

CHURCH NEWS

MAY 2007

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My dear friends,

I write on an unseasonably hot afternoon, hoping that all of the nesting birds do not get caught out in a few weeks time. Is it the warmth, or the length of days, or what that decides them that it is that time of year again? Do the older and wiser birds look on from their perch with an encouraging 'you'll be sorry?' while waiting for the day we have always started nest building? (For wine makers the best day for picking dandelions is St. George's day – or should it now be two weeks earlier?) Yet another picture springs into my mind. This time the great herds of Wildebeest on the African plains waiting to cross Crocodile infested water. Who chooses which one goes first – and, perhaps more important, which is the safest order in which to jump?

I have a round coffee mat with the inscription: "At long last, we have a sufficient quantity for each of you to have his own. Guard it well! These tuits have been hard to come by, especially the round ones. This is an indispensable item. It will help you to become a much more efficient worker. For years we have heard people say 'I'll do this when I get round tuit.'" Now that you have a round tuit of your very own, many things that have needed to be accomplished will get done.

Cheesy, perhaps, but how many things are you putting off? How often do we simply say that we will get around to it ...one day? Perhaps we might rush into one or two things too quickly, but, perhaps, this is better than too late, or even not at all. So what are you putting off? Something in the house or garden; something in the community or at work; words left unsaid to a loved one? Are there times when God is calling you to a particular course of action and your response is ...'not just yet'?

If it will help, you may borrow my round tuit but, whatever, do not put off to tomorrow what should really be done today, for, as they say, tomorrow never comes!

John A Peal.

SERVICES AT ST. PETER & ST. PAUL'S ASH

<u>Time</u>	<u>Type of Service</u>	<u>When</u>
8.00	Holy Communion	Every Sunday in month
10.10	Junior Church meets in Ash Village Hall, age 3 and over	2nd, 3rd, 4th & 5th Sundays during term time
10.30	Family Worship	First Sunday in the month
10.30	Family Eucharist	2nd, 3rd, 4th & 5th Sundays

SERVICES AT ST. PETER'S RIDLEY

<u>Time</u>	<u>Type of Service</u>	<u>When</u>
9.15	Parish Communion	Every Sunday in the month
6.30	Evening Prayer	Second Sunday in the month only

diary dates

Full details can also be found on the website.

May	1 st	Ash Church Standing Committee	8.00 p.m.
	3 rd	Covenanting Churches committee meeting	8.00 p.m.
	9 th	Lance Pierson at Meopham	7.30 p.m.
	13 th	Service of Thanksgiving for the gift of a child	3.30 p.m.
	15 th	Ash P.C.C.	- Ash Rectory 8.00 p.m.
	17 th	Ascension Day. Holy communion	- Ash Church 8.00 p.m.
	19 th	Christian Aid Walk.	- Meopham 8.30 am & 2.30 p.m.
	20 th	LYRA Concert	- Ash Church 8.00 p.m.
	22 nd	Deanery Synod	- Longfield 8.00 p.m.
	27 th	Whit Sunday. Pentecost	
	29 th	Ash P.C.C. Standing Committee	8.00 p.m.
Jun.	23 rd	Ash Fete	

FROM THE REGISTERS

FUNERALS

Mar.	20 th	Joan Dane	aged 72
	23 rd	Dorothy Ellen Williams	aged 81
	27 th	Leonard Alfred Cullen	aged 94

May they rest in peace.

FORTY YEARS OF WALKING FOR CHRISTIAN AID

It was in the Christian Aid Week of 1967 that the first sponsored walk around the periphery of Meopham was organized. Now, 40 years later the walk will take place on: **SATURDAY 19th MAY 2007 starting from the St John's Centre, Meopham.**

The route now links the parishes in the Cobham Deanery and is divided into two sections, both starting and finishing at St John's Centre, Meopham. The first part in the morning starts at **8:30 am** and is approximately 14 miles long via Longfield, Fawkham, Ash and Ridley. The afternoon route will encompass Meopham, Cobham and Luddesdowne Churches - a walk of approximately 6 miles and will start at **2:30 pm**. As usual, printed directions and maps of the route will be provided at check-in.

As part of the celebrations for the 40th anniversary of the walk a barbecue lunch will be provided at the St John's Centre from 1.00 p.m. during which Holly Ellson will give a short presentation on the work of Christian Aid.

