



Round-up Why *The Spire* needs you; Church of England census results

There I was, chatting away between sips of wine at Brian's farewell evening when an arm wrapped its way round my shoulders. I looked up to see Brian.

I quickly weighed up the situation. Was he in need of physical support? No, too early in the evening for that! Had I forgotten to do up my flies? Thankfully, not that.

'You know you mentioned you used to layout newspapers?' he asked. 'Yes,' I said, trying to recall exactly when I'd let slip about my career in print.

'Well, I wondered if you would help us with *The Spire*?' And so it began.

I hope you have noticed the changes we have introduced in the past month. The aim is to both increase the content and make it easier to find everything. Over the coming months we hope to provide more news from the Church as a whole, as well as exploring what being a Christian means.

This month includes a new section devoted to our younger members, the Jays; there's a crossword to please and tax the brains of wordsmiths; and some car-

toons to raise a smile.

Hopefully these changes present a more welcoming feel to the magazine, reflecting Brian's aim of making *St James*' look out on the world. Don't forget, many people who come into contact with the church through events such as weddings and baptisms are not regular church-goers. We hope they will take away a copy of the magazine and want to return.

Brian had a gift for seeing the talents we all have and finding ways to use them in church life. His energy and enthusiasm was reflected everywhere - including this magazine. His departure makes it even more important for all of us to get involved. Think about ways in which you could contribute. We welcome letters on *any* subject, not just those in the magazine. Have you done something that would be of interest to the wider community? Could you answer the monthly question?

This magazine is only as good as we make it. So don't just *read* it, help us to *write* it. Be inspired by *The Spire*.

Nick Bagge

Many churches in England are in a healthier state now than seven years ago, according to the 2005 English Church Census. Some churches are doing very well, and overall they are not losing as many people as they were.

The census showed that in the 1990s one million people left church in nine years, but in the seven years from 1998-2005 only 500,000 left, a much slower rate of decline, showing that church-going in England is beginning to pull out of the previous 'nosedive'.

The two major reasons for this are the number of churches which are growing, and a considerable increase in ethnic minority attenders.

Over a third of churches are growing (compared with 21% in 1998), while the proportion which are declining has fallen from two thirds to only half. A quarter of the churches which were declining in the 1990s have not only stemmed their losses, but are now growing.

However, the declining churches are still losing more people than the growing churches are gaining. The net effect is that overall 6.3% of the population are now in church on an average Sunday (compared with 7.5% in 1998).

Dr Peter Brierley, who undertook the census, said: 'It is important that church leaders learn from those who are doing well, and build for the future.'

PULPIT HUMOUR



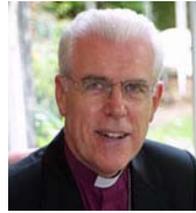
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**All copy for
the December
issue must be
with us by
13 November**

...you'll be pleased to know that **all** your son's biometric information is contained on this new style baptism card...

Are you ready to answer the call?

The Rt Rev Michael Colclough, Bishop of Kensington, hopes a new ministry will challenge and inspire many more people to 'come and see'



I want to write about a new, exciting development in the ordained ministry, to be offered first in our area. Deanery Licensed Ministers will attract different men and women to offer themselves for it, and a ministry which you will see being exercised in new patterns of working in the next few years in your parish or a parish near you.

But as we begin, perhaps you could spend a few moments talking with your neighbour about some moment in your life when the ministry of a deacon, priest or bishop was particularly significant.

You always have to be careful when talking about particular vocations in the Church. When St Augustine became a bishop in North Africa 1610 years ago this year he reminded his people that: 'First I am a Christian along with you, secondly I am a bishop for you.' I have been ordained a deacon, then a priest, then a bishop - but the most important event in my life was my baptism in the parish church of St John, Longton, in early 1945.

St Paul, writing to the Galatians, expresses the importance of that moment and day in the these words:

'For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptised into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Christ.' (Gal 3: 26-28).

