

# ANSLEY CHURCH MAGAZINE

No. 675

SEPTEMBER 1981

Price 10p

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Tel.: Chapel End 392240

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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## GREAT EXPECTATIONS

You will see that there have been four weddings in August at Ansley. Marriage has rarely been more fragile than during the past few years but is more popular than ever. Why is this? In the first place, marriage still has status attached to it. It is not seen as just a 'piece of paper' to make a relationship legal. People really feel that marriage is the way to say 'yes' to each other in public. Secondly, although failures in marriages are higher than ever, people have great expectations of married life—and this is usually where the trouble starts! Many have a television advert idea of married life—the sun shining, the children spotless and well-behaved, a handsome husband raring to paint the house and dig the garden and a trendy wife who makes a cosy comfortable home for the man of her dreams . . . .

However much we laugh at this model of married life, we all fall for it sometime or other. This is where the Christian faith gives us a good dose of reality. For we are not perfect; even if couples suit each other well, each person has an inward twist that can become selfish and which can lead to quarrels, problems and stress. The marriage service emphasises that marriage commitment is like any other Christian commitment—you don't give up when the going gets tough. It is 'for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health . . .'. Part of the reason for the high rate of failure in marriage is

that people have an impossibly high expectation of themselves and their partner. But there's no perfection in this world.

Christian marriage is modelled on Jesus Christ's love for his people. He did not give up on his friends when they misunderstood him or were not faithful in following him. Those who get married in church should not do so because its a pretty custom or because the photographs will look nice. That's hardly a good enough reason—the real reason is that these people want to make the Christian faith real in their home life and want to go on learning more about what it means to model their marriages on God's love for us.

Sometimes people think that God cannot be present at a Registry Office wedding. That is untrue. The Christian element in marriage comes from the commitment of the couple 'till death us do part, according to God's holy law.' People who think that getting married in church buildings makes a marriage more 'Christian' need to realise that God does not live in buildings but in the lives of men and women.

The failure of the 'great expectations' of marriage is seen in the 150,000-odd divorces every year and the attendant stress, grief and sense of personal loss and failure. And the sins of the parents are sadly often visited upon the hundreds of thousands of children of broken families. We ought to remember today's young couples, facing an uncertain future financially, expecting a lot from their marriages and often with no home to start their life together. What can we do to help them understand what Christian marriage means?

### **COMMITMENT, CONFIRMATION AND COMMUNION**

There has been some recent interest in Confirmation. It is a sad fact that the confirmation registers of the past make pretty discouraging reading. Someone said that they often make confirmation look like a 'passing-out' parade—passing out of the Church, that is! A glance at Ansley's registers shows this too. For that reason I propose to return to the older practice of delaying confirmation until 15 years of age in the case of young people. Of course others are confirmed in adult life—enquiries welcomed!

I believe that the urge to get confirmed younger (in some cases 10 or 11) arose out the switch to a pattern of worship based on Holy Communion which began in the 1950's. It is natural that in such a setting young people will feel left out of what is the central service of the Christian faith. But it is disturbing to find that many of those who have been confirmed in recent years are not to be found regularly at worship or active in the life of the church. One said to me recently 'I haven't got time . . . ' But don't we all find time for the things that **really** matter to us? Jesus himself never said 'I haven't got time.' In fact he spoke out against those who said they hadn't got time to follow him.

During the next few weeks I shall be collecting together names of those 12 and upwards who are interested in some form of



activity, meeting, study, etc., leading towards confirmation and beyond. We might meet in the Vicarage at 8.00 p.m., on Sunday evenings for an hour or so and go on to plan outings, activities, etc., as well as try to grow together in our understanding of the Christian faith. Any names or enquiries to the Vicar. Remember this applies to Ridge Lane and Ansley Common as much as the village. Remember that if no-one comes nothing will happen either !

#### QUESTION TIME — No. 2

##### Why is religion and worship so dull ?

It seems a sharp contrast between the living, active and forward-moving God of the Bible and the stagnant and lifeless worship that is sometimes found in our churches today. It seems a puzzle that we confine God to a building 800 years old, sometimes talk to him in a language 400 years old and sing to him in a language 200 years old ! This really can put God at a distance, in time and space !

Three things will help us to make worship real :

- (1) **DIRECTED TOWARDS GOD.** True worship is not a musical performance or a religious habit. The aim of worship is not to speak of God as a fairy-story, 'long ago and far away.' True worship should speak of God with us—'Proclaim with me the Lord's greatness; let us praise his name together' ! (Psalm 34 : 3).
- (2) **UNDERSTANDING.** It is good to use the old services but do we understand the words ? Are they real to us or repeated time after time ? Look at the blank faces in some churches and you will begin to wonder.
- (3) **BUILDING.** Every church should be always 'under construction' — and I don't mean the building. The aim of worship should be to build up the people of God so that we can be confident in our beliefs.

A minister went to a church fifteen years ago where the average collection was £2 per Sunday and there was a congregation of about six. It was to be declared redundant. He was given a year to build it up. The Redundancy men asked if the church had any future. He replied, 'I believe that if anyone really preaches the simple gospel of Christ, trusts in the power of prayer, and opens his life to the renewal of the Spirit, this church will be full in no time !'

By the grace of God that church is today full and flourishing (it has moved to larger premises). The sober fact is that about 610 Anglican churches will be declared redundant between now and 1989; that is a closure rate of **one every five days**. We need to show that God is alive and well by our worship and by the renewal of our lives in true Christian commitment.

Next month—what is baptism ?

### BAPTISM

We welcome into the family of the Church (August 16th)  
Helen Mumford, 125 Birmingham Road.

### MARRIAGE

August 1—Steven Roper and Susan Randall.  
August 7—Alan Croft and Jeanette Morris.  
August 22—Peter Allan and Linda Bayley.  
August 22—David Pointon and Sonia Rowntree.

### NOTES, NEWS AND DATES

- 4—**PCC meeting** at 8.00 p.m., in the Village Church Hall.
- 8—**Village M.U.** at 3.00 p.m., in Village Church Hall (note change of date).
- 11—**Beetle Drive** in the Village Church Hall. 50p entry. Prizes, tea, coffee, biscuits, crisps, etc. Begins at 7.30 p.m.
- 22—**Coffee Morning** at 10.30 a.m., at Mr. and Mrs. Truelove's, Merrybrook Cottage, Hood Lane.
- 23—**St. John's Mothers' Union**, St. John's Hall at 7.00 p.m.  
Speaker : The Vicar. (Please note change of date from 18th).
- 24—**Autumn Sale** at St. John's Hall. All kinds of gifts, both small and large, welcome. Stalls, Raffle, Refreshments. Admission 5p (Door Prize).

Advance notice—there will be a Barn Dance on Saturday, 3rd October at Sutton's Farm. Tickets £2 including refreshments. Kurley Kale Ceilidh Band. Brenda Garnham, caller. Tickets from Mrs. Cove, Mrs. Priest, Mrs. Sutton and Frank Arnold.

The Vicar and family will be on holiday from 5th September to 18th September inclusive. Church services as normal.

A number of vases have appeared in the churchyard recently. Relatives are reminded that prior permission must be sought and the appropriate fee paid for the installation of these. A very large number of small items of this type have to be moved every time the grass is cut.

Over 50 people attended the Family Service in August, a good number considering how many people there are on holiday. Residents of the Common are reminded that the bus will run for the September service on 20th September so make a note of it !