

# ANSLEY CHURCH MAGAZINE

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Arrangements for Baptisms, Banns, Weddings and Funerals should now be made with the Vicar.

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## WORSHIP

**1st, 2nd, 4th, 5th Sundays** in each month

11.00 a.m. Parish Communion

6.30 p.m. Evening Prayer

**3rd Sunday**

11.00 a.m. Family Service

6.30 p.m. Parish Communion

**1st Sunday**

8.00 a.m. Holy Communion

Sunday School each Sunday at 11.00 a.m., in the Village Church Hall except on the third Sunday when it will attend the service in Church.

The Vicar will not normally be available on Tuesdays.

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Dear Friends,

**WOMEN AND CHILDREN FIRST . . . . .**

. . . . so the cry goes up when the ship goes down ! But isn't this also the make-up of the church ? Ask yourself this question—what would happen to the church scene if all the fairer sex stopped away ? We ought to ask ourselves why men aren't involved in church life. It seems there are two main reasons. The first is that we have made the Christian faith into a cosy domestic religion. It is all right for stories for children, for introducing them to the world of make-believe and myth. So Christian commitment is associated with childhood, but becomes something you grow out of when you reach secondary school age. The second reason is that often Christians have nothing to say about the world of work, the shop-floor, the stresses and strains of dispute and confrontation and redundancy. God has become domesticated and reduced to the status of a spare-time hobby. Christians have withdrawn from the world into the home.

Jesus had no home to call his own—he said “The Son of Man has nowhere to lie down and rest” (Luke 9 : 58). Here was no milk-and-water pale imitation person. He was no armchair philosopher trying to put the world to rights from a safe distance, but a man enduring ridicule, suffering and shame and

dying a criminal's death for his beliefs. He gave everything he had so that God's will could be done. He gave everything in sacrifice.

Is one reason for the weakness of the Church the lack of a spirit of sacrifice? The Methodist Minister Colin Morris has said, "We . . . are reaping exactly what we have sown—a thin Gospel producing a sparse harvest. Whole areas of the modern Church seem to be . . . victims of our gospel of the minimal demand. We plead that our people might spare us the odd half-hour out of their crowded diaries. Tithing is unacceptable so we beg the odd twenty pence. People are easily bored so we promised them a ten-minute address instead of a full-blown sermon. We do not ask for sacrifice but assure them that they will suffer only slight inconvenience should they be willing to take up office in the Church."

We can always find time for what we think is worthwhile and important. Many people think that faith in God is unimportant, a spare-time option instead of a living and personal faith in the God who actually took it upon himself to become human, speak to us and share our ups and downs. Have we, as the people of God, been guilty of making him into a hobby?

TIM GOULDSTONE

### THE CHURCH FETE

Thank you to all who made the Fete such a success on Saturday, June 13th. Over £250 was raised for the Church General Fund. We had what proved to be the best weather of the year and were able to get outside as well. I hope everyone appreciated the work that went on behind the scenes in setting-out and preparation of refreshments, etc.

### MOTHERS' UNION

The combined Mothers' Union service at Corley on the 16th was a good opportunity to meet together for a social evening and worship. Mrs. Haynes of Berkeswell spoke to us on the importance of having a personal faith. How many of us have heard the words of the Communion service for years but never realised what they can mean to us—"Feed on him in your hearts by faith with thanksgiving." These words can be true to us at any moment of the day, not just when we receive the bread and wine. Do we have a personal faith in God or is life just confusion?

### SUNDAY SCHOOL

Don't forget about the Sunday School which meets every week in the Village Church Hall. But remember they are members of the local church! As I write this we are looking towards our 'treat' on Saturday, June 20th and the prize-giving on the following day. It is possible that there is someone reading this who doesn't know about the **Family Service** on the third Sunday of the month. Just come along at 11 o'clock, listen, worship and learn—no-one is too young or too old for this. The next one is on July 19th.