Yes, we are one in Christ and share together in our baptismal vocation of witnessing to Christ in our world - whatever else we may do in our lives. It is St Peter who reminds all of us that we are to let ourselves 'be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy Priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ'. (1 Peter 2:9).

Some people, however, are called to particular min-

istries in the Church: the three-fold ordained ministry of Bishop, priest/presbyter and deacon, other recognised ministries such as Reader, Evangelist, Teacher. What we have to remember is that all such callings, all such vocations come from Jesus - and all Christian ministry is commissioned by Jesus. We are sent out in his name.

The calling of the first disciples in St John's Gospel has always spoken very strongly to me about vocation. Listen to that passage again: John 1 35-42.

If all callings come from Jesus - and I believe that they do - then this Gospel passage points us very clearly to certain aspects of vocation.

I like the rather tentative way in which Andrew and the other disciple (probably St John himself) begin their following of Jesus: 'Where are you staying?' they ask. These are the first Gospel followers - many would come after - and, like most of us they follow Jesus because of what they have heard someone else say about him. Someone they knew, trusted and respected - in this case John the Baptist. We are told that, until this particular day and encounter with Jesus, they had been two of John's disciples.

The New Testament does not show us John the Baptist sharing in the evangelistic mission of the Church but it is John's conviction and John's witness, 'Look, there is the Lamb of God', that starts these two first disciples on their path of following Jesus and abiding with Jesus. Later in St John's Gospel we hear John the Baptist talking of his own relationship with Jesus and saying: 'He must increase, but I must decrease' (3:30).

John is realistic about his own vocation and role. John is not possessive with his friends, his disciples - he generously points them to Jesus. John the Baptist has discerned that it is with Jesus that these men will

fulfil their vocation and use their gifts to the full. My own vocation to the priesthood began in a small coal-mining village in Stoke-on-Trent.

Throughout this Gospel passage we see a two-way process going on. What Andrew and Simon Peter thought they were doing was looking for the Messiah. What they did not realise at the time was the Messiah was looking for them. Jesus - looking for them - and, when he finds them, he gives them a new vocation ('fishing for people' as St Mark calls it). The initiative comes from Jesus - and brings change to their lives. For Simon, even his name is changed.

Part of our discipleship is looking, searching for Jesus. But the wonderful thing is that Jesus is looking for us, longing to embrace us and lead us into new ways. Wanting us to be with him in his vocation as the Messiah. These callings in St John's Gospel take place before the wedding at Cana where Jesus revealed 'the first of his signs'. In St Mark's Gospel none of Jesus' healings and miracles take place until after Jesus had surrounded himself with a group of followers, with the people of the Messiah. The disciples are integral to Jesus' own mission and calling. And, of course, Jesus sees these followers as nothing less than God's gift to him. Later, in his high priestly prayer (Chapter 17 of St John's Gospel) we hear Jesus praying: 'I have made your name known to those who you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you...'

So when we talk of Christian calling, Christian vocation, we are not simply talking about another job. It is clear from the pages of the New Testament that Christian calling is nothing less than the gift and the grace of God himself. The various

ministries of word and sacrament that we have in our churches - they are nothing less than the gift of God to us. Your clergy - and other ministers - are gifts from God to Jesus, to His Church.

I am very grateful that, in the parishes of this Episcopal Area, we have people who are pointing others to Jesus, the Lamb of God. Clergy and people who, by the depth and integrity of their own lives of Christian discipleship, raise questions in other peoples minds. I am grateful that the Ministry Division of the Church of England and the Bishops of the London Diocese have given support for the Kensington Area to pilot a new scheme that will, hopefully, enable a greater variety of people to offer themselves for the ordained ministry. It is a scheme that will, I believe, give us not only more ordained ministers to equip the Church in its mission but will also give a wider and richer experience of ministry within the Church.

Deanery Licensed Ministers will be people from your parish who are challenged with the gospel call to 'come and see', challenged to see if, for them, this means being ordained within the ministry of God's Church. They will be non-stipendiary and live at home. They will do a three year curacy in a parish like all other newly ordained clergy and, after that curacy, will be available to serve where the Church needs them. Some of our parishes are very large but have only one priest. In such parishes the demand for baptism, weddings and funerals can more than fill the diary of the incumbent for one week.

