



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

# Newsletter

**November 2010**

## The Gospel According to Philip Pullman

### Reports on the autumn Bible Study course.

I knew next to nothing about Philip Pullman, except what I had read in newspapers. So I wasn't sure what to expect of Alison's latest course. When I read the handout for the first session, I found that I was having a lot of sympathy for Philip Pullman's re-interpretation of New Testament stories that I find difficult. For example, in the story of Jesus visiting Mary and Martha, I have always felt that Martha's point of view was dismissed by Jesus as being unimportant. However, in Philip Pullman's story, Jesus agrees that Mary should help Martha, there being other opportunities to hear Jesus' words, but once bread is burnt, no-one can eat it.

Discussion during the sessions

brought out a lot of honesty in expressing doubts and the difficulty of accepting some of the stories in the New Testament. Once someone has been brave enough to express these doubts, perhaps thinking that they are alone in this, it leads to others agreeing that they feel the same.

Alison's extensive knowledge of how the Bible was written and translated, together with her ability to retrieve quotations from her wide reading help us, if not to have answers to all our questions, at least to realise that asking the right questions leads us to greater understanding, and that is what Philip Pullman is encouraging us to do.

**Margaret Everett**

The Bible passages in the fourth session describe some 'God-given' births in the Old and New Testaments. Some of these stories predate Moses, the first historical OT figure, but many of them form a historical record as do the Gospels which are in no way a complete biography of the life of Jesus. History, we agreed, is *continuous methodical record of public events*. However history is always inevitably subjective; can there ever be objective history? Henry Ford famously said "History is Bunk" but no doubt slightly tongue in cheek! I suggested one famous example of subjective history is Winston Churchill who said, "History will be kind to me because I intend to write it"!

The stories of 'God-given births' in the Old Testament – ie those of Isaac, Esau and Jacob and Joseph all tell of women who were barren and/or too old to bear a child until God answered their prayers and they produced sons. Elizabeth too, in St Luke's story, was barren until God granted to her and Zechariah the gift of a son John (the Baptist). The climax to these stories is that of Jesus, born to Mary before her marriage to Joseph, by the overshadowing of the power of the Holy Spirit. There was much discussion about what might have happened historically but the truth enshrined in the story for Christian believers is that Jesus was 'filled with God' in a new and dynamic way. The story reflects what Christians have come to believe about Jesus – the 'truth' of faith. The connection between history and truth is a challenging one to explore further.

**David Beattie**

#### Worship – Sundays

8 am **Said Eucharist**  
10 am **Sung Eucharist** (*Coffee afterwards*)  
'2gether' (with crèche) 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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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**Alan Crawley**

**REFLECTION**

## It's OK to disagree

I am writing this soon after finding out that I wasn't elected to General Synod. However, as a candidate, and having spoken to other electors who have read manifestos and attended hustings, one of the things that surprised me was that it was often quite difficult to determine what candidates believed! The Bishop of Buckingham described the hustings as "Extreme Being Nice".

In the time that I have been at St Michael's one of the things that has struck me is that it is a church which is not afraid to disagree with itself. This is something to be welcomed in my view, but something which few churches manage. If we suppress our legitimate views for fear of upsetting someone else, or for fear of being rejected ourselves, we are not living in the light of Christ, but in darkness.

This ability to hold such a wide range of views about everything is one of the things that I value in the Church of England. One of the reasons that I stood for General Synod is that I wanted us to continue to believe different things and to accept that **this is alright**; to acknowledge that, as Max Warren wrote, "It takes a whole world to know the whole Christ" and to worship together, rather than splitting into smaller and smaller groups who think they know the truth and that the others are wrong, as has happened with some Protestant denominations. Of course, we might be wrong!

At one of the hustings someone quoted John Fenton along the lines of: If you draw a circle to separate those inside the church from those outside of it you will find Jesus on the outside. To which I say Amen. May we continue disagreeing with each other whilst being our true selves and worshipping together.

