@hotmail.com)

It’s Saturday, 9 February 2008 or Sailors Ahoy!

The sun was shining, the sea was lapping gently on the shore and ice creams were the order of the day. Spain? The Caribbean? Australia? No – Felixstowe! Yes – Felixstowe!

We had decided to make a surprise visit to the Mission to Seafarers at Felixstowe Docks, and loading the car with gloves, hats, sweaters, jigsaws, books and magazines, we set off from Godmanchester.

We were warmly welcomed by Hazel, who is one of the Padres who runs the centre, and, by the Revd Geoffrey Moore, the Port Chaplain. They explained how ill prepared some seafarers are for the

climate changes they encounter, and how the centre tries to help them by providing warmer clothing.

Feeling happy that we had re-established contact, we left the port and headed for Felixstowe Ferry and a high-class fish restaurant, named 'The Ferry Café'. After dining 'frugally' on best haddock and chips with a side order of strong tea, we strolled round the ferry, admiring the fish stalls, one offering Felixstowe Ferry puppies 'ready in April'. We then came back into Felixstowe town, to enjoy a look around the shops, and went onto the promenade for ice cream and a reviving walk.

We returned home after a wonderful day – perhaps readers would care to join us next time? Please may we appeal for contributions of knitted hats, scarves and gloves, sweaters, jeans, decent second hand shoes, T-shirts and new socks? These can be brought to us or, we will collect if you give one of us a ring. Such little things to us: for cold, lonely sailors these gifts mean so much.
Thank you.

Peter Ballantine 450432 and Olwyn and Robert Hurd 458700

PCC Meeting

Minutes in full of PCC meetings are displayed on the south door noticeboard. Here are some key points from the January meeting:

Matters arising:

Collection Box: It was agreed to purchase an oak box to be wall-mounted in place of the two wall slots. The box will have one slot; small

envelopes will be available to differentiate donations.

Admitting Children to Communion:

This had been aired in the parish. It was for the PCC to decide whether or not to go forward. In discussion, both sides of the debate were fully explored. Following prayer, a vote was taken. 11 PCC members voted in favour of admitting children to Communion and 4 PCC members voted against. There were no abstentions. Following the vote, Revd David Busk said he would send a letter to the Bishop seeking permission to admit children to Communion. Once this is obtained, he will then ask parents/guardians whether their children wish to receive Communion. Following suitable preparation within Children's Church we will proceed with admitting children to Communion.

Finance Committee:

We are currently £7,081 above budget mainly because of a shortfall in income and because utilities and the cost of maintaining the church fabric are on the increase. However, thanks to the good management of the Treasurer, our overall financial position is reasonable.

Venue for Christmas Bazaar

Trevor Weedon, Christmas Bazaar coordinator, advised that several people within the congregation had said that they would prefer the bazaar to be held at the QE School rather than at St Anne's School as at present. They considered that it would be better as the QE School is more central and would attract passing trade. In discussion, it was pointed out that now we have held the bazaar at St Anne's School for 3-4 years, people are used to us being at that end of town. Financially 2007 was better than 2006 by about £300. The venue is much more pleasant and parking is better. A vote was taken on the proposal that the bazaar should stay at St Anne's School – the PCC agreed unanimously.

Trevor Weedon

And finally

With Easter fast approaching, so is the schools' examination season. RE teachers in particular will be pleased to avoid too many sentences like these, although they may provide a chuckle for their staff-room colleagues. 'Solomon had 300 wives and 700 cucumbers,' 'The

Philistines are islands in the Pacific,' 'The natives in Macedonia did not believe in Paul, so he got stoned.' For more of the same look out for *Must try harder; the very worst howlers by schoolchildren* by Norman McGreevey, and published by Constable.

Peter Irving

The Registers**Baptisms**

17 February Ebony Sky Lavallin
 Joshua Alan Hannibal

Memorial Service and Burial of Ashes

27 February James Gilbey (former Head Server in this church prior to
 Richard Bunn)

The Lectionary

2 March **Lent 4 – Mothering Sunday**
 1 Samuel 16:20-end; Luke 2:33-35

9 March **Lent 5**
 Ezekiel 37:1-14; John 11:1-45

16 March **Palm Sunday – Parish Praise (St Anne's School)**
 Isaiah 50:4-9a; Matthew 27:11-54

20 March **Maundy Thursday**
 Exodus 12:1-4, 11-14; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:1-7,
 31b-35

21 March **Good Friday**
 Isaiah 52:13-end of 53; Hebrews 10:16-25; John 18:1-end of 19

22 March **Easter Eve**
 7.30 Easter Vigil
 Genesis 1:1-24a; Exodus 14:10-end and 15:20-21 Ezekiel 37:1-14;
 Romans 6:3-11; Luke 24:1-12

