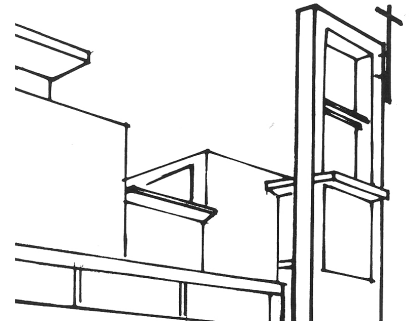


The Octagon



BAR HILL CHURCH NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 337: MAY 2010

Ambassadors for Christ

So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us. (2 Cor. 5.20).

At our dawn service on Easter morning, John Yule spoke about Jesus' disciple Peter. He talked about Peter's accent. He was from Galilee and his accent sounded very different from that of the people in Jerusalem, so when the disciples went with Jesus to Jerusalem, their accent was one of the things that made them stand out. During the Passion narrative Luke records Peter's actions after the arrest of Jesus. *'So they seized [Jesus] and led him away, bringing him into the High Priest's house. But Peter was following at a distance.'* (Luke 22. 54).

Luke records that Peter's accent was an issue as he waited outside the High Priest's house. He was repeatedly challenged by those sitting around a fire in the courtyard. A servant girl stared at him and recognised him as being one of Jesus' companions. Two others insisted that he was a follower of Jesus because he had a Galilean accent. In his sermon John challenged us as to our accent: are we those who others can recognise as followers of Jesus from our demeanour and from the way we speak and act?

As I have been pondering his words over the last week, the Scripture verse that has been consistently coming to my mind has been the one quoted at the top of this article. I believe that this is Paul's exploration of the same challenge. Paul is examining the reality of what it means to live out life as a Christian in a world where your voice and actions might be very foreign and unfamiliar. And in fact where your voice and actions might

make you stand out as an alien or threatening presence, where being a follower of Jesus might get you into trouble.

I think that we are ambassadors for Christ in two senses. We are to be models of Christ to the world. When people see us, they are to see Jesus reflected back at them. The Holy Spirit transforms us so that through our lives others have access to the living God. This is an extraordinary privilege but it is also quite terrifying as people will judge God by the way we think and act if we call ourselves a Christian. The second sense in which we are ambassadors is that we are responsible for conveying God's message to the world. The ambassador of a country speaks not just with his or her own voice but with the voice of the government that they represent.

Paul takes up this theme in his letter to the Romans. *"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.: But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him?"* (Romans 10.13-14)

Over the next term I will be exploring these two aspects of our great commission as ambassadors for Christ. What does it mean to be a 21st century ambassador: speaking with Jesus' accent and bearing his message to those around us in ways that enable them to receive it with joy and as good news, promising liberation, freedom and fullness of life? Of course, as for Peter and Paul, such a life is not without risk.

Rev'd Ruth Adams

As servants of Christ we commit ourselves to worship, work and witness together in his name to establish his kingdom in our village and beyond"

Holiday at Home April 2010

After weeks of planning our "Holiday at Home" has come and gone. It feels a bit flat now like a longed for and happy holiday has come to an end. So now the reflection of the happy memories are of happy people enjoying a different holiday, all of the fun and none of the hassle. So many people spoke of being loved and cared for and being made to feel special. It was exciting to see the folks trying something new and achieving success and ready to show the results to their families.

The week was of course, the tip of the iceberg, the bulk of which was unseen in terms of preparation, planning, meetings, checking and praying for the right outcome to be achieved. The week consisted of so many elements: guests, crew, food, activities, entertainment, decorating and creating the right atmosphere. So many people have been involved.

The crew, although a little smaller this year, worked like trojans. Each person undertook a piece of the week, such as running a craft table, working in the kitchen, supervising the games, to make the whole thing a success. The work in the kitchen was arduous and unrelenting with between 75 and 97 people to feed each day. And how well-fed we were, with fresh home made food coming out of the kitchen continuously.

The activities were a mix of some new and some familiar ones. Flower arranging and jewellery making are always among the favourites with some clamouring to find a seat at these activities. We also tried clock making, bag decoration and fan decoration. This year we have managed to buy our own Carpet Bowls which we hope anyone will feel welcome to use anytime. I can see some good social events occurring around this.

It felt as if the whole church was with us this year and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the congregation for their many contributions of cakes and puddings, loaning equipment, and covering the event with prayer. Thank you very much to you all.

I can't thank the crew enough for their hard work with such good grace and a smile. We are looking forward to meeting again soon to evaluate the week and also to have a shared supper. I expect there will already be a degree of planning for next year's Holiday at Home. We will try to plan events for the rest of the year so that we get to meet again as crew and guests to enjoy one another's company. More news of this as the weeks go by.

So a huge thank you to everyone involved, and thank you for being willing to support this work which gives so much pleasure to our older friends and in the process builds us up as a church community. Please continue to pray for our work with the senior citizens of our community.

