



**St Michael and All Angels
Amersham-on-the-Hill**

Newsletter

July/August 2010

God Beyond Church

Sheila Cassidy's Millennium Lecture

St Michael's

Thursday September 16. 8 pm

The next in our remarkable series of Millennium Lectures will be given by Dr Sheila Cassidy, who became well known when, as a young doctor, she was imprisoned and tortured for treating a wounded revolutionary in Pinochet's Chile. After her release she became an outspoken advocate for human rights and the author of *Audacity to Believe*.

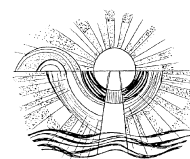
She wrote about her experiences of insomnia and

depression and her attempts to found a religious order for women in *Made for Laughter*.

She developed new approaches to the care of young cancer patients, before training as a psychotherapist.

God beyond Church is the title of a third book that she is in the process of writing. We look forward to welcoming her here.

Living Water



A quiet time of stillness, Gospel reading and simple sharing of bread and wine. Sustaining the sacred centre.

Sunday 5 September 6 pm

September's Bible Study Course

A reminder that Alison Woodnutt will be offering another of her stimulating courses in September.

It will be based on passages from the Gospels, a section from Acts and extracts from St Paul's letters. They will be contrasted with passages from Philip Pullman's *The Good Man Jesus and the Scoundrel Christ*.

The sessions will be on Tuesday mornings at 11.30 am and will last for about an hour.

September 14. Difficult Stories.

September 21. Why do good? Sin and Forgiveness.

September 28. Jesus the Christ.

October 5. The 'Light of Truth' and the 'Darkness of History'.

Worship – Sundays

8 am **Said Eucharist**
10 am **Sung Eucharist** (*Coffee afterwards*)
'2gether' 2nd Sunday.

Tuesdays

10.30 am Said Eucharist

Alternate Wednesdays

10.30 am *Praise & Play.
3.45 pm *Praise & Play Plus.

* see diary (page 6) for details

Mondays - Saturdays

8.30 am Morning Prayer

Saturdays

3 pm Saturday Slot 1st Saturday

The Church is usually open each morning from 8 am for anyone who wishes to meditate or spend time in quiet.



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Living in Heaven on earth

Have you ever considered that the Church's year is a bit like waiting for a bus? Here we are in July, with nothing much in sight to transport us, unless we count St. Swithun and far off Michaelmas. Then, in December, along comes a whole fleet of Specials to take us from Advent right up to Trinity at the end of May. In fact, in the space of six months, we cram in a complete theology of Incarnation, Redemption and Resurrection, not to mention Pentecost and a full blown doctrine about the nature of God.

So, what are we supposed to do, in the remaining six months from June to November, stood at the bus stop, looking at the empty road? I suggest the answer is "Nothing!" Why? Because we really have already arrived. In our Christian life together, from Christmas onwards, we have been travelling as passengers in God's Kingdom, with its highs and lows, the challenges of Lent, the joys of Easter and we have been brought to the completeness of Pentecost and Trinity. In a sense, then, through summer and autumn, we are already living in a heaven on earth, as redeemed members of God's Kingdom, the destination of the Christian Year.

So, in July and the coming months, let's rejoice in that God-given state of completion and tranquillity, which allows us apparently to do nothing. A family or a married couple or a group of friends sometimes sit happily together in each other's presence, not doing much but listening to the silence or maybe sharing a meal or enjoying just being. In the same way, we could perhaps savour the pleasure of being still in God's presence, listening to his voice and to each other in his family, allowing his heavenly peace to be part of our daily lives.

And if it rains cats and dogs on July 15, St. Swithun's day....never mind! We can tell ourselves it's just part of being in a heaven on earth.

Our Vision Statement

As a Christian community, we seek to engage with the world around us and to be a place of welcome and acceptance for all on a journey to God – believers, doubters and those who are seeking.

