



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

Newsletter

May 2010

'Cop Card' Visit to St Michael's

On Monday March 29 Year 6 from Woodside School visited St Michael's as part of the Cop Cards initiative. While there they completed a questionnaire (compiled by Alison Woodnutt) and looked around the church to help them find the answers. Cop Cards - an abbreviation for 'Community and Police Cards' - is a scheme run by the local police for year 6 (top of primary) which aims to encourage children to be safe, get involved in community activities, care for their local area and engage with their neighbourhood policing team. They collect stickers and for their visit to St Michael's they earned a "faith" sticker. After the visit all the children wrote thank you letters saying that they were pleased we allowed them to look around, rather

than making them sit and talking to them; many liked the Lady Chapel and some said that they would like to return. Their teacher said: "The children talked about it all the way back to school. They loved doing the quiz and the fact that you were allowed to go around the church and ask people questions."

The scheme runs until June 30 and we would love it if other children were to do the questionnaire by themselves (Alison stumbled across a couple doing just that) - copies are available in the Narthex (the entrance lobby).

As we engage with school children at events like this, or at assemblies, it is obvious that some of them have no idea of the Christian story and our contact



helps start addressing this in a small way. It also means that we become a 'known face' for future contact.

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.



**Christian Aid
Week
May 9 – 15**

You will find full details of all local Christian Aid Week events, including the Craft Fair at St Michael's and soup lunches at the Friends' Meeting House, on Page 5



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REFLECTION

It's all about risk

As I began to think about this month's reflection the sky was criss-crossed with vapour trails for the first time in the six days following the fall-out of ash from of the Eyjafjallajokull volcano. The radio was reporting the plight of Kenyan flower growers who were losing two million dollars a day as a result of the cancellation of flights over the UK. The television in the living room showed images of children from a school in Hackney on board HMS Albion alongside troops returning to Portsmouth from Afghanistan.

All this caused me to reflect on the importance of risk in our lives. While recognizing the difficult decisions that had to be made quickly by those who felt responsible for air passengers, I am nevertheless saddened that our society is becoming more and more risk averse. Regulations and bureaucracy attempt to cover every eventuality that things might go wrong or somebody might get sued. And so, a nurse is not allowed to wear a cross on a chain at work in case a patient pulls on it and strangles her. Communicants have to be told how they are allowed to receive wine from the chalice to minimize the risk of getting swine flu. Teachers and pupils are no longer free to follow their preferred leaning styles and allow their individuality and creativity to make education exciting and memorable. Instead the whole process becomes evidence-based so that boxes can be ticked and nobody should be held accountable for not having delivered the "deliverables".

I was reminded that, as a child, I learned and thrived through taking risks. Somehow I had understood, through my parents' guidance and a culture where trust was more evident, the difference between foolhardy risk-taking and the freedom to explore and experiment. It was the resourcefulness and risk-taking of the teachers who travelled with the children on HMS Albion that will have made that journey something they will never forget.

Christianity is all about risk: Mary's risky "yes" to Gabriel; Moses' willingness to embark on a journey of faith trusting in God's guidance while at the same time saying, 'Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?'

It is risky embarking into the unknown but we do so under the care of a God who allows us the freedom to try new things, to make mistakes and ultimately to discover that in the risk-taking we find our true selves - the very people God calls us to be.

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.

Will you say 'Yes' to a new experience?

Churches on the Hill, Amersham (COTHA) is organising a Week of Accompanied Prayer, August 1 – 7. Liz Waumsley, secretary to COTHA, encourages us to take part in an experience which can, she suggests, “enable the Spirit to work in and through our lives”.

Many who took part in the Week of Accompanied Prayer organised by the local group of Churches Together in November/December 2001, as well as many who were unable to then, hoped that another such week could be arranged. Since then, a group of Prayer Companions, including ministers, spiritual directors and members of religious orders among others, have gained training and experience in leading these events and go where they are invited by churches or groups of churches. Churches-on-the-Hill is planning a Week of Accompanied Prayer for August 1 - 7, and has invited Marguerite Kuhn, who was a Companion for us in 2001, to co-ordinate this. She talked at morning worship on April 18 at

both St Michael's (8 am and 10 am) and St John's (11 am), at coffee time afterwards at St John's, and at morning worship at Amersham Free Church on April 25 about how these weeks work, and there will be a 'taster session' on May 23. This will give us a chance to see what might be involved, by watching role play and having questions answered.

There are leaflets available with more details, but, briefly, participants undertake to spend half an hour a day on their own, in prayer and meditation, and to meet daily the Prayer Companion with whom they are partnered.