23 March **Easter Day**
 Acts 10:34-43; Colossians 3:1-4; John 20:1-18

30 March **Easter 1**
 Acts 2:14a, 22-32; John 20:19-end; 1 Peter 1:3-9

G O D M A N C H E S T E R P A R I S H N E W S

Dates for your diary**March 2008**

Sat	1	8.00 am	Men's Frugal Breakfast	Methodist Church, Huntingdon 10 East Chadley Lane 38 London Rd / 79 Roman Way
		2.00 pm	Bouquet Making	
		t.b.c	Youth Group Cake Baking	
Sun	2	Lent 4 Mothering Sunday		
		8.00 am	Holy Communion	
		9.45 am	Sung Eucharist	
		o/c	Youth Group Cake Stall	Church Hall
		11.30 am	Healing Service	
		6.30 pm	Sung Evensong	
Mon	3	1.30 pm	Stepping Stones	Baptist Church Centre 23 Earning St All Saints Church, Huntingdon
		8.00 pm	Communications Committee	
Tue	4	12.15 pm	Churches Together Prayer	QE School White Hart Chestnuts 10 East Chadley Lane
		2.00 pm	Mothers' Union	
		7.30 pm	Men's Social Group AGM	
Wed	5	11.00 am	Holy Communion	10 East Chadley Lane
		8.00 pm	Bible Study Group	
Thu	6	9.45 am	Holy Communion	Comrades' Club Quaker Centre Vicarage Church Hall
		10.00 am	St Mary's 0s – 5s	
		8.00 pm	Evening Lent Group	
Fri	7	1.30 pm	Afternoon Lent Group	Church Hall
		7.30 pm	Choir Practice	
Sat	8	9.30 am to 5.00pm	Walk through the Old Testament	Baptist Church Centre
		7.30 pm	Lent Concert with Fauré Requiem	
Sun	9	8.00 am	Holy Communion	Church Hall 38 London Rd Vicarage
		9.45 am	Sung Eucharist	
		11.30 am	Grassroots and Baptism	
		12.00 pm	Frugal Lunch	
		6.30 pm	Sung Evensong	
		6.45 pm	Youth Group Chillout	
Mon	10	10.30 am	GMC Churches Together Ministers' Meeting – 'Hope 08'	Baptist Church Centre St Anne's School 10 East Chadley Lane
		1.30 pm	Stepping Stones	
		7.30 pm	Governors' Meeting	
		8.00 pm	Parish Praise Planning Meeting	

G O D M A N C H E S T E R P A R I S H N E W S

Tue	11	8.00 pm	Wives' Club	Church Hall
Wed	12	10.30 am	Holy Communion	Oak Tree Court
		7.30 pm	PCC Meeting	Church Hall
Thu	13	9.45 am	Holy Communion	
		10.00 am	St Mary's 0s – 5s	Comrades' Club
		8.00 pm	Evening Lent Group	Quaker Centre
Fri	14	1.30 pm	Afternoon Lent Group	Vicarage
		7.30 pm	Choir Practice	Church Hall
Sun	16	Palm Sunday, beginning of Holy Week		
		8.00 am	Holy Communion	
		10.15 am	Procession from Church to St Anne's	Church
		11.00 am	<i>Parish Praise</i>	St Anne's School
		6.30 pm	Sung Evensong	
		6.45 pm	Youth Group Passover Supper	Church Hall
Mon	17	1.30 pm	Stepping Stones	Baptist Church Centre
		8.00 pm	Compline with homily	
Tue	18	8.00 pm	Compline with homily	
Wed	19	11.00 am	Holy Communion	Woodley Court
		8.00 pm	Compline with homily	
Thu	20	Maundy Thursday		
		9.15 am	St Anne's School Easter Service No 9.45 am Holy Communion	Church
		7.30 pm	Sung Eucharist with foot-washing	
		o/c until midnight	Vigil	
Fri	21	Good Friday		
		11.00 am	Churches Together Walk of Witness	Huntingdon Methodist Church
		1.30 pm	Good Friday Liturgy	
		1.30 pm	Children's Workshop	Church Hall
Sat	22	Easter Eve		
		11.00 am	Churches Together Singing	Tesco
		7.30 pm	Vigil and Sung Eucharist	
Sun	23	EASTER DAY		
		6.00 am	Churches Together Dawn Service	Castle Hill, Huntingdon
		8.00 am	Holy Communion	
		9.45 am	Sung Eucharist	
		6.30 pm	Evensong	
Tue	25	Vicar in Japan until Saturday 12 th April		
Wed	26	9.45 am	Holy Communion	McCartney House

G O D M A N C H E S T E R P A R I S H N E W S

Thu	27	9.45 am	Holy Communion	
Fri	28	1.15 pm	Wedding Maddox / Robinson	
		7.30 pm	Choir Practice	Church Hall
Sun	30	8.00 am	Holy Communion	
		9.45 am	Sung Eucharist	
		4.00 pm	Ecumenical Service	Rectory Gardens
		6.30 pm	Sung Evensong	

Churches Together – Easter Arrangements

Greetings everyone. A few matters for your diary ahead of the minutes of our last meeting.

Easter arrangements- ‘The BIG HOPE’

21 March **Good Friday**. Walk of Witness 11am from Huntingdon Methodist Church. We shall need banners for this and a small group is meeting to arrange the details.

22 March **Easter Saturday** 11.00 am Singing at Tesco. We have permission to sing and will meet at 10.45 am. Please put this in your diary and your prayers!

23 March **Easter Sunday** 6.00 am Sunrise Service on Castle Hill followed by breakfast in Huntingdon Methodist Church.

Every blessing,
David Soldan

The Editorial Committee meeting for the April magazine will be held on **Sunday, 16 March**. Would you please ensure that material is with one of the following by that date and if possible not later than **Friday, 14 March**.

Peter Irving (Editor), 26 Post Street (pjibooks@aol.com)

Victoria Richardson (DIRandVMR@aol.com)

Clare Hurd (esmeuk@yahoo.co.uk)

(**NB** Please note that Joan Jackson will not be available to typeset the April magazine, so would you please send all material to Peter Irving direct).

Any enquiries concerning advertisements should be addressed to Victoria Richardson.