Experiencing Resurrection Now

We are delighted to reprint a shortened version of Diana's sermon for the first Sunday in June

I've just finished reading, *Consider the Blackbird*, by Harvey Gillman, our next Millennium lecturer. I was struck by one paragraph in the book where he talks about how we relate to sacred texts: *There is a long Christian tradition of exploring different levels of meaning in sacred texts. Questions of whether things actually happened or not are not as important as the meanings derived from them. The literal meaning of the text is not as important as the deeper narrative. And this deeper narrative is an open text where new revelation is always possible.*

Did it really happen?

I'd like to invite us to look at the deeper narrative within today's Old Testament and Gospel readings. As stories, we might find it challenging to accept that these were events, which actually happened.

- Did Elijah really breathe life back into the widow of Zarephath's son?
- Did Jesus really raise the widow of Nain's son from the dead?

But these are questions that, in a sense, don't matter because the truth imparted by these narratives is deeper than historical fact and, as Harvey Gillman implies, we can go on discovering new meaning as we read and reread, as we allow the text to interact with what is going on for us at the time..

It's quite clear that the two Bible passages are related and that Luke is intentionally modelling his story of the raising of the widow of Nain's son on the reading we heard from 1 Kings – the raising of the widow of Zarephath's son. Luke is using this updated

version of a familiar miracle to point to the resurrection of Jesus. Understanding Luke's purpose for his Gospel may help us look for that deeper narrative that Harvey Gillman talks about.

In the search for that deeper narrative, one question we might ask ourselves is this: "Where in our life do we experience what feels like death? Are we able to be open to the possibility of resurrection in that situation – if you like, to hear the words: 'I say to you rise?' as if they are spoken to us personally?"

In our own church community here at St Michael's I'm very much aware that there's a question people have been asking that feels more like death than resurrection. That question is this: "*Who is going to do the jobs, take on the roles that we have held, when we are no longer able to do them?*"

Letting go

Behind this question there is an assumption that needs to be challenged. The assumption is that these activities and roles *have to continue*. And so we say to ourselves: "That's the way we've always done it – therefore it has to carry on in the same way". But does it?

Letting go of something can feel like bereavement but within that letting go there is always the possibility of resurrection, new life, new growth. Letting things go does not devalue what has been. It acknowledges its importance. What has been will give birth to what will be.

Can we ask ourselves these questions, *Where's the fire?*



(Bishop Alan's question at the 2010 Deanery Visitation). What are we passionate about as individuals? What is distinctive about us as a church? How might our gifts be used in God's service? If we ask ourselves these questions we are inviting people to offer something that energises them. And it might be quite different from what has been.

A sign of resurrection

A couple of years ago Jan Lemos realised that Fairtrade fortnight coincided with Shrove Tuesday. "Wouldn't it be great" she said, "if we held a pancake party – as an outreach event, inviting anyone from the community to come in and eat some pancakes?" The place was packed, children made playdough pancakes, new friendships were made, some families now come to Praise and Play as a result. The event was repeated this year and included a pancake-tossing competition on the forecourt. Only a couple of weeks ago, somebody in Waterstones bookshop commented to me on it. It had made an impact. If I ask myself where the fire is in St Michael's, we're certainly good at partying!

Just one example – but a sign of resurrection, of God who is constantly renewing us and giving us gifts. Today's Gospel reminds us that Christ brings in the resurrection to all situations. Are we open to receive it?

Our Persecuted Church family in The Sudan



For a whole generation, until two years ago, Sudan was wracked by violent civil war between the predominantly Muslim north and the largely Christian south.

Although a peace settlement is now in place and leaders are working towards a referendum on the question of splitting into two separate countries, the North has armed militia groups to destabilize the South. Over 2000 southerners have died and 250,000 been displaced in these

attacks. In one incident an Archdeacon was shot dead at the church altar while leading a service. At another church three people were killed and children abducted.

Pray for true peace to come to Sudan, for the abducted and displaced people to be able to return home, for the church to remain strong and be a stabilizing force throughout the South.

Hazel Miller, elected Churchwarden at last April's annual meeting, introduces herself

I come from a Methodist background but in the absence of a Methodist church in St Andrews, where I went to university, I 'tried out' various other denominations before finding my spiritual home within the Anglo-Catholic tradition. Since 2008 Ian and I have been regular worshippers at St Michael's where we have found a warm welcome and plenty of opportunities to become more involved in the work and worship of the church.