Of course, it is impossible to know for sure what it would be like for you. Perhaps it is in the



saying 'yes' to new experience that we give the Spirit a chance to work in and through our lives. It will not really be about teaching you how to pray, and neither will it be about praying together. I found when I worked with my lovely Prayer Companion in 2001 that she was able to clear a space through which the grace of God could reach me. I was going through difficult times following bereavement, and her compassion and understanding helped me, with the aid of a scripture passage which she suggested and the image of a well of spiritually thirst-quenching water, towards renewed life.

Comments made by some of those who took part in 2001 include: “very affirming and reassuring”; “more than I expected or hoped for”; “meetings served as a springboard to private prayer and meditation later” and “my Companion took me down roads I didn't know existed”.

We chose August because it's a month which for many people means doing different things, and seeking recreation and renewal.

Hazel Miller and Jamie Haley from St Michael's, Ann Cloke from St John's and Hazel Richardson and I from Amersham Free Church will be delighted to talk to anyone who wants to know more.

Pentecost as an experience of the here and now

The Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit is not an ancient tale about an anthropomorphic being nor a story of certain things that happened on the hills of Galilee or in the city of Jerusalem but a living, practical, constantly repeated experience of the here and now. Such a belief is deep-seated in our own inheritance in England; our poets are full of it; age to age has had this sense of the miracle of the presence of the Lord breaking out from every common bush. 'Lift the stone and I am here', in the handiwork of men laying a gas main as much as in the handiwork of men who built King's Chapel. It was in every common thing that Jesus found and revealed the Spirit of God and his parables differ from those of almost every other religious teacher in that they deal with the everyday and the normal. We have been looking for God in the earthquake, in the storm, in the miracle; let us look for him in the loaf of bread, the cup of wine. The fullness of the love of God is to be found in the simplest things of everyday and we cannot escape from the presence of God.

Charles Raven

Making Space for God

Parish Retreat October 8 to 10

God's love is always pressing in on us, but so often we feel distant from Him. How can it be? God's love continues to flow, but we block it off with our worries, concerns, and busy-ness. These may be deep like bereavement or redundancy, or may be a family upset, or may be anything that distracts us so that our response to God takes a back seat. If only we could make space to allow God's love to keep flowing in. Our inner life might flourish in a new way and our worries might come

into perspective.

That is what this Retreat is about - making room for God to love us and to deepen our inner life; to draw closer to Him, by recognising his presence within us and beside us, now and at all times. But will we make the space for Him or will we block Him out?

The Retreat will be led by Mrs Alison Hassall who is a Licensed Lay Minister who has a wide ministry in the

area of spiritual direction, including leading retreats.. It will be held at the Carmelite Priory, Boars Hill, Oxford, which has recently been refurbished. The Chapel, Dining Room, Conference Room and most of the bedrooms are on the ground floor with no steps. Carmelite Friars, who meet separately for worship, pray and minister in the spirit and tradition of St Teresa of Avila and St John of the Cross. The theme for our Retreat fits perfectly and so it should prove a helpful place.

The programme will begin with supper on Friday October 8 at 6.30 pm and end after lunch on Sunday October 11. There will be five or six sessions led by Alison, two Eucharists, times for reflection, and Compline each evening. There will be a free afternoon on Saturday. Tea and coffee will be available during breaks. The Retreat will be silent from Friday after Compline until lunch on Sunday, although there will be a place for those who need to speak.

The cost is £90 per person or £70 if people are prepared to share a room. This includes all meals and refreshments. If you would like to make a preliminary booking, please contact Hew Motion either at church or on 766243. Booking forms attached to a letter are available in the Narthex.

Our persecuted Church family in IRAQ



Since 2003 persecution of Christians has increased. Other minority faith groups are also being targeted, such as Jews (of whom only 8 remain in Iraq), Mandeans (followers of John the Baptist) and Yasidi (who trace their faith back to Noah). With Christians, all of these were part of the culture in Iraq for hundreds of years before Islam came into being, but are now being forced out by targeted attacks in people's homes, churches and as they attempt to flee Baghdad and Mosul, where the greatest persecution is happening. In one week recently 4000 Christians left Mosul because of the attacks. Al Q'aida has promised Iraq a 100% Islamic state, therefore eradication of non-Muslims is seen as desirable.

PRAY for the Rev Andrew White, 'Vicar of Baghdad' (who has MS), and national church leaders as they seek to maintain witness and worship in this turbulent country.

There has been a continuous Christian presence here since the 1st century, still worshipping in Aramaic – the language Jesus spoke. May those who love Him continue to be His spokesmen in this Biblical land. Pray that the Iraqi government, police and armed forces will be enabled to make and maintain peace, and to welcome and ensure the rights of all faith groups to follow their religion without harassment or persecution.

The Good Earth

An Exhibition of the work of local artists (including Brian Hall).