Sue Kenchington

Poverty: Let's End It

In Christian Aid Week, which begins on 9 May, we go into our village to encourage everyone who lives here to help those in need. More than fifty people take part in the house-to-house collection each year, and they do that on behalf of us all. Some of them have been collectors for twenty years or more; others are new this year.

If you are not collecting yourself, do pray for those who are – theirs is not always an easy task. And please support the cause by giving a realistic amount yourself to help those whose standard of living is greatly below our own.

If you live outside the village you may not have a collection in your area. Do join in our effort. Please take a Christian Aid envelope from church (there will be some by the offertory plate) and return it by the end of May.

Save a life (or two) for £5.

Recipe for disaster:

Take one hospitable climate, preferably Africa.

Add a generous dose of poverty.

Apply one mosquito bite, incubate for 9-14 days and wait for the result.

The horrifying result is that a million people die from malaria every year;

that's three thousand deaths every day,

and includes a child every 30 seconds;

horrifying because it is entirely preventable.

In addition to the loss of life, the economic and social impacts are also devastating: sick children miss school, adults already on the bread line cannot work, companies won't operate in vulnerable areas, tourism suffers and foreign investment is stifled – all further increasing poverty. Annual economic loss in Africa due to malaria is estimated to be £8 billion, representing a crippling 1.3 percent annual loss in GDP growth in affected countries.

But there is good news:

Malaria No More UK is part of a global effort to put an end to the suffering and death caused by malaria. Their aims are:

- to ensure every person at risk of malaria in Africa has access to a mosquito net by the end of 2010.

- to put an end to malaria deaths completely by 2015.

It sounds ambitious but it can be done! For example, Ethiopia and Rwanda have already cut deaths from malaria by over 50% by the simple measure of bed nets. Volunteers are recruited and trained as malaria experts in their local community to educate people about using bed nets. These not only protect the 2 sleepers but insecticide on the nets also kills the mosquitos!

A £5 donation to **Malaria No More UK** provides a net and, with the charity's running costs being covered by grants from foundations such as The Department for International Development and The Gates Foundation, 100% of any donation goes directly to helping end malaria in Africa.

Spraying, medicines and developing a vaccine (probably 10 years away yet) are also possibilities but bed nets remain the simplest and most immediately effective tool. I found this tremendously encouraging and exciting and it is a charity I feel inclined to support and will certainly watch with interest.

Pam Vendy

Note to readers: What charity do you support? Why not write a piece to tell us about it? - Ed.

A church member, who is much too modest to want her name published, told me that a friend asked her to go with her to visit the friend's brother who was seriously ill in the Norfolk and Norwich hospital. As neither lady drives a car this meant a long journey by bus and train and the weather was still wintery. Although she did not know this man, our church member said she was really pleased to have met him and was glad to have gone with her friend. How inspiring it is to know that ordinary people in our small community live by Christ's teaching without making a fuss or wanting recognition and are so ready to go much more than the extra mile.

She said God must have been watching over her when they got back to Cambridge because she had to run, but just caught, the last bus back to Bar Hill. Surely he was with her every step of her way.

'Beyond the Party Label' is the title of an article about the General Election in the recent edition of CARE magazine. It contains some sound advice about being 'salt and light' as Christians -

Don't vote out of habit. In the post-war years the main parties had fairly constant identities and policies but in recent years this has changed. So we need to do our homework and look beyond the labels to see what is actually on offer.

Who is telling us what 'good' looks like? Beware, the secular media will not give us a Christian perspective. Ask the question, what do we know from the Bible about God's attitudes? - about wealth, the vulnerable and marginalised etc.

Don't 'not vote' because none of the candidates is a Christian. A politician doesn't have to have an active faith to share our principles. Conversely, if you discover that one candidate is more hostile than the others to Christian principles and freedoms, then use your vote to help ensure they are not elected. You may be helping to deliver Parliament from someone who could be a very bad influence!

Don't limit yourself to voting. Whether individually or at an open meeting of candidates, ask questions (courteously!) that make it clear there is an active Christian voice voting.

And if the candidate you voted for is not elected? - you can pray for Parliament with a clear conscience, believing that God is bigger than human institutions and will give us the leadership we deserve (or don't deserve, if we don't take our democratic privileges and responsibilities seriously).

Pam and Barry

The Sound of Silence

A friend gave me a little book that became one of the turning points of my life. It contained but one thought, and it was this: that God was waiting in the depths of my being to talk to me if only I could get still enough to hear his voice.

I thought this would be easy and so I began to get still. But no sooner had I began than a perfect pandemonium of inner voices overwhelmed me, and I was pushed and pulled by noisy acclamations of unspeakable unrest.

While it seemed necessary for me to listen to some of them, God said 'Be still, and know that I am God'. As the conflicts of thoughts and cares came flooding in, God said 'Be still!' As I listened, and slowly learned to obey, and shut the ears of my mind to every sound, I found, after a while, that when the other voices ceased, or I ceased to hear them, there was a still small voice in the depths of my being that began to speak with an inexpressible tenderness, power and comfort.

