

# ANSLEY CHURCH MAGAZINE

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Dear Friends,

People often think that the outward form of the church remains much the same—but there are always trends, moods and emphases which distinguish the church of one time from that of another. This month we look at two—one in the Church of England, the other outside it.

## **A NEW THING (1) — “GROUP MINISTRIES”**

The Church of England has been having a big re-think about its ministry and the way in which its ministers are distributed throughout the land. In this area we have a ‘Group Ministry’ covering the parishes of Ansley, Arley, Fillongley and Corley. I accepted Ansley on the understanding that this would be the future arrangement. In the new Group, the Revd. Grahame Humphries of Arley, the Revd. John Law of Fillongley and Corley and myself are aiming at a pattern which will enable our local churches to work together more closely. This is not just something for the clergy but for the people of God in all four parishes. Each area will have its ‘own’ minister but the use of that phrase is very misleading—every Christian has some gift of ministry which they can bring to the Christian community. Ministry is not confined to one person, but is given to each Christian to use for the benefit of the people of God; if we are part of the worshipping community we ought to ask ourselves : what gift has God given to **me** to use for his glory ?

The Church Commissioners have been notified that the scheme for setting up the Group Ministry to cover the above four parishes was confirmed at a meeting of the Privy Council held on February 10th, 1982 to take effect from March 1st this year.

This sounds very official. Is it to be a sign of spiritual life and concern, or is it to be a sign of death—a closing of ranks as the beleaguered church faces the pressures of an increasingly secular society ? Only God’s people can determine that, as they are obedient to him and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Revival and renewal of the church will not come about solely by the reorganisation of parishes but by the activity of God’s Spirit as we seek his will. This brings us to the second ‘new thing’ . . .

## **A NEW THING (2) — “HOUSE CHURCHES”**

Outside the main churches one of the biggest trends in patterns of Christian commitment has been the springing up of “House Churches.” These are semi-independent local meetings of Christians and they are not formally connected with the major denominations. What has brought about this renewed emphasis on simple Christian spirituality ?

## **MAUSOLEUMS OR MISSIONS**

Many people, especially the younger generations, are despairing of the immobility and expense of maintaining denominational structures which seem to have served their purpose. They say that men have made the church of God into a museum. The Holy Spirit departs when denominations become pre-occupied with the struggle for survival in a non-religious age. The mainstream churches are judged as having forgotten the central message of Jesus and the New Testament Christians.

## **DISCIPLINE**

The "House Churches" frequently demand a much greater degree of commitment than the Church of England or other traditional churches. The demands made on C. of E. members are virtually unenforceable and pretty slack! The "House Churches" look upon us as places which are used at public convenience for rites of passage such as baptism, marriage and funerals. Many members in this new movement voluntarily tithe their income—they give at least one tenth of what they earn to Christian work, not all of it to the local church either. Consequently their programmes are not dominated by fund-raising and material problems.

## **PROS AND CONS**

It is certainly true that these new trends are ministering to real needs felt by Christian people and the result is often a well-taught Christian who knows what believing and belonging means. They can put many of us to shame here. But there are some drawbacks. Some of the house churches have become havens for people who cannot face the tensions and pressures of a sinful and imperfect world. Frequently there are exaggerated claims about their own rightness and the wrongness of Christians who remain in their denominational churches.

My own experience shows them to be places of extremes. There is indeed great love and concern, often with a judging attitude towards those who are not of their number. Frequently they attract insecure people who crave strong leadership and want others to make life's decisions for them. This is not the path of Christian maturity. But their existence is something of a judgement upon **us** and **our** ways. Why do people respond to such a demanding standard of discipleship and church membership? What is the uncomfortable truth in their criticisms of the major churches' pre-occupation with survival?

New things in themselves will not bring revival or utopia, or anything else. They can be useful dodges from reality, making us pre-occupied with the novel at the expense of the eternal. But we have to be self-critical—to ask what kind of people God wants, to remember that we are called to share the resurrection faith of Jesus Christ, and to bring hope and light and life to all corners of the world in the power of God's Holy Spirit

TIM GOULDSTONE.

## **NOTES AND NEWS**

We acknowledge with gratitude the gift of £130 in memory of the late Mr. John William (Jack) Green of Ridge Lane. Part of the money will be used to buy extra copies of tune books for



the church choir. "Jack's" bright smile will be missed by many; a quiet Christian life but ultimately the sort of person that means so much to the local church. Our prayers and sympathy go with Mr. and Mrs. Richardson and Mrs. Dingley in their loss.

Since 'Occasional Newsletter No. 1' went out we have been taken up by the Revd. John Law of Fillongley and Corley concerning the possibility of a summer **cricket match**, possibly Arley and Ansley v Fillongley and Corley. (I had thought of Nuthurst Crescent v Rest of the World . . . .) More news later if this arrangement comes off . . . .

