

Ash-cum-Ridley and New Ash Green

Church News

November 2007

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My dear friends,

Remember, remember, the fifth of November. I suppose that many will be celebrating Guy Fawkes this year (and others hiding their pets from the noise). I am not really sure what we are remembering, though. We certainly do not have the battle now between Catholic and Protestant, and surely no-one now would wish to blow up parliament (?!). Sometimes remembrance loses all of its original meaning.

On November 11th we will celebrate Remembrance Sunday. My late Aunt had a vivid memory of the First World War - but those who do are now few and far between and in but a few years no-one left alive will. I realise that other wars are also remembered on that day, but what is it that we are remembering when you have to be 70 to remember the Second War as well? I do not remember it any more than I remember Guy Fawkes. I do know, however, that many millions of men and women died in the name of peace - and many of the survivors suffer physically and emotionally still. Many others share their fate from lesser wars since. Let us salute their bravery and their memory - and, even if we do not remember the wars in which they fought, let us take up their banner and work to make this world one worthy of them.

November has two other days of memory as well - the first and second. On November the First we remember the great saints of the church - many of whom also gave their lives in the causes in which they believed. We remember the people throughout the centuries who taught and lived the Christian faith, including those after whom our two churches are named, Saints Peter and Paul.

The following day is known as 'All Souls' day. We remember those who for us have been Saints. Those who taught us and who we owe such a debt of gratitude. As the years pass it is good to be able to have a day when we can remember them. I pray that I may be able to live a life worthy of all that they did for me and taught me - for I owe them so much.

We will remember them.

Yours very sincerely,

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.

| | | | |
|------|------------------|---|-------------------------|
| Nov. | 4 th | Family Service and renewal of Brigades Promises | 10.30 a.m. |
| | 13 th | Ash P.C.C. meeting | 8.00 p.m. |
| | 17 th | Service of Thanksgiving for the Gift of a Child | 3.00 p.m. |
| | 20 th | Rota meeting followed by Ministry Team meeting | 7.00 p.m. |
| | 27 th | Ridley P.C.C. meeting | 8.00 p.m. |
| Dec. | 2 nd | Family Service and Junior Church Christmas Play | 10.30 a.m. |
| | 8 th | Bring and Buy at 64 Redhill Wood | 10.30 a.m. to 3.00 p.m. |

FROM THE REGISTERS

HOLY MATRIMONY

| | | |
|------|------------------|--|
| Sep. | 15 th | Stephen Roy Hadfield and Janice Barbara Parsons |
| | 22 nd | Julian Arthur Walker and Jillian Jameson Stewart |

FUNERALS

| | | | |
|------|------------------|--------------------|---------|
| Oct. | 3 rd | Bryan John Davison | aged 75 |
| | 19 th | Beryl Roberts | aged 72 |

May they rest in Peace

PARISH QUESTIONNAIRE REPORT

Earlier this year many of us filled in a questionnaire focussed on our church community. There was a good return of 50% filled in of those sent out. People from all age groups, from 3 years old upwards, responded to the questions, with a wide variety of offers of help and suggestions for changes. This suggests an encouraging enthusiasm for the church community and a desire to own and to 'have a say' in it.

Based on national statistics, the civil parish of 'Ash-cum-Ridley' has a larger than normal number of people in the 45-65 age bracket, and smaller than normal numbers in the 10-14, 25-29 and 75+ brackets. This is probably due to the date when New Ash Green first became lived in and the type of accommodation offered. It has an important bearing on the church community in that, in a few years time, we will have a *larger* than average proportion of over 60's, with the resultant problems that that brings of income, mobility, activity and leadership.

75% of residents claim to be Christian.

The main, unsurprising, fact to emerge from the questionnaires was that we are a body of individuals with individual likes and dislikes: virtually every suggestion for improving services had an equal and opposite suggestion!

However, comments focussed on four main areas:

WORSHIP AND SERVICES

The Peace: some people felt that this part of the service goes on too long, disrupting the flow of worship, and, perhaps even more importantly that newcomers and others are often left out while people rush to exchange the peace with their close friends and families.

Family Services: these were generally considered to be less satisfactory than the weekly Communion Services. It was felt that they appeared to be poorly prepared and presented, sometimes too long and uninteresting, and not always suitable for young families or those who are young in faith.

(N.B. *Since this was noted, members of the ministry team and others have undertaken some training in preparing and presenting family services, with more training to follow in the Spring.*)

Psalms: One or two people would like us to read or sing a psalm occasionally.

SOCIAL LIFE

Many people commented on how much they appreciate the social life of the church, especially Ash fete and the Rectory Barbecue, and the children particularly enjoy the Pancake Party. However some people also felt that there are several impenetrable friendship groups that make it hard for newcomers to feel as if they are a part of the church community.