Such a venture, if it is to bear fruit, must be truly offered to God in prayer. Keep your eyes open for suitable candidates: you, yourself, may be a modern-day John the Baptist who points someone else to where Jesus wants them to be. That's an important vocation in itself!

'Christian calling is nothing less than the gift and grace of God himself'

A Sunday School that is all-inclusive



The Jays Sunday School is a lively, caring group for children aged from three-and-a-half to 11, with four teachers.

Why 'The Jays'? The name was derived many years ago and simply denotes the 'J' for St. James and 'J' for Jesus.

They meet most Sunday mornings in the Church Hall. The exceptions are the first Sunday of each month, when there is an all age service that is suitable for the children to attend, and the three main school holidays (they do meet during half term holidays).

They sometimes act as sidepersons, read lessons, say prayers and assist with parish breakfast during the services on the first Sunday of each month. The children also put on activities for Mothering Sunday, Easter, Harvest and Christmas.

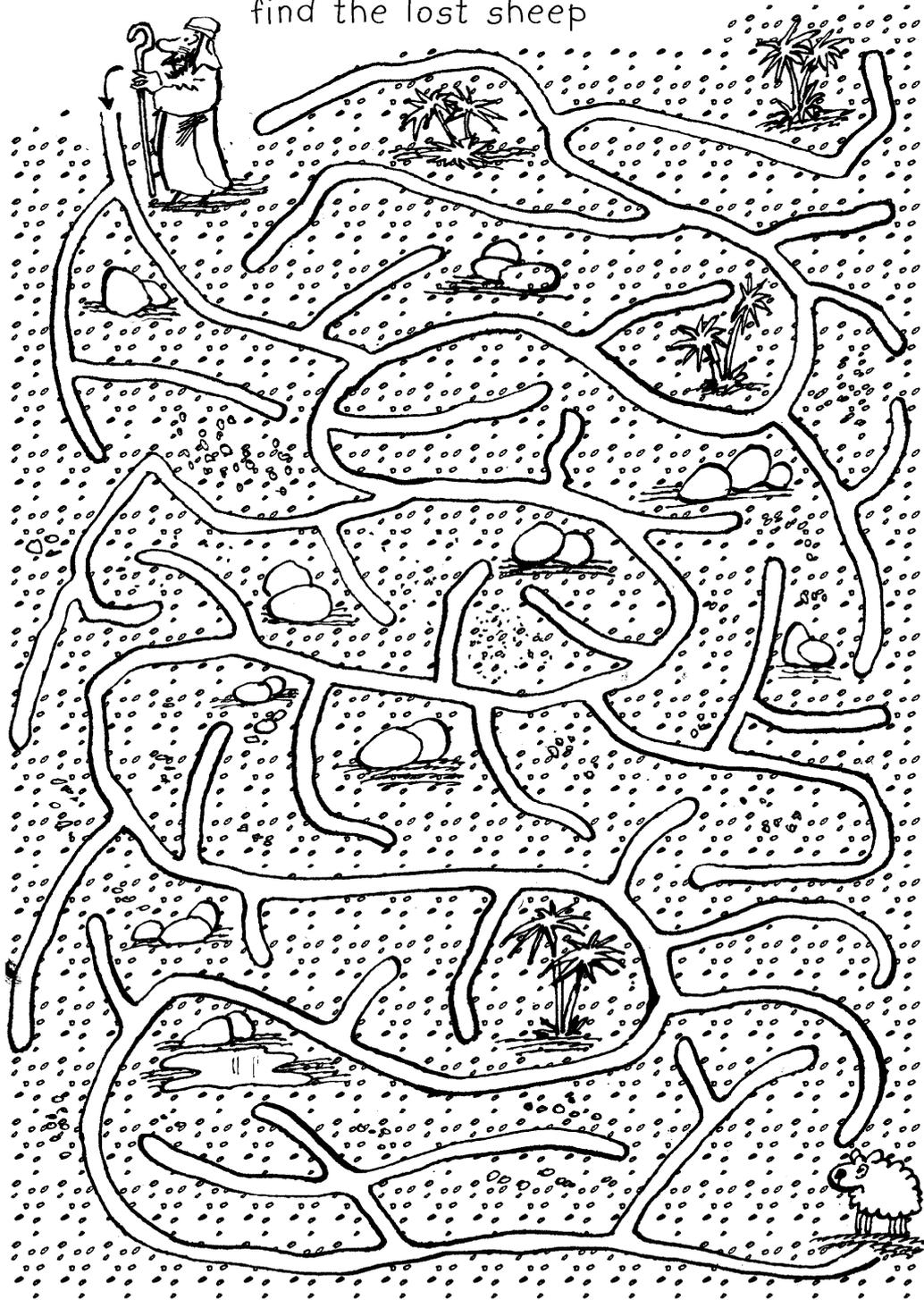
Sunday School starts at 9.30am in the church. During the last verse of the first hymn one of the children goes up to the altar to receive a cross. This is then taken into the hall by all the children who then have their usual Sunday School meeting. At the end of the meeting, they return to church and one of them takes the cross to the altar along with the offertory.