## **POWER AND THE GOSPEL**

### **THEM AND US . . . .**

Recently we were thinking about Whitsun and the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples, giving them power to live, witness and work for Christ. But what is the meaning of power for the Christian?

Our ideas of power are taken from the world around us. The problems within our political parties are said to be 'power struggles' over leadership. Often power goes to the individual or group who can make the most promises in the most jargon-ridden language. What of economic power? Christian Aid advertises with posters showing the poor of the world—the caption reads "Soak the Poor." And this is exactly what is going on in some parts of the world where the economic power of rich business associations is exploiting those without economic power. Many industrial disputes at home are about questions of power—the power of management and unions and the ability of both to exercise power for or against the national government for their own benefit.

A Marxist would say that one of the main problems of our industrial life is that power lies in the hands of those who have it within their grasp to buy and sell labour, to 'hire and fire' at will. The powerless ones are those who suffer from this strategy; the workers and unemployed who do not share the material benefits of the god Profit.

A dedicated capitalist would say that our problems are due to too much power being used irresponsibly by those on the shop floor, causing stoppages, strikes and inefficiency resulting in poor production.

Who is right? Which of these two views of power is the one which will save us from disaster? Both these ways of looking at power ask the question, "Who holds power?" Employers? Workers? Governments? The wealthy? The poor? Christians must question this and ask further, where does power come from? God shares his power with us. We can abuse it and line our own pockets at the expense of others, or use it for their good. We can grasp power for ourselves in order to get a passing security at the expense of others who face uncertainty, worry and poverty. We can become slaves for a lust for power—power to control others, to manipulate events. What is God's power like?

### **GOD'S POWER**

God's power is not like that of the world. It is the power shown by Jesus Christ. He was not a deluded revolutionary who thought up salvation through political power and then failed to carry it through. He was weak in the eyes of the world. He was despised, poor and rejected by those who thought that the maintenance of religion and the protection of politics was more important than the truth about God.

Paul speaks of God's power being seen in those who believe (Ephesians 1 : 19). Christians have sometimes abused this power,

resulting in an unholy alliance between church and state, parson and squire. How often has the cause of Christ suffered from religion where the parson and his set controlled the religious aspect of local life with the connivance of the local business interests? The power of God was not seen through the lowly figure of Christ; his power was identified with the privileged. Is this the historical reason why so many stay away from church today?

How are Christians supposed to show God's power? First, by welcoming all, irrespective of status, class and background. Christ himself dealt with soldiers, religious leaders, the rich and poor alike. All must come before God by exactly the same route, through the work of Christ alone. Secondly, there must be a conscious seeking of God's will for our church and ourselves through study, prayer and discussion—leading to action! This means hard work! Thirdly, we must use what God has given to his church, not what we think we can do on our own. God gave gifts to his people; pastors, teachers, helpers, administrators and many others.

Our attitude to power should be that shown to us by God:

The attitude you should have

is the one that Christ Jesus had:

He always had the nature of God,

but he did not think that by force

he should try to become equal with God.

Instead of this, of his own free will

he gave up all that he had,

and took the nature of a servant.

He became like man

and appeared in human likeness.

He was humble and walked the path of obedience

all the way to death—

his death on the cross . . . . .

(Philippians chapter 2 verses 5 to 8)

#### **BAPTISM**

We welcome into the Lord's family (June 28th):

Christopher Ian Day,

Kenneth Jon Day, both of 77 Birmingham Road.

#### **LAID TO REST**

Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live, even though he dies." (John 11 : 25)

June 8th—Dorothy Mason, late of Ansley Common, aged 93.

Our prayers and sympathy go out to the relatives of Mrs. Mason who was associated with St. John's for many years. Also to those of Mrs. Low of Birchley Heath who died in June and was well known to many of our friends.

#### **DIARY FOR JULY**

1—Wednesday. Parochial Church Council, Village Church Hall  
8.00 p.m.

19—Sunday. 11.00 a.m. Family Service with Baptism.