Christ Church

Waterside, Chesham

Friday April 30 7.30–9.30 pm

Saturday May 1 and

Sunday May 2 11 am–5 pm

FREE ENTRY

We welcome in Baptism
Scarlett Elizabeth Mardle
We give thanks for the life of
Mary Stocks

Living Faith

Alison Woodnutt explains how she sustains her 'sacred centre'.

We learned from Diana's April 'Reflection' that music brings her close to God. I find the Bishop's paraphrase for 'Sustaining the Sacred Centre' ie:-'Enabling people to deepen their enjoyment of God and to recognise God's presence in everyday life' a helpful one. I found inspiration, challenge and delight in reading authors like C.S Lewis and John Robinson (in the 60s) J.V. Taylor and Martin Israel (in the 70s and 80s) and more recently Rowan Williams, James Alison, Keith Ward, Timothy Radcliffe and Karen Armstrong. Here are just two 'Eureka' moments from some recent reading.

1) Karen Armstrong points out in *The Case For God* that until the 17th century 'belief' meant 'loyalty, trust and commitment'. 'Credo' originally meant 'I give my heart to---'. What an enormous

relief it is to realise that 'I believe' did not (does not?) mean having to assent to a large number of intractable intellectual ideas, but suggests **commitment** in faith and trust to the God who became human so that we could become divine.

2) In *Why Go To Church* Timothy Radcliffe points out that '*some Christians hold theories of the atonement that do seem bloodthirsty*'. Following the work of Rene Girard and James Alison he suggests '*another way of seeing the sacrifice of Jesus - as a liberation from violence rather than its perpetuation. It was not God who demanded a victim - we did.*' For years I have struggled with the idea of a wrathful God demanding vengeance for human sin through the death of his son. These writers suggest that we



can see the sacrifice of Jesus as '*a liberation from violence rather than its perpetuation*'- another gleam of light on my path.

I look forward to the forthcoming interviews. There is no one right way of sustaining our sacred centre - we are all wonderfully different!

We invite others to write about the different ways in which they sustain their sacred centre. Your contributions will be warmly welcomed



Christian Aid Week

May 9 - 15

Saturday May 8	10.30 am - 12 noon	Coffee morning at the Methodist Church, Old Amersham. Bring-and-buy sale
Sunday May 9	8 am and 10 am	Focus on Christian Aid at St Michael's services
May 9 - 15		House to house collection for Christian Aid
Monday May 10 - Friday May 14		Soup lunches - Friends' Meeting House, Whielden Street, Old Amersham
Saturday May 15	9.45 am - 3 pm	Craft Fair at St Michael's. Donations of plants, gifts, nearly new items or books can be brought to Church Friday evening 7 pm - 8 pm or Saturday am.



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DIARY

May 2010

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.

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

Other Activities in May

Saturday	May	1	<i>Saturday Slot.</i> 3 pm
Sunday	May	2	5th Sunday of Easter
Tuesday	May	4	Tuesday Club. Wildlife Films, followed by pub lunch. LUNCH BREAK. Life as a Hospital Chaplain. Free Church. 1.10 pm
Wednesday	May	5	<i>Praise & Play.</i> Lady Chapel. 10.30 am Healing & Wholeness. Lady Chapel. 4 pm – 6 pm
Sunday	May	9	6th Sunday of Easter. 2gether. Communion Service. Free Church. 6 pm
Tuesday	May	11	LUNCH BREAK. Hymns and Songs Free Church. 1.10 pm
Wednesday	May	12	Tuesday Club theatre outing. Depart 12.45 pm <i>Praise & Play Plus.</i> Lady Chapel. 3.45 pm
Thursday	May	13	ASCENSION DAY. Eucharist Lady Chapel 10.30 am and 8 pm.
Saturday	May	15	CHRISTIAN AID FAIR
Sunday	May	16	7th Sunday of Easter
Monday	May	17	Not One for Lunch. Lady Chapel. 12.45 pm
Tuesday	May	18	LUNCH BREAK Opening up the Bible. Free Church. 1.10 pm
Wednesday	May	19	<i>Praise & Play.</i> Lady Chapel. 10.30 am
Saturday	May	22	'Amersham in Transition'. Forecourt. 9 am – 12 noon
Sunday	May	23	PENTECOST. Healing will be offered at 8 am Junior Drama Group – dance workshop. Hall. 2.30 pm Week of Accompanied Prayer, Taster session May 23rd 3 pm - 4.30pm – Wesley Room, St. John's
Tuesday	May	25	LUNCH BREAK. Sue McCoan–My Swan Song, Free Church. 1.10 pm
Wednesday	May	26	<i>Praise & Play Plus.</i> Lady Chapel. 3.45 pm
Sunday	May	30	TRINITY SUNDAY.

Our next issue . . .

Our next issue will appear on **Sunday May 30**. . Please get your contributions to us by Sunday May 16.