They join with the rest of the congregation in receiving a blessing or communion and singing the last hymn. This way children are included in the church service and feel part of it even though they spend most of the time in the hall.

The teachers use a variety of materials which includes booklets to take home. They follow the church calendar so that they are an extension of the church and congregation, not a separate entity. They have parties during the year and a summer picnic in order to accommodate the wide age range.

• For further information, contact Lou Coaker on 020 8979 2040

The Lost Sheep - help the shepherd find the lost sheep



What's On

Does Creating Wealth Cost the Earth? 7 November, 6.30pm, St Paul's Cathedral. Speakers include Rt Rev Richard Chartres, Bishop of London; Tim Smit, Eden Project; Sir David King, Govt advisor. Admission free. 020 7489 1011.

RNLI Coffee Morning

18 November, 10am-12 noon, Baptist Church, Teddington. Twickenham



and District Branch sale of Christmas cards, puddings of various sizes, souvenirs and books.

The Lust for Certainty 21 November, 6.30pm, St Mary's Church, Putney. Discussion on the dangers of dogmatism, scientific and religious. Speakers include Anthony Kenny, Stuart Sim and Giles Fraser. Admission free.

Christians and Muslims: toward the future 27 November, 7.30pm, St Marylebone Parish Church,

Marylebone Road. Annual lecture, this year by Dr Chris Hewer, St Ethelburga Fellow in Christian-Muslim Relations. Admission free. 020 7563 1388.

Sharing God's Planet 24 November, 9.45am, St Paul's Cathedral. Study day to encourage theological thinking about environment. Speakers include Peter Brimblecombe, University of East Anglia; and Celia Deane-Drummond, University of Chester. Cost £40 concessions £35). 020 7489 1011.



Website

Have you noticed the new-look website? Navigation is easier, some sections have been changed to make it more logical, most pages have been updated and new pages are being added. Thank you to all contributors of pictures and text - please continue to do so. As well as this *Spire* magazine you can now read online extracts from issues from January 2000.

Prill Hinckley

A queen who looked up, not down

This month's saint, Margaret of Scotland, fed the poor, sought the unity of the church and strove for peace, but, as **Val Traylen** discovers, also recognised her own innate sinfulness and fallibility



Margaret was born about 1045, the granddaughter of King Edmund of England. Exiled with her family when the Danish King Canute invaded, she was educated in her mother's homeland of Hungary.

She returned to England in 1066 when her brother Edgar claimed the throne as successor to Edward the Confessor. He was rejected by the nobles in favour of Harold and fled with his family when William of Normandy invaded.

As they sailed for the continent from Northumbria their ship was blown off course and forced to land in Fife. There King Malcolm - who had himself been an exile at the English court after Macbeth murdered his father - offered protection to the royal family and marriage to Margaret.