From 1990-1994, I managed what was then the Mowbrays department of Dillons Bookstore in London but which all our customers knew just as Mowbrays. During that time, I obtained a Certificate in Religious Studies from Birkbeck College. Ian and I got together as a result of my suggesting a celebration to

mark the centenary of Mowbrays in London as he had also worked for the company in the 1950s. In 1994 I moved to SPCK Bookshops as a regional manager covering the south of England. Since 2001, I have been employed in management roles in medium-sized charities. I currently work in Reading for Family Resource Centre UK, an organisation which supports children and young people and their families.

My career to date has provided opportunities to acquire an insight into many of the facets of the churchwarden's role. As a religious bookseller, I became familiar with the administrative systems of the Church of England, in response to our customers' needs. My more recent jobs have given me an insight into a range of roles – charity finance and fundraising; personnel and training; property

A Fresh Start

That's the theme of September's *Saturday Slot*, the popular, informal family worship that takes place on the first Saturday of each month at 3 pm.

**Saturday
September 4
3 pm**

*Linda & Steven
(Alderson)*
warmly invite
all members of the
St. Michael's
congregation to
their wedding on
Saturday July 24
at 1.30 pm
at *St Michael's*

**We welcome in Baptism –
Kie Michael Daniel.**

**We give thanks for the life
of
Betty Treagus.**

management.

I feel privileged to have been elected as a churchwarden especially so soon after becoming part of the congregation of St Michael's. I am endeavouring to get up to speed with the who?, what? and where? of the community but know there is still a lot more to learn. I welcome opportunities to increase my knowledge.

My hunger for God's Word

Joy Tobler offers the next contribution to our series on the different ways in which members of St Michael's sustain their sacred centre,

Within a day of becoming a Christian in my early 20's, I developed a huge hunger for God's Word, which led eventually to theological training, becoming a church 'lady worker' (in the days before women deacons or priests), and then 32 years in Bible translation work – first in Brazil as translator for the Karipuna indigenous people group in north-eastern Amazonia, and then in the UK, speaking about Bible translation in churches and colleges, before illness stopped me.

Throughout this time, and ever

since, a pattern of twice daily Bible reading and prayer times have provided the basic sustenance for my soul and for spiritual growth. Reading Christian study and devotional books, sometimes using daily Bible notes, Christian biography, missionary books, concordance studies, etc, have all played their part.

More recently, being part of contemplative meditation groups, and going on retreat, have also added to the rich diversity of ways in which I can be open to God, listening for His voice, talking with



Him.

There have been times of intense darkness, spiritually, and of suicidal depression; but maintaining the discipline of daily quiet times with God has been one of the main helps in coming through to light again. And another help for 'sustaining my sacred centre' is to reach out to others in one way or another – giving lifts to disabled friends, accompanying neighbours to hospital appointments, having people in for coffee or a meal, being a shoulder to cry on and a listening ear – seemingly little things, yet 'it is in giving that we receive', and in receiving are sustained.

subsequently to ordained ministry.

My training has been based in London with the new St Mellitus College which has a 'pioneer' emphasis and aims to equip the UK church for mission. I am ordained into the developing missional community of CMS, as an integral part of the Church of England, and this has brought me to my new role in the parish of St Michael's. I am very much looking forward to being with you and learning from you.

Pippa Soundy, our new part-time curate, introduces herself

Hello, I'm Pippa Soundy, delighted to be joining St Michael's as a part-time curate on July 4.

I'm supported financially and in every other way by my husband Andrew, who works in financial services. Andrew is an active Christian and for now will continue his own ministry in work and in Great Kingshill, where we've lived for the past 22 years. We have three children - two grown-up daughters and a son who's nearly 15.

I was born and brought up in Amersham and met Andrew playing in the Challoner's joint school orchestra a very long

time ago! I love music and have taught (mainly piano) for many years, although my first career was with BP in the City. As a child I was taken to Sunday School (at Amersham Free Church) but left church as a teenager, feeling the need to 'discover God for myself'. The person of Jesus came into clear focus for me during my time as an undergraduate at Oxford and I have been trying to follow His Way ever since. As a student, I was confirmed in the Church of England but have since spent over 20 years in independent churches, before being called to join the parish community in Holmer Green about 8 years ago. Here I began to discern a calling to public ministry and

Our next issue . . .