In Tanzania 80% of the population depends on agriculture for a living. Their wellbeing is precariously dependent on good rains to water the crops. Christian Aid supports eight partner organizations there, focusing on improving basic living conditions, improving skills and fighting HIV/AIDS.

This year the sponsorship money raised will be designated to a particular partner project in the Diocese of Central Tanganyika (DCT) in Tanzania. Through DCT, Christian Aid has, since 1998, funded the Lamaiti Area Development Programme in Dodoma, where the emphasis is on improving farming methods, diversification, schemes to help people survive bad harvests and, of course, developing new water sources.

A budget of £8,350 will provide training for the formation of on saving and credit societies; provision of 33 ox ploughs; and training in food storage and provision of seeds for approximately 3,000 farmers.

To help them to achieve that target you could participate in, or sponsor walkers on: **SATURDAY 19th MAY 2007.** You could **DOUBLE YOUR DONATION** by sponsoring one of our walkers, Paul Thomas. He is able to obtain matched giving from his employer, Microsoft UK. You may sponsor him on line at: <http://www.justgiving.com/meophamwalk07> You may also sponsor him on the day.

Taxpayers can increase the value of their sponsorship or donation through the Gift Aid scheme.

Photographs of previous events, news of the 2006 walk and entry forms for 2007 can be seen on our website: www.cadswalk.co.uk

Alternatively, for entry forms and further information please contact Peter Kettle on 01474 813632, or e-mail: twokettles@hotmail.co.uk

NOT 2 B MISSED!!!

Lance Pierson

is an entertainer who brings words to life.

He is coming to

Meopham School

on

Wednesday 9th May 2007

@ 7.30PM

with

'The Jesus Story'

Tickets (£2.50) from Francesa Burgess – 01474 874411

Arranged by Cobham Deanery

Lance Pierson is an actor and performer who entertains at a variety of events. Among his favourite subjects for entertainment (poetry, music hall and cricket) he has a particular interest in bringing the Bible to life through his Bible performances, Christian poetry presentations and one-man shows. Rob Frost, a presenter of Premier Radio, says of him, 'Lance is a gifted actor... I warmly recommend him.'

As well as being an entertainment for practising Christians, '**The Jesus Show**', which Lance is performing at Meopham School on the 9th May, is an evangelistic event, and it is hoped that members of the congregation will bring friends and/or family members along too. This is what it says about the show on Lance's website:

'This is a show about the most influential person in the history of the world. Lance's aim here amounts to the same as that of the Gospels: to retell the highlights of Jesus' life and death and return to life, to present it as life or death good news for the hearers and to convey a sense of the Lord's living presence. Lance draws a selection of the highlights from all four of the Gospels and the story covers the key moments of Jesus' career: Birth, Baptism, Teaching, Healing, Opposition, Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension.

The subject matter will obviously do nothing but good to Christian groups who want to celebrate the person at the heart of their faith. But it is also good to use evangelistically. This is an ideal chance to invite friends to think about Jesus and the claims he makes. A short half-hour can fit into a Sunday service, in the place of a sermon or interspersed with songs and prayers. Longer versions provide an 'evening out' in themselves and of course give the fullest coverage of the Jesus story.'

Ruth Russell of Camberley Baptist Church says about the show:

*'I can guarantee that no-one who makes the effort to attend Lance's amazing one-man dramatic presentation of **The Jesus Story** will have any desire to fall asleep, nor will they leave it without a new spring in their step!'*

ASH GREEN YOUTH THEATRE

Ash Green Youth Theatre is looking for new members to join this year's Summer Course. This follows the success of last year's course which culminated in an exciting production, *Capiche!*, based around the play *Romeo and Juliet*. This year we hope to do the same to that wonderful piece of literature, *Alice In Wonderland*.

If you are interested in theatre – whether you're an actor, singer, dancer, or even a writer – then this is the course for you. From 20th August to the 1st September this year you'll get the chance to work with professional theatre practitioners to develop your skills. Two performances will be held at the end of the course for family, friends and members of the public to show the results of the two weeks.

The cost of the course is a mere £60 and you must be aged 13-18. The course takes place at New Ash Green Village Hall.