The **Lent Meetings** will take place again this year. Here is a brief introduction—if you want to know more come and find out.

**March 3rd, 7.30 p.m., St. John's Hall—'THE LENT COLLECTOR.'** What does Lent mean to us? Is it something positive or negative? A self-examination before Easter? What is a Christian? Is there enough joy in our faith?

**March 10th, 7.30 p.m., Village Hall—'THE PUBLIC CONVENIENCE.'** What is the church? What is commitment? What is stewardship and do we need it to survive? Is "It's there when we want it and it's nice to think it's there" a valid view? Is it a free service?

**March 18th, 7.30 p.m., St. John's Hall—'THE CHANGING SCENE.'** Constant change is here to stay? What makes churches grow? What makes them stagnate?

**March 24th, 7.30 p.m., Village Hall—'SEND US OUT.'**

'Send us out

in the power of your Spirit

to live and work

to your praise and glory.' Amen.

(Closing prayer, Communion Service).

What is worship? Does it relate to life? Why have set patterns? Can we be more flexible? Is this threatening and why? Why would Archbishop Cranmer turn in his grave if he found us still using his services dating from 1552?

**CMS SUNDAY—March 14th, 1982.** We welcome as our preacher on this Sunday the **Revd. Richard Handforth** of the Church Missionary Society. Mr. Handforth was once the 'link missionary' for Ansley with this society and he will be preaching at both Arley and Ansley. In past years this parish has been a keen supporter of CMS and it is good to renew the link. In the morning he will be speaking on the theme of 'Making Christ Known' and in the evening he will show how our support is used to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to others overseas. The days of the missionary with pith helmet under a palm tree are long gone—some of the churches overseas can teach us a great deal.

On Saturday 20th there was a very successful '**Bring and Buy**' event in the Village Church Hall in aid of Scot Atkins of Nuneaton who needs a bone marrow operation to save his life. The sum of £115 was raised by this event organised by Ansley Sunday School. Thank you all who took part and did the organising and to everyone who contributed.

The Revd. John Law and Dr. John Harris were duly 'Cast Away' on their desert island. There was a wide choice of music—from J. S. Bach to Heavy Metal Rock. (Mr. Law left this on the mainland!) Even though we may not be very musical ourselves it is surprising how certain tunes can be associated with special events in our lives.

Note the concert by the **St. David's Singers** from Coventry to be given in St. Michael's, New Arley on March 27th. Further details later . . . .

We thank Mr. Greenway and his colleagues for the new notice board outside the Village Church Hall and also thanks to all those who did a tidy-up (and chuck-out) there.

#### DIARY FOR MARCH 1982

- 2 3.00 p.m. Village Mothers' Union. Speaker : Mrs. Antrobus.
- 3 7.30 p.m. Lent Meeting, St. John's Hall.  
'THE LENT COLLECTOR.'
- 7 (Second Sunday in Lent) — 'Conflict'
  - 8.00 a.m. Holy Communion (said).
  - 11.00 a.m. Parish Communion.
  - 6.30 p.m. Evening Prayer.
- 8 7.30 p.m. Eleven Plus at the Vicarage.
- 10 7.30 p.m. Lent Meeting, Village Church Hall.  
'THE PUBLIC CONVENIENCE . . . ?'
- 11 7.30 p.m. Church Annual General Meeting.  
Village Church Hall.
- 14 (Third Sunday in Lent) — 'Making Christ Known'  
(CMS Sunday).
  - 11.00 a.m. Holy Communion.  
Preacher : The Revd. Richard Handforth.
  - 6.30 p.m. Evening Prayer.  
Preacher : The Revd. Richard Handforth.
- 15 7.30 p.m. Beetle Drive, Village Church Hall.
- 17 7.00 p.m. St. John's Mothers' Union.  
Speaker : Miss Margaret Truelove on her holiday  
in Thailand and Burma.
- 18 7.30 p.m. Lent Meeting, St. John's Hall.  
'THE CHANGING SCENE.'
- 21 (Fourth Sunday in Lent) — 'Which Way ?'  
(Mothering Sunday).
- 22 7.30 p.m. Eleven Plus at the Vicarage.
- 24 7.30 p.m. Lent Meeting, Village Church Hall.  
'SEND US OUT.'
- 27 7.30 p.m. St. Michael's, New Arley. Concert with the  
St. David's Singers from Coventry. Tickets "about  
£1" — see the Vicar.
- 28 (Passion Sunday) — 'The Victory of the Cross'
  - 11.00 a.m. Holy Communion.
  - 6.30 p.m. Evening Prayer.

#### BAPTISMS

Feb. 7—Gillian Baines, Ansley Lodge, Birchley Heath.

Feb. 21—Angela Wilson, 41 Bretts Hall Estate, Ansley Common.