### 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.*

## Room for Everyone

*Question: "Archbishop, but is it Anglican?"  
Rowan Williams: "Let's wait and see".*

**Alan Crawley reports on a Diocesan Conference attended by five members of St Michael's on the theme of 'Fresh Expressions' – new ways of being church.**

The main speaker through the day was Bishop Graham Cray who is the Team Leader of Fresh Expressions and Archbishops' Missioner, working directly for Rowan Williams. He began by putting into context what "Fresh Expressions" are: "a fresh expression is a form of church for our changing culture, established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any church".

He recognised that there are three forms of reaching out to others:

- "come" - Here we are, come and join us
- "go and then come" - Meet people where they are and bring them into our

congregations

- "go and then stay" - Meet people where they are and stay there to worship with them in their way.

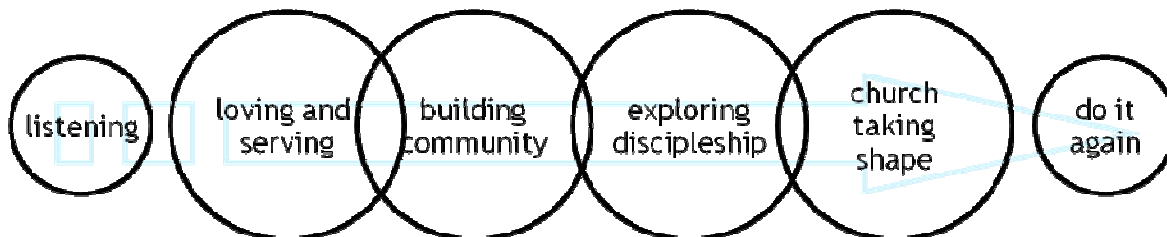
This leads to two forms of church, the inherited and the new (which may encompass many different forms), which Rowan Williams has welcomed and dubbed the "mixed economy".

Many people at the conference found that others in their churches wanted to bring people into existing congregations, rather than starting new ones. However, Graham Cray pointed out that any church that has an 8.00 congregation has already

accepted that people worship in different ways, and that having worship which is tolerated by everyone and cherished by no-one is not a good way forwards. He suggested that having different worship to address people's different contexts made sense and tackled concerns that this might lead to a lack of community by suggesting we should do other things together, and specifically mentioned parties and social action (this approach is also advocated by Steve Hollinghurst of the Church Army, who some will have heard at Deanery Synod).

When talking about "Fresh Expressions" he gave a pattern to follow (see diagram below). The first step is to listen. We were told that the listening process can take a long time - an example where it took a year was quoted.

*We are now discussing what the next step is for St Michael's.*



**Cards for Good Causes**  
At St Michael's  
**November 3 – December 16**  
**10 pm – 4 pm**  
**Monday – Saturday.**

Yes, Cards for Good Causes will be back at St Michael's again this year. This is your chance to get all of your Christmas cards in comfort - and to support the charity of your choice at the same time.

**Supper Quiz**  
**in aid of**  
**Workaid**

Tickets £8, including hot supper (bring your own soft drink) from Helen George 07703 568159.

**St John's**  
**Saturday November 13**  
**7 pm for 7.30 pm**



## Restoring Faith In Democracy



Just before the General Election last May, Churches-on-the-Hill decided to investigate joining the MP Accountability Network, which particularly seeks to restore faith in democracy by ensuring that the MPs we elect take account of the real issues that affect ordinary people.

The network would support us in setting up ways to engage with our MP, perhaps meeting with her about three times a year. This would enable us to keep issues like social justice and eliminating poverty firmly on the agenda. I think you would agree that these issues have

become more, rather than less, urgent since the General Election. Is there someone who would like to take on the job of being our MP Accountability Representative? It could be a really interesting job, and it is high time we all re-engaged with politics. To find out more, Google MP Accountability Network. **Please contact me if you might be interested in being a local churches representative:** [liz@waumsley.co.uk](mailto:liz@waumsley.co.uk)

**Liz Waumsley,**  
*Secretary to Churches-on-the-Hill, Amersham*

## God Beyond Church

Jo Harrington reports on Sheila Cassidy's Millennium Lecture

Dr Sheila Cassidy spoke autobiographically to show us "God beyond church." She told of the two kinds of vocation which seem to have followed her throughout life. The call to serve God through joining a religious community was paralleled by a call to practise medicine. After attacks of 'vocationitis' while studying at Oxford, she eventually went to Chile, following her Marxist atheist friend who had made her aware of injustice and poverty in the Third World.