SPIRITUAL LIFE

We lack activities - and maybe the inclination – to build up our faith together. As one person put it, “The church needs to be more focussed on God.” We also need to be more ready as a community to share and explore our own vision of God and to listen to that of others.

THE CHURCH BUILDING

We suffer from having a church building down a narrow lane well outside the main centre of the community and we should therefore look at ways of becoming more visible in New Ash Green.

We, and the people who visit us for weddings, concerts, etc., hope that it will not be long before we are allowed to build some toilets! We are aware that their absence prevents some people from attending services and other events.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Questionnaire was instigated and put together by the Parish Weekend Committee in order to evaluate our church life and to see where we need to put our focus for the Weekend. However, there are some things that can be put into progress now, so our recommendations are as follows ...

- all offers of help to be routed to the appropriate person either for use when necessary in the future, or to be used immediately.
- the social committee to look at suggestions for social events and begin to try to incorporate them, where possible, into the annual programme.
- some change has already begun, but there should be some on-going thought about the ‘Peace’ and how we share it in a more appropriate and inclusive manner.
- we should continue to review our work with children, young people and young families, especially the way Family Services are prepared and led (see ‘*Family Services*’ above).
- A small ‘outreach group’ has been established to look at ways of reaching out to New Ash Green that will not duplicate or clash with the excellent work already being done by the North Kent Community Church.

THE PARISH WEEKEND will be an opportunity to build up our sense of community and shared purpose, to develop a unified vision for achieving God’s purposes for us, and a timed action plan to realise that vision. Please continue to pray for the work of your church and for the Parish Weekend, and especially for Tim Sledge who will be leading us through it.

From: The Parish Weekend Steering Group, October

FLOWN OUT AT MOD EXPENSE

The e-mail arrived out of the blue. Would I be willing to do some work with the people who lead children's work in the army garrisons in Germany? I would be flown out at MOD expense. Always one for an adventure, I ignored my colleagues' comments about being parachuted out of a Hercules and replied, 'Yes please!'

It is easy to overlook the British Army in Germany, but, there are about 22,500 Service personnel, and a further 23,000 civilians based there, a population nearly the size of Gravesend. I realised that the young families were living in a different environment from the UK, but Padre Brian Elliot the Warden of Church House training centre, briefed me fully. It was a bonus to find that Roly had actually been there, though I felt a little insecure when I found that he talked regularly to Brian on the Internet. My reputation was going before me!

Church House is situated on the edge of a beautiful National park at Lübbecke, near Minden. It was built in 1938 for the Hitler Youth and used for training future leaders of Nazi Germany. Brian pointed out the remains of the 3rd Reich emblem on a wall and '19 HJ 38' - *Hitler Jugend 1938* - over the door. '*We are not far from Belsen*' he told me. But that is all that remains. Church House describes itself as, '*An oasis for all.*' It offers training on issues like leadership and stress management as well as explicitly Christian subjects. I shared the facilities with a 'Vocations' course, a group of youth workers, and a couple who came to crash out for a few hours. Rank and uniforms are left at the door, the atmosphere is welcoming and relaxed, and the food is excellent. Indeed, it is Christian hospitality at its very best.

About eighteen Sunday school leaders met me in the chapel on the morning of 22nd September. They were mostly young mothers; some also being primary school teachers. Some of them were Anglicans, and there were two Baptists, a Roman Catholic and a Methodist minister. Several people from the vocations' course and three children joined us for the afternoon so numbers and faces kept changing!

As most of the churches have just a few youngsters, I started with some of the opportunities and challenges of working with small groups and followed it with an exercise on learning with all the senses. After the coffee break, we had a session on worship, using the '*Godly Play*' idea of the sacred space. We learned a song to be used as a Gathering Rite and explored ways of using visual aids in teaching and prayer activities. I had set up some catalyst prayers around the chapel and invited them to create their own '*Thank you*' and '*Please*' prayers for use in the closing act of worship.

It was a beautiful day so the staff provided a marvellous barbecue in the garden for lunch and we stayed out there for a craft session on '*Jesus, the light of the world*', that could be used for All Saints-tide, Advent or Epiphany. We also looked at another song and a short drama on John's account of Jesus healing the blind man, and incorporated them into the worship.

It soon became clear that all but one of the leaders felt isolated. This was emphasised when someone observed that some young mothers lacked the confidence to venture outside the garrisons, even for shopping. Moreover, as families were always moving so it was hard to sustain a cohesive group of children. By the end of the day, we had formed an email group, and I have sent the feedback from the 'senses' exercise and some other information to the co-ordinator.

The second need was for resources and information. People were not sure how to access funding or advice – it is a totally different set-up from a parish, but Brian rescued me by telling them where and how to get both! They fell onto the small bookstall and handouts, and I answered several questions about materials for schools as well as churches. We also discussed BRF's discipling course, *Foundations 21*, which is computer based, so very suitable for people who are moving about.