As usual there will be no August issue. Our September issue will appear on **Sunday August 29**. Please get your contributions to us by Sunday August 15.



DIARY

July/August 2010

**St Michael and All Angels
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Regular Weekly Activities		
Sundays	8 am	Said Eucharist
	10 am	Sung Eucharist
Mondays	8.30 – 8.55 am	Morning Prayer. Lady Chapel.
Tuesdays	8.30 – 8.55 am	Morning Prayer. Lady Chapel.
	10.30 am	Said Eucharist. Lady Chapel
Wednesdays	8.30 – 8.55 am	Morning Prayer. Lady Chapel.
	7.00 – 8.15 pm	Choir Practice
Thursdays	8.30 – 8.55 am	Morning Prayer. Lady Chapel.
Fridays	8.30 – 8.55 am	Morning Prayer. Lady Chapel
Saturdays	8.30 – 8.55 am	Morning Prayer. Lady Chapel.
Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays.	10 am – 12 noon.	Wheeler Coffee Pot. Wheeler Room.
<i>The Church is usually open each morning from 8 am for anyone who wishes to meditate or spend time in quiet.</i>		
Other Activities in July		
Saturday	July 3	<i>Saturday Slot.</i> Lady Chapel. 3 pm
Sunday	July 4	5th Sunday after Trinity
		Praise Plus contemporary service. Free Church. 5.30 pm
Tuesday	July 6	LUNCH BREAK. Where to find God. Free Church 1.10 pm
Wednesday	July 7	<i>Praise & Play.</i> Lady Chapel. 10.30 am
		Extended Quiet Healing. Lady Chapel. 4 pm – 6 pm.
Saturday	July 10	Amersham Carnival.
Sunday	July 11	6th Sunday after Trinity. 2gether.
		Communion Service. Free Church. 6 pm.
Tuesday	July 13	Healing offered at 10.30 am service.
		LUNCH BREAK. Violin Recital. Free Church. 1.10 pm
Wednesday	July 14	<i>Praise & Play Plus.</i> Lady Chapel. 3.45 pm
Friday	July 16	Tuesday Club outing to Anglesey Abbey
Saturday	July 17	BRIC-A-BRAC SALE. Forecourt. 9.30 am – 12.30 pm.
Sunday	July 18	7 th Sunday after Trinity.
Monday	July 19	Not One for Lunch. Lady Chapel. 12.45 pm
Tuesday	July 20	<i>Praise & Play.</i> Lady Chapel. 10.30 am
Sunday	July 25	8th Sunday after Trinity.
Tuesday	July 27	LUNCH BREAK. 20 minute worship. Free Church. 1.10 pm
Other activities in August		
Sunday	Aug 1	9th Sunday after Trinity Summer Party. John Payne's. 12.30 pm
		Week of Accompanied Prayer (to August 7)
Tuesday	Aug 3	LUNCH BREAK. Multi sensory prayer. Free Church. 1.10 pm
Saturday	Aug 7	<i>Saturday Slot.</i> Lady Chapel. 3 pm
Sunday	Aug 8	10th Sunday after Trinity
Tuesday	Aug 10	LUNCH BREAK. Ken Prideaux-Brune Poetry Reading. AFC. 1.10 pm
Sunday	Aug 15	11th Sunday after Trinity
Tuesday	Aug 17	LUNCH BREAK. Chorleywood Trio. Free Church. 1.10 pm
Sunday	Aug 22	12th Sunday after Trinity. Summer Party. Baker's. 12.30 pm
Tuesday	Aug 24	LUNCH BREAK. Alan Kirkcaldy. Happy Families? AFC. 1.10 pm
Sunday	Aug 29	13th Sunday after Trinity.
Tuesday	Aug 31	LUNCH BREAK. Andrew Busby. Organ Recital. Free Church. 1.10 pm