Initially she refused, perhaps preferring a convent, but in 1069 she accepted. It was a happy and fruitful marriage both personally - they had eight children - and politically.

As Queen of Scotland, Margaret encouraged edu-

cation and the arts, and introduced continental culture, manners and fashion to the Scottish court. She also instigated reforms in the Scottish church.

Although encouraging devotion to Scottish saints, supporting the traditional Celtic hermits and reviving Iona, Margaret also invited English priests and Benedictine monks to introduce Roman rites, and in particular Latin mass in place of the many Gaelic dialects.

The effect of her influence on court and church was to integrate Scotland culturally and economically with Europe.

She may also have hoped that it would foster friendlier feelings between Scotland and England, despite the constant battles over Northumbria.

She had a particular concern for the poor, who benefited from her lavish almsgiving, the provision of hostels, and from the promotion of Sunday as a holiday. She frequently visited and cared for the sick herself.

In private she devoted her time to needlework, reading and prayer. Her penitential

'Where the saint differs from the cynic is looking beyond human fallibility'

fasting may have damaged her health. She had already been ill for some time when in 1093 she learned that Malcolm and their eldest son had been killed in a skirmish in Northumbria. She died a few days later, on 16 November 1093, aged 47.

Miracles at Margaret's tomb brought her canonisation in 1250 and she was declared patron of Scotland in 1673.

For centuries she was regarded as an ideal for Christian rulers - personally devout, generous to the poor, seeking the unity of the church and peace between nations.

But as feudal kingship gave way to parliamentary democracy the royal saints were relegated to stories for children, illustrated with a pretty medievalism that belies the realities of 11th century life.

It is only when we turn from story to history that we

see how Margaret faced religious and cultural issues that are not unfamiliar today.

The choices she made were rooted in prayer and the penitential lifestyle of someone who recognised her innate sinfulness and fallibility. She did not merely 'do justly and love mercy' but she 'walked humbly with God'. That humble walk with God is the essence of holiness. It means looking for and responding to reality, acknowledging human fallibility as a painful part of that reality, and therefore being constantly open to correction, confession and change.

Where the saint differs from the cynic is in looking beyond human fallibility to the God who says: 'My grace is sufficient for you. It is in your weakness that my strength finds its full expression.' (2 Cor 12/9)



This month's question - and your answers to last month's

LAST MONTH WE ASKED

Statistics show that churches grow during short interregnums. Why have a parish priest?

You replied

Counsellor and confidante

Perhaps the important words in the introduction to the question are 'short interregnums'. In a long interregnum the same statistics show a withering of the church. A trusted parish priest has a unique function in the community as a whole. He or she is a confidant or confidante and guide in the many practical as well as the spiritual crises members of the local community, churchgoers and non-churchgoers face. Direct counsel in matters of faith,

emotional distress or life decisions is an obvious function, but possibly as important is the confidential guidance that a priest can give to the desperate or confused in the personal crises that some people face. Knowledge of not only the social machinery but the local expert in that particular field, and an introduction, is the sort of help that priests give unstintingly.

I imagine the sort of reply a priest will give to such a person in distress might be: 'I understand your problem, I can't help you directly, but I do know someone who has expert knowledge in this area.'

Sometimes even the best answer to the problem is painful. In which case the

priest is there for direct counsel in bearing the pain.

Name and address supplied

We need a leader

I think the crucial word here is 'short'. I am surprised if it is true that churches actually grow during an interregnum, but I am sure that the congregation feel the need to sort of help together to keep everything going as normally as possible until the arrival of the new priest. However, if this situation continued for a long time, it would be difficult to keep up the enthusiasm and it is likely that people would drift away.

All organisations need a leader, from nations to businesses, schools to local clubs. Someone in charge of

running the organisation and making decisions. A priest will do all this but is much more than just an administrator: they will also give spiritual guidance and help in time of need, teach, administer the sacraments, be the visible link between the church and the local community and be available to the parishioners in a multitude of ways.