There was a lot of humour but some moving moments. A young man said that he was a new Christian who had been baptised a year ago. His enthusiasm for the Gospel and desire to find the best way to share it imaginatively was powerful. A mother told me that her husband was due to go to Iraq. This would be her first Christmas away from home and she would be alone with the children.

With Iraq and Afghanistan constantly on our screens, it is easy to ignore the many places that the British Army is serving and the families that are there with them. This is cutting-edge mission with a group of people who are easily overlooked. I learned so much that was both interesting and humbling.

By the way, 'MOD expense' is a seat on a Boeing 737 from Stansted!

Margaret Withers

BBC1 'SONGS OF PRAISE FOR REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY:

Will come from **Rochester cathedral** and will show a few familiar faces!

THE SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE AT ASH WAR MEMORIAL:

Is arranged for 10.45 a.m. on Friday 9th November and children from New Ash Green Primary School will again be taking part in the service.

THE CHANGING WORLD SCENE - HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND?

Come and discuss this question with members of other churches in Cobham Deanery.

When? **Saturday 3 November 2007**
 from 9.45 to 12 noon [Coffee at 9.45, “Workshop” from 10 until 12]

Where? **Christ Church Hall, Snodland**

Facilitators: Becky Rust from Christian Aid and someone from Rochester Diocesan World Mission Forum.

This is an event organised by Cobham Deanery Synod but open to all.

CHRISTMAS “BRING AND BUY”

SATURDAY 8TH DECEMBER @ 64 REDHILL WOOD
10.30 a.m. TO 3 p.m.

Again this year you will be able to buy gifts, cards, wrapping paper, gift tags and many hand crafted items. There will be a raffle for a Christmas hamper and other Christmas items and a chocolate and wine tombola.

Sale items can be given before (please see Ann or Pauline) or on the day. SMALL items, in good condition, suitable for Christmas gifts would be most welcome as well as bottles of wine, homemade cakes, pastries or sweets, jam and mincemeat or anything connected with Christmas.

If you haven't been before please come along and bring a friend. Children are most welcome and a good time is guaranteed. Ploughmen's lunches (£3.00 each) will be available from 12.00 noon with tea, coffee and mince pies throughout the day. Entrance is free but donations are welcome and all proceeds will go to the Church.

If you are unable to come but would like to donate maybe a bottle of wine or homemade cake or buy raffle tickets please see Ann or Pauline.

Transport will be available on the day from Turners Oak, Hanover Place etc. Please ring Ann on 873385 to arrange a time.

**PLEASE CONTINUE TO PRAY FOR OUR LINK PARISH OF ST PAUL'S
MARLBOROUGH HARARE, ZIMBABWE**

A recent report from Tearfund gave out this information;

Scarcity of food has become so critical in Zimbabwe that more than 4 million people could face starvation before the next harvest if the current situation continues.

And Zimbabweans are not only facing a food crisis - there are water, electricity, fuel and foreign currency shortages too.

Poverty, once concentrated in rural areas and manifesting itself in water-borne diseases and malnutrition, is now sharply increasing in major cities.

In response to the emergency, Tearfund has launched an appeal to increase the work that is already being done with our partners there.

For some time partners have been feeding orphans, supplying clean water and helping families provide for themselves. Now, in the face of the escalating crisis, the work needs to expand so that lives can be saved.

*You can help with this appeal. For more information on the crisis, **see our website** or call our Supporter Enquiries team on 0845 355 8355.*

Over 4,000 white-owned farms have been seized by the Zimbabwean government as part of its land redistribution programme. Since then agricultural production has fallen sharply and with poor rains and bad harvests, the once food-secure country has become reliant on food aid.

During a recent trip to Zimbabwe we asked people what they would like us to pray for:

'My hope would be... it's quite a difficult question. I would say God has got the answer to this. I know someone out there can help me. Someone can feel for me and this family. Someone can give some mealie (maize) meal, some clothes and some financial assistance. I think a prayer can be the answer to this entire question. I would say so, because I believe in God anyway. That's all I can say.'

Joseph, Zimbabwe

- *Please pray for the millions of Zimbabweans who are at risk of starvation.*
- *Pray that aid would get to those who need it most. Ask that the political situation would change in Zimbabwe and that corruption and injustice would end.*
- *Pray also for our partners in the country that they would be protected as they work to provide for communities.*
- *Please continue to pray for our own link parish.*

ADVENT COURSE

Turners Oak 8.00 p.m. Wednesday 7th November for four weeks.

All are welcome to attend a course in Preparation for Advent;

Spiritual Disciplines: Study Meditation: Bible Studies

The course involves '*Transformation Exercises.*' Essential equipment: a Holy Bible!
Course details from **Lawrie Townson** [872256]

BRYAN DAVISON

Bryan, following a short illness, died on the 20th September at Darenth Park Hospital.