If you're interested and would like to join or get more information, you can either e-mail us at ash_green_youth_theatre@hotmail.co.uk or phone Ashley Gorton on 07815436565

RUSSIAN CHURCH MUSIC - A Potted History

The Russian Orthodox Church is over 1000 years old and many composers have written music for its rites. Most are totally unknown outside the church, though there are a few notable exceptions such as Rachmaninov and Arensky.

In the Orthodox faith, singing in church is meant to be an icon of worship: prayers are sung. Orthodox hymnody developed from singing psalms and scripture passages, first as simple responses and refrains, later developing more complex forms. Choirs developed later, but were never meant to completely replace the people's voice: chants and music must help the people make the prayer their own.

Russian Orthodox Church music has had a unique development. Byzantine music remains basically unison singing. But part-singing appeared in Lvov and began to spread in southern Russia and the Ukraine as early as the 15th Century followed by early experiments with harmony. Small male choirs of sorts were schooled in the Imperial Court, and Tsar Peter the Great started the Imperial Chapel Choir in the 18th Century. The movement to introduce Western European harmonisation and the chorale style spread quickly, initiating a new period of concert-like choir singing.

The later part of the 18th Century saw influence by German romanticism. By order of Emperor Nicholas I, who was concerned about unanimity in Church singing, "The routine for Imperial Court Church singing" was set down. A. Lvov was then director of the Imperial Chapel, a renowned violin-player and composer, and author of the Russian Imperial Hymn. This "routine" accumulated more than a century's tradition of Court Church singing, and harmonised many tunes in the German Protestant style. This standard routine singing system was a significant step forward in terms of Church singing in harmony.

The establishment of conservatoires in St. Petersburg (1862) and Moscow (1866) substantially helped the development of choral art. Russian Church singing was opened up and a new period of creativity emerged, rooted firmly in the tradition and the experience of previous generations. However, the mood was also influenced by the sentimentalism of gypsy music: despondency, exalted rapture, forgetful joyfulness and expressiveness became a routine Church experience.

With the reign of Emperor Alexander III, all Russian fine arts saw a period of triumph. In 1880 a serious reorganisation of the Synodal Choir and its school took place and the quality of singing was further improved. E. Azeev and A. Kastalsky were among those to write and edit definitive editions of music and manuals regarding the style of performance. By the beginning of the 20th Century, however, Kastalsky and many other Church musicians, wanted to return to the traditional and less obviously emotional roots of the canonical chants.

One of the most tragic events in Russian history took place in St Petersburg in 1881. The liberal emperor Alexander II, who had led many reforms and actually abolished serfdom in 1861, was assassinated by a member of the terrorist organisation "People's Will". A beautiful cathedral was erected (1883-1907) with its high altar on the very spot where this happened. The "Cathedral on Spilt Blood" resembles St. Basil's in Moscow's Red Square, with its mighty size, multicoloured domes, abundance of decor and its interior which is the largest surface in the world covered with religious mosaics.

St Petersburg, the glittering capital of 18th century Russia, had already generated a wealth of glorious music and the epoch is celebrated as a summit in the evolution of church music. The music tradition at the Cathedral on Spilt Blood concentrates closely on later material, contemporary to its construction.

There is a marvellous opportunity to get an insight into this rich heritage of Russia's sacred music when the St Petersburg ensemble, LYRA, return to Ash Church for a concert at 8 pm on Sunday 20th May.

All the members of LYRA sing regularly in church and cathedral choirs in their native St. Petersburg, and many of them are professional singers with the conservatoires and opera companies in this fine city. Singing largely unaccompanied, the rich choral sound reverberating round our acoustically perfect building is not to be missed. The concert is free, but a retiring collection will be taken to help fund LYRA's visit and finance the staging of this concert. A donation of £5 is suggested. Refreshments will be available during the interval and there will be an opportunity to purchase copies of LYRA's CDs.

THE ALPHA COURSE – A Wake-Up Call

A few people have been asking me about my experiences taking part in the Alpha Course at my University in Winchester, so I thought I might write something to give you all an idea of what the whole thing's about!

Set up by the Revd. Nicky Gumble from Holy Trinity Brompton in London, the course usually runs for about ten weeks, with one meeting a week and the option of going away on a Course Weekend. The course is designed to be first and foremost an introduction to the ideas and beliefs of Christianity. It's there for anyone who is looking for answers or has heard about this faith and wants to know more.