Name and address supplied

THIS MONTH WE ASK

How can we say the Creed when we are doubtful about some of its components?

We'll print a selection of your replies in next month's issue of *The Spire*.

Send your replies to the Parish Office, to reach us by 12 November

Round-up from St James' and the local area



Confirmation will take place at St James' at 6.30pm on 26 November. Please come and support our candidates.

The annual Youth Concert on 15 October raised £260 for the Shooting Star Trust. Over 60 children took part in this the fourth concert, with growing confidence. The choir sang two songs, including *Sailing*, and the St James' Players handled Handel to *Superman*. Roll on next October!

Janet Nunn has now retired from her voluntary work as Brian's secretary, a task she performed for many years. We thank her for all she has done, unseen, to keep things running smoothly. Janet remains secretary of the PCC.

Elizabeth Wilmot, Jane and Darcy Cox, Coryn Robinson and Annie Crawford have spent many hours learning to ring the bells and are now helping on Sundays. We are glad to have them on the team as it will ensure that we can ring every Sunday and for weddings and other occasions.

Free lunchtime talks at Hampton School have started again. There are two this month: Vincent Cable MP, on 6 November; and Jeff McAllister, Head of the Lon-

don Bureau of *Time* magazine, on 13 November. Both start at 12.40pm. There is no need to book, but ring the school office on the day to check it is going ahead.

If you are going to an event which you think may interest readers of *The Spire*, but do not have your own digital camera, please borrow one from the church office.

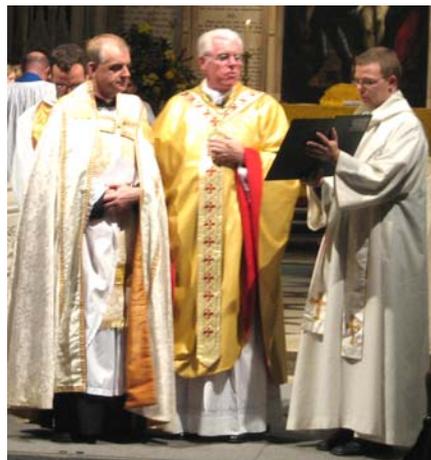
The next visit of the Theatre Club to Richmond Theatre will be on Tuesday 21 November to see *Three Men in a Boat*. If you are interested, please sign the list at the back of the church or contact Maria Beaumont on 020 8943 4336.

Upwards of 50 guests enjoyed the annual Baptismal Party. Friends old and new chatted over a sumptuous tea, and the children were able to explore the nooks and crannies of the church. A big thank you to all those who helped.

Lucy Moritzen, daughter of Greta Rosten, has successfully completed her parachute jump and raised £2600 for the Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths. Well done, Lucy!

Thank you for all the harvest gifts for SPEAR. The collection continued to grow during October.

We have so far received £1196 towards the cost of producing *The Spire*. Thank you to everyone. It's not too late to send donations to the Parish Office. Make cheques payable to 'St James' Church Magazine Account'.



Picture: Prill Hinckley. More pictures online

Brian's Induction

'Very impressive' was the overwhelming reaction of the 90 of us who attended Brian's Institution and Induction as Rector of Chelsea on 5 October. Descending from the coaches, we were struck by the very tall tower of St. Luke's, silhouetted against the dark sky, and then, as we entered the church, by the great height and soaring arches. As the service began, the combined choirs of St. Luke's and Christ Church, together with the wonderful organ, gave the impression that we were in a cathedral rather than a parish church. The service proceeded with due ceremony and formality, but also with joy. From the lofty pulpit, Bishop Michael spoke of the need for all of us to play our part in worship, witness and service. Brian was welcomed by representatives of both churches. Holy Communion was celebrated (and one of our number said later, it was very strange to receive communion from Brian knowing he is not 'ours' any more). After

the recessional hymn, we were made most welcome in the hall. We returned home, feeling that with the uplifting service and fine music, followed by good food, wine and company, Brian will soon feel at home in his new parish! We remember him, Ramani and Anusha in our prayers as they start this new phase in their lives.