There Sheila encountered "priests of the poor", "the church that lived by the Gospel," hiding people on the run, and opponents of Pinochet's coup. Arrested for treating a dying young freedom fighter, Sheila suffered electric torture to betray information. Yet it was after this being "torn up" and yet "put back together again" that she realised her vocation was to follow Isaiah in saying to God, "Do whatever you like with me."

Back in the UK, working in a cancer ward, Dr Cassidy found

that she had a real gift with people who were very frightened. Running St. Luke's Hospice and later working at Derriford Hospital, Plymouth, she developed several care projects and learnt the importance of loving and talking to patients as human beings. They became "more like family than anything." Since retirement, she now practises as a psychotherapist.

Answering questions, Sheila Cassidy spoke more openly about "God beyond church." Church-going "doesn't do a lot for me". For her, God is immanent, transcendent, El Shaddai (the Almighty), love and unknowingness. "I know that God is.....I have a bowing down on the floor relationship with the divine." Prayer, with or without words, is "enormously important because it is the basis of our relationship with God". She summed up her thoughts in a favourite hymn: "Will you let me be your servant in the night time of your fear..?"

## All Hands Needed

Buildings Committee are holding a Working Party on the morning of Saturday November 6 from 9.30 am, starting in the hall. Weather permitting there is gardening and several outside jobs to be done as well as the usual extra cleaning tasks in Church and Hall. Please contact Martin Elliston (726016) or Maureen Meeks (433820) if you are able to come.

## Film Club

The new St Michael's Film Club shows an exciting range of films on the 4<sup>th</sup> Friday of every month. At 1 pm in the Wheeler Room. Refreshments offered following the film. See the Diary page for details of the film to be shown each month.

## Extended Quiet Healing will start earlier

Please note that from **December** until further notice the sessions of extended, quiet healing on the first Wednesday of each month will start and finish an hour earlier. As the evenings draw in the sessions will start at **3 pm** and end at **5 pm**. For most of those attending it is felt that this will be more convenient.

There's no need to make an appointment. Just turn up.

## Now 3 pm – 5 pm

**We rejoice in the Blessing of the Marriage of Paul and Kate Testa**

**We give thanks for the life of David Muncaster.**



Where is my sacred space—what a difficult question to answer; for me it depends on how I am feeling, am I alone or with family or friends and what am I doing?

Brian Griffiths said we all needed time and space every day to commune with God; it did not matter where we were.

So where do I begin, at St. Michael's in the sanctuary serving or in the Lady Chapel having a quiet moment, sitting at my computer typing out notes for a Festival Service? In a garden -and I visit many? Lots have an area that has a special feel to it and you appreciate God's amazing creativity. Looking at photos I have taken, again marvelling at creation? What about my workshop/garage where I attempt to make or repair things? I have over the years repaired and made things for St. Michael's (I still bear the scar from one thing I made)? It has been a privilege to make things and see some of them still in church. Sharing time with relations or friends - both support me, especially when I am in a low state? Listening to music? I am no music buff but I enjoy listening, mainly to classical. I got great joy from seeing Barbara's face light up as she listened to a particular piece.

## Sustaining our Sacred Centre

This month's article in our series on the very different ways in which people sustain their sacred centre is written by Michael Darvill

In 1956, while doing my national service as a member of the Dental Corps, I was posted to Libya. With others I landed up at an RAF camp in the desert. Before going to bed I went for a walk. Just outside the camp was a military cemetery. The crosses seemed never ending and reading the ages of those who had died I realised most were of my age. On Remembrance Day in 1957 I had the honour of being in the Remembrance parade at the war memorial in Benghazi. Both these events have had a lasting effect on me. I do not understand why we don't learn to live in Peace, Love and Understanding. I have for many years had the privilege of reading the famous lines from Lawrence Binyon's "For The Fallen" on Remembrance Sunday.