As I listened, it became to me the voice of prayer, and the voice of wisdom, and the voice of duty, and I did not need to think so hard, or pray so hard, or trust so hard, but that 'still small voice' of

AT HOME WITH GOD: How to go on Retreat without going away. By Penny Roker RSM (Canterbury Press Norwich, 2009)

While a quiet time at home can only be 'second best' (the author's own words) to the experience of a retreat away, this slender book should help anybody who recognises 'the need for a short period of withdrawal from responsibility and the distractions of everyday life', but who is just not able, for any of a variety of reasons, to get away on retreat. After an introduction containing useful hints about preparation and some 'Dos and don'ts', each of the book's 15 chapters focuses on one individual in the Gospels. From them, we learn that God is 'not far off, but within our reach'. Along with her thoughtful reflection on the Bible passage, Jenny Roker proposes areas for the reader's own personal reflection, with topics for intercessory prayer and ideas for activity. It's not a book to rush through. Take it a section at a time, and by the end you will feel as if you've travelled a long way on a worthwhile journey. Next time, you may wish to move heaven and earth actually to get away on retreat!

Reviewed by Barry Vendy
(I'll be glad to lend out any of the books I've renewed)

the Holy Spirit in my heart was God's prayer in my secret soul, was God's answer to all my questions, was God's life and strength for soul and body, and became the substance of all knowledge, and all prayer, and all blessing: for it was the living God himself as my life and my all.

This is our spirit's deepest need. It is thus that we learn to know God, that we receive spiritual refreshment and nourishment. It is thus that we receive the Living Bread; it is thus that our very bodies are healed, and our spirit drinks in the life of our risen Lord, and we go forth into life's conflicts and duties like the flower that has drunk in, through the shades of night, the cool crystal drops of dew. But, as the dew never falls on a windy night, so the dew of his grace never comes to the restless soul.

We cannot go through life strong and fresh on constant express trains, but we must have quiet hours, secret places of the Most High, times of waiting upon the Lord when we renew our strength, and learn to mount up on wings as eagles, and then come back to run and not be weary, to walk and not to faint.

[Adapted from John Edward Southall (1855-1928)]

MAY CHURCH SERVICES

Sunday 2nd	10.00 am 6.30 pm	Holy Communion Evening Praise & Worship
Sunday 9th	8.00 am 10.00 am 3.00 pm 6.30 pm	Holy Communion Morning Worship Family Fun Evening Prayer
Sunday 16th	10.00 am 6.30 pm	Holy Communion Quiet Prayer
Sunday 23rd <i>Pentecost</i>	10.00 am 6.30 pm	All-age service wuth Confirmation & Communion Holy Communion
Wednesday 26th	10.00 am	Holy Communion
Sunday 30th <i>Trinity Sunday</i>	8.00 am 10.00 am 6.30 pm	Holy Communion Morning Worship Evening Prayer
There is also a Roman Catholic service on Saturday evenings at 6.00 pm		
People to contact:	The minister: Rev Ruth Adams Tel: 01954 789369 Church Centre Manager: Tel/Fax: 01954 206120 (office hours Monday, Wednesday & Friday 9.30-10.30)	

May Events

Weekly: Tuesdays at 7.30pm Prayer time
 Wednesdays at 1.30 Art Group
 Thursdays at 1pm Knit & Natter
 Fridays at 7.50pm Music Group Practice

9th - 15th: Christian Aid Week
 Wednesday 19th: Church Meeting
 Saturday 22nd: Craft session, 2.30pm in church
 Saturday 29th: Big Church Day Out - see box.

The Cambridgeshire Baptist Missionary Fellowship
 invites you to the
ANNUAL GENERAL & OPEN MEETING

The **Rev. Gareth Wilde**
 (BMS World Mission Headquarters, Didcot)
 will give an update on BMS World Mission
 and the **Rev. Richard Lewis**
 (Eastern Baptist Association Regional Minister)
 will give an update on BU/Home Mission

The Meeting will be held on
THURSDAY 20th MAY at 7-30pm
at HISTON BAPTIST CHURCH
 at which there is ample car parking

Open Gardens – 27 June 2010

Do make a note of the last Sunday in June for the fifth Open Gardens in Bar Hill. This year there will be at least nine gardens to inspect, and the usual extra attractions of teas, plants, books and a competition.

Open Gardens is an informal event that gives you the chance to talk to your friends as well as to see their gardens. As before, the money raised will go to the Camphill Village Trust, which provides homes and occupations for adults with special needs. Come along to support this very worthwhile cause and enjoy an afternoon out at the same time.

Camphill Village Trust registered charity 232402

Big Church Day Out

This is a gathering at Stanford Hall in Leicestershire, taking place on Saturday 29th May. Its claimed to be the UK's largest one day event for the church, and a great opportunity to join with others across the country. We are being encouraged as a church to join in; fliers, and a list to sign if you plan to go, are available in the church foyer.