Registers

for September

BAPTISMS

- 10** Grace Anne Futtit, Hampton Hill
- 10** Toby Daniel Barber, West Ewell
- 10** Kian Patrick Le Gros, Hampton

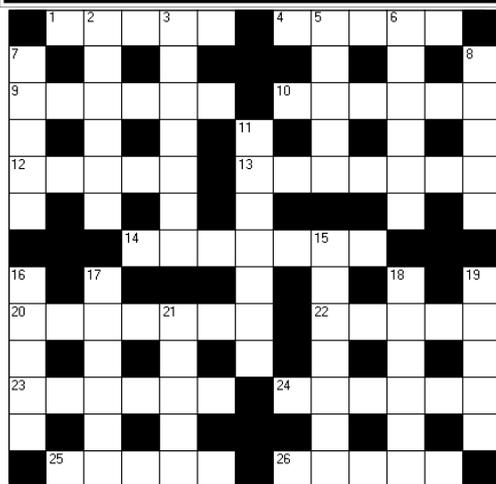
WEDDINGS

- 16** Claire Louise Pattison and Vladimir Tandara

FUNERALS

- 6** Anne Ward, 68, Hampton

If you have a news item please send it to the Parish Office



Crossword

Across

- 1 Cereal (5)
- 4 eg liver (5)
- 9 Ascends, as Moses ascended Mount Nebo in Deuteronomy ch. 34 (6)
- 10 Detestable God of the people of Ammon in 2 Kings ch. 23 (6)
- 12 Easily understandable (5)
- 13 ..because you are called an _____ (Jer 30.17) (7)
- 14 Sixth son of Jacob and Leah in Genesis ch. 30 (7)
- 20 Violent stream of water in Luke ch./ 6 (7)
- 22 Eli fell backwards off his in 1 Samuel ch. 4 (5)
- 23 Insurance underwriters (6)
- 24 Description of Aaron in Exodus ch. 4 (6)

- 25 Jesus was offered wine mixed with this substance in Mark ch. 15 (5)
- 26 The water in Ezekiel ch. 47 reached up to this joint (5)

Down

- 2 Each (6)
- 3 Father of the apostles James and John (7)
- 5 In Psalm 147 it is scattered like ashes (5)
- 6 Early hominid (3-3)
- 7 ..they _____ walls like soldiers (Joel 2.7) (5)
- 8 Colour of overmantle worn by Carmelite friars (5)
- 11 Nahum ch. 3 compares guards and officials to these insects (7)
- 15 Ritually prohibited as food (7)

- 16 Coral reef (5)
- 17 Feeling urge for motherhood (6)
- 18 OT lion tamer (6)
- 19 Proverbs ch. 11 says that the righteous will thrive like such a leaf (5)
- 21 Sea duck (5)

The answers, together with a new crossword, will appear in next month's issue of *The Spire*.

Rebuilding a country full of hope



Visiting Rwanda has been a long-held ambition of **Ann Peterken**. Here she describes the effect it had on her.

With the busy weeks leading up to Brian's farewell, not many people knew I was going to Rwanda at the end of September on a trip organised by the Church Mission Society (CMS).

I gained so much from my two-week visit that it's going to be difficult to capture the essence in a few words.

Why Rwanda? Like most people my awareness of Rwanda started with the terrible genocide that swept the country in 1994. Two years later I read a book by Lesley Bilinda, a young Scottish lady whose Tutsi husband was one of the victims. I wrote to thank the author and was delighted when she responded. We have been in contact ever since and I've kept an active interest in the country where she once lived so happily.

Rwanda is about the size of Wales, with a population of 8.3 million. Also known as the Land of a Thousand Hills, its mountainous topography is due to its position on the rim of part of the Great Rift Valley. Western and central Rwanda, where I travelled, are characterised by a seemingly endless vista of steep mountains - a bit like Tuscany, except for all the banana trees!