So which place should I choose! As I said it depends on so many things. As long as I can pray and know God is with me I am content.

### Our Persecuted Church Family

Lack of space means that this article has been held over. The final article in this series will appear next month.

## Free Church Open Day

Saturday December 4

If you have been wondering what's been going on behind the scaffolding and the hoardings at the Free Church here is your chance to find out. The newly refurbished hall and kitchen will be proudly on display.

There'll be a service of dedication at 10 am and the premises will be open to view from 11 am to 3 pm.

## Second Half Living

A course for those aged 50 – 70-ish on four Wednesday evenings, November 3, 10, 17 and 24. These evenings will be a chance to explore the challenges and opportunities that mark these years. The course will take place at Holy Trinity, Penn, church hall from 7.30 pm – 9.30 pm

Please register by contacting **Derrick Carr Area Dean on 05602 158514 or by e-mail [carrd@btopenworld.com](mailto:carrd@btopenworld.com)**

## Advent Reflections

A spacious time of reflective music, images and words to mark the start of this Advent Season of watching and waiting. Step aside from busyness to draw on the deep peace of this gentle worship, and to be resourced and refreshed on the journey towards Christmas.

*Refreshments to follow for those able to stay.*

**Sunday November 28  
Lady Chapel  
6 pm – 6.45 pm**



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## DIARY

**November 2010**

### Regular Weekly Activities

<b>Sundays</b>	<b>8 am</b>	<b>Said Eucharist</b>
	<b>10 am</b>	<b>Sung Eucharist</b>
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 November

Tuesday	Nov	2	LUNCH BREAK Operation Christmas Child. Free Church. 1.10 pm
Wednesday	Nov	3	<i>Praise &amp; Play</i> , Lady Chapel. 10 30 am Cards for Good Causes 10 am – 4 pm (To Dec 16) Extended Quiet Healing. Lady Chapel. 4 pm – 6 pm
Saturday	Nov	6	<b>Saturday Slot. Remembering Baptism.</b> Lady Chapel. 3 pm
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Nov</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday before Advent. Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church</b>
Tuesday	Nov	9	LUNCH BREAK. Happy Families? Free Church. 1.10 pm
Wednesday	Nov	10	<i>Praise &amp; Play Plus</i> . Lady Chapel. 3.45 pm
Thursday	Nov	11	Armistice Day. Service with Last Post on the Forecourt. 11 am.
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Nov</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>Remembrance Sunday. 2gether (with crèche)</b> <b>Ceremony at Chesham Bois War Memorial. 12 noon.</b> Communion. Free Church. 6 pm
Monday	Nov	15	Not One for Lunch. Lady Chapel. 12.45 pm
Tuesday	Nov	16	LUNCH BREAK. Let the Children Sing. Free Church. 1.10 pm
Wednesday	Nov	17	<i>Praise &amp; Play</i> , Lady Chapel. 10 30 am Churches Together AGM. Old Town Methodist Church. 7.40 for 8 pm
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Nov</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>Christ the King. Revd Erna Stevenson to preside and preach. 10am</b> <b>Junior Drama Group. Christmas Party. Hall. 2.30 pm</b>
Tuesday	Nov	23	Healing offered at 10.30 am service LUNCH BREAK. Coming to Faith. Free Church. 1.10 pm
Wednesday	Nov	24	<i>Praise &amp; Play Plus</i> . Lady Chapel. 3.45 pm
Friday	Nov	26	Film Club, <i>My Big Fat Greek Wedding</i> . Wheeler Room. 1 pm
Saturday	Nov	27	Christian Aid Christmas Fair
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Nov</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>Advent Sunday</b> <b>Advent Reflections. Lady Chapel. 6 – 6.45 pm. Refreshments.</b>
Tuesday	Nov	30	LUNCH BREAK. Songs for St Andrew's Day. Free Church. 1.10 pm

### Our next issue . . .

Our next issue will appear on **Sunday November 28**. Please get your contributions to us by Sunday November 14. Please note that, as usual, there will be no January issue.