In each meeting you are given a group and a table to sit at. Usually in the first week of the course the people you are sitting with are complete strangers to you, and so there is a good amount of time for you to meet them and get to know them a little. During this time there can also be food served which is provided by whoever is running the course – at ours, though it was the University's course, a local church provided our meals.

After this the main focus of the evening begins with a talk. During the two courses I went on we had a wide variety of guest speakers, sometime students and sometimes someone from one of the various churches around the city. (Winchester, as those of you who have been will be aware, has almost as many churches as it does pubs!) After these talks, which usually last about ten minutes, you have the opportunity to talk within your groups about what you have just heard. Although there are initial questions given to help you, most of the time the groups can go off on a complete tangent and the discussions can be as open or as closed as you like.

There may be a few of you wondering why I went to a course designed as an introduction, when I've been a Christian all my life. But last year my faith was seriously suffering a major malfunction. I feel that the course gave me a kick in the right direction; it was a major wake-up call to what God was telling me to do with my life. Sometimes we all need a reminder of what we believe as Christians. When talking to other Christians who are strangers, you can begin to question why you believe the things you do, maybe even change your beliefs a little. When I started the first course, back in October of last year, the Holy Spirit was something I thought about but never really understood. I'm not saying I completely understand it now, but I do feel I have a better understanding of it then ever before.

The Alpha Course has changed my life quite significantly and very much for the better. I strongly recommend it to anyone who is interested; I guarantee you there will be a course running somewhere near you right this very moment. Although the Parish Weekend must take precedence, it is even something to consider running here at Ash if enough people express an interest. I hope that some of you may experience the wake-up call that I did.

Mark Nurdin ☺

THE MIKADO (16th – 19th MAY 2007)

Hartley Gilbert & Sullivan Society presents The Mikado or The Town of Titipu from Wednesday 16th to Saturday 19th May at the Hartley WI Hall, Ash Road, Hartley. Performances begin at 8PM and tickets will be £7.50 available by calling the Box Office on 01474 704188. Come and support your local G&S Society as they put on possibly Gilbert & Sullivan's most famous and loved operetta featuring such famous numbers as 'Three Little Maids', 'I've Got a Little List' and 'Tit Willow'. Whether you're new to Gilbert and Sullivan or a life long fan come and enjoy what promises to be a fantastic show.

An URGENT plea from Joan Mills

We desperately need more people to clean the brass and the church. If anyone has just an hour to spare every so often please give your name to Joan or George. Thank you.

AFFIRMING CATHOLICISM ROCHESTER

At the next meeting the Labour MP for Medway, Bob Marshall-Andrews will be speaking on 'Theology and Freedom' at St. Augustine's Gillingham. Please note the revised date of Wednesday 16th May (7.30 for 8pm)

JOIN ARCHBISHOP TUTU AT ST ALBAN'S

Archbishop Desmond Tutu is coming to lead a Pilgrimage in the City on **Saturday 23rd June**. Three coaches have been booked leaving from Bromley and Sevenoaks at 8.15 am (contact **John Webber 020 8650 9164**) and from East Malling at 8.00 am (**Contact Canon Derek Carpenter 01732 874420**) Cost £13 per person. Closing date for bookings is Monday 4th June.

ASH FETE SATURDAY 23rd JUNE 2007

This may sound a long way in advance but the fete will be here before we know it. Planning has already started in earnest and once again we need all the help we can get. Please volunteer. It doesn't matter how little you can do or how much spare time you have, everyone will be welcome. It is always great fun – even though we are all worn out at the end of the day. It is a lovely way of getting to know more people and we would like everyone to be involved, young and old alike. There will soon be lists appearing as if by magic. If you would like to know more about anything please speak to **Ian Nurdin (873414)** or any other Fête Committee member - thanks!

BARN DANCE

This was once again a very successful evening and raised over £180. Thank you to everyone involved.

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

This was held on Tuesday 24th April 2007. **Colin Irving** was appointed Church Warden to serve alongside **Jacky Richardson**. **Michael Rose** has served the maximum 6 year term but remains a member of the PCC and he will also rejoin the serving team. Many thanks to Mike for all his hard work.