The Funeral Service was held at Medway Crematorium, followed by a service of Thanksgiving and Celebration at St Peter and St Paul on Wednesday 3rd October.

The Gospel from St John 6 v 35- 40 was read by Bryan's son, Michael, at both services. Martin Lloyd, Bryan's Brother-in-Law gave a tribute at the Service of Thanksgiving.

It was good to welcome Geoffrey, Marie, the Grandchildren Katie and Christopher and other members of the family.

Much can be written about Bryan but these words composed by Jane from the messages she received from Family and Friends say more about Bryan than one individual can:

A TRIBUTE TO BRYAN MADE BY HIS FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Such a lovely man

He was a very kind person and I can't believe he's gone

He would do anything for his friends

When we sit in our garden we will say 'cheers' to Bryan and think of your garden so painstakingly created

He will be missed so much - he was such a quiet and kind man

He contributed so much to the life of New Ash Green

He was a very special friend, warm and affectionate

His ready smile.....

Softly-spoken gentle man with a warm smile and lovely sense of fun

He was such a gentleman

He had a tranquil approach and had a delicate way of getting difficult matters progressed

He would arrive in our back garden with a barrow full of plants then proceed to plant them

Happy memories of him being the pirate captain on a ship made out of cushions on the living-room floor, later (of course) the model railway and the boat

We have asked for prayers to be said for him by the monks in Nepal at a place that is very special and one of the most peaceful places we know.

The Offertory at the Service came to more than £600+ which has been divided between the Ellenor Hospice and St Peter & St Paul's.

Jane also chose an Old Testament reading from Lamentations chapter 3:

*The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,
his mercies never come to an end;
they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.
'The Lord is my portion,' says my soul,
'therefore I will hope in him.'
The Lord is good to those who wait for him,
to the soul that seeks him.
It is good that one should wait quietly
for the salvation of the Lord.*

Jane and the family know that our prayers and thoughts have been and remain with them.

Lawrie Townson [Reader]

SELF CONDEMNATION

So many Christians struggle with incessant self-condemnation. This self-condemnation can be a product of mental health issues or it can be a contributing factor towards their development. Either way, challenging incessant self-condemnation is an essential undertaking.

Of course self-condemnation is not a disassociated habit, it stems from poor self image, guilt, childhood labels, shame, critical parenting and a number of other sources. Exploring the roots of your self-condemnation will be an important step in challenging its power in your life.

What is self-condemnation? Well it is your own voice internalised; self-talk that commentates negatively on your value, person-hood, actions, feelings and behaviours. Common experiences of self-condemnation would be, "You are stupid, unacceptable, weak". "You are sinful, unworthy, a fraud". "You are unforgiven, unlovable, a failure".

You might assume that Christians would automatically experience less self-condemnation than other people, since the whole Christian message stands in opposition to these messages. However, often Christians give licence to their self-condemnation though a mistaken interpretation of Christian doctrine.

Some Christians mistake self-condemnation for the voice of conscience that is prompting them to confess their failings to Jesus even though they have already confessed them and been forgiven. Others justify their self condemnation by believing it is a helpful tool that stops them making the same mistakes twice. Still others see self-condemnation as a form of healthy punishment that they should both initiate and endure as some form of penance for their failings or shortfalls.

All of the assumptions above are mistaken; in fact they stand in the face of the cross of Jesus and his grace. Maintaining self-condemnation for presumed spiritual justification is something to let go of. Jesus has come to heal and restore, he wants you to stop holding onto your past sins and the consequential labels those mistakes have given you. He wants you to walk away from punishing yourself, standing under the insults of others or the labels of your childhood. The direct translation of the word devil is the 'accuser' or 'slanderer', he likes nothing more than to leave you in the false belief that self condemnation is a healthy spiritual discipline that keeps you from becoming proud.

There is a story in John Ch 8 where a woman is being judged having been caught in adultery. Jesus challenges the judges with their own shortcomings, then he asks the woman (v7F)"Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

In this story Jesus doesn't let sin off the hook (something many self condemners are worried about). Instead he deals with sin and condemnation separately. Jesus dealt with our sin at the cross when he took our sin upon himself.

Romans 8:1 says "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering".

Jesus removed our sin and the bible says there is "now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus". Jesus dealt with the woman's with real compassion; he refuses to condemn her whilst still challenging her lifestyle.

We all need to refuse to condemn ourselves because Jesus has said that there is no condemnation for us. At the same time we need to healthily challenge our behaviour to be more like him.

Try and choose to say gentle and loving things to yourself today, if you are struggling, think about what Jesus would say to you; "You are my precious child, you are forgiven, I love you, have my peace, know that I will never leave you".

Have a day of affirmation and say goodbye to condemnation.

Will Van Der Hart, 01/09/200