My first impressions as we were driven to our first guesthouse were the large numbers of people walking

along the side of the road; women carrying heavy loads on their heads and babies on their backs; children in school uniforms; brightly coloured clothes and plastic flip flops; bicycles loaded with more sacks and containers than seemed humanly possible; and numerous people working in the surrounding fields.

The purpose of the CMS trip was for each of us (11 in total) to experience Christianity in a culture other than our own. We were guests in three of the nine dioceses of the Episcopal Church in Rwanda, part of the worldwide Anglican Communion. In each diocese we were greeted warmly by the bishop and diocesan staff, by the Mothers' Union and by the people who catered for our needs. I really appreciated that nobody apologised for not being able to give us all the comforts we take for granted, such as hot water. They generously gave us the best that they could. We formed a close bond with our hosts.

The most important message for me to share is the holistic approach the church is taking on evangelism. In each diocese, the bishops and their staff were eager that we understood their vision. Yes they are preaching the good news of Jesus Christ, but alongside health, educational and agricultural programmes to help people



Picture: Ann Peterken

out of poverty and handouts. They use clergy training programmes to teach about community development, so that each student can be an ambassador for new ideas on return to their village. In our first diocese, the Bible School was called the Bible and Development School. This was hugely encouraging to me, seeing Mission and Development so intricately combined.

The work of the church is doubly impressive when you understand the great needs of the people.

They are not only poor, but have experienced trauma and loss from the genocide, and are having to deal with the impact of HIV/AIDS as well as other illnesses. There are so many widows and orphans and child-headed families.

How easy it would be to despair at the enormity of the task, but I saw none of that. I saw self-help groups where each member pools their meagre income in a common bank account so that the interest allows each of them to buy a national

medical insurance card. I saw head teachers act as parents to students, and spend what money they have on individuals rather than on the school. I saw people making beautiful crafts for sale. I saw health centres for HIV testing, treatment and support. I saw stretchers used to carry patients many miles to hospital.

Behind all these activities are inspirational people who simply get on with it, including Angelique, Emmanuel, Immaculée, and Eve.

I enjoyed two vibrant and joyous Sunday morning worship services and will long remember the white faces of my fellow travellers amidst a sea of eager locals all wanting to shake hands and bid us welcome.

If I have to use one word to describe my trip it would be 'uplifting'. Rwanda is a country of hope, with much to teach us about personal expression of our Christian faith. I am greatly enriched by the experience and wish that everyone could make such a trip once in their lifetime.

'Rwanda is a country of hope with much to teach us about expression of our Christian faith'



Letters to the Editor

We welcome letters on any subject. Please include a full postal address and telephone number with correspondence. Send to: Letters, *The Spire*, Parish Office, St James' Church, St James' Road, Hampton Hill, Middlesex TW12 1DQ. You may also email them to: office@stjames-hamptonhill.org.uk. We reserve the right to edit all letters for space.

Forward with *The Spire*

Six months into *The Spire's* new format, and it is time to move from an initially wary acceptance of the change into enthusiastic acceptance.

In those months, we have also been adjusting to the far greater changes coming out of Brian's move to Chelsea; and the realisation, as Rodney has pointed out, that during this interregnum, we, the parish, are now the Leader.

Thanks to Brian's teachings over the 17 years of his incumbency, we can face these changes with the

utmost confidence.

Looking back to April, and the first new-look *Spire*, we can reflect on his words in that issue: 'We need constantly to find new ways of speaking the truth which never changes'.

In doing this, the editorial team is greatly strengthened by being able to draw on the experience and insights of new member Nick Bagge.

Welcome on board, Nick!

And thanks to you all for the truly memorable October issue, and its coverage of Brian's departure.

Jack Gostling

Brian's help in time of need

Thank you for continuing to send me *The Spire*. The October issue, mostly about Brian and his farewell came this morning. I shall always be grateful to him, especially for his help during Hannah's last illness, and for his tribute to her at her funeral.

Tom Stanton,
West Yorkshire

My mornings with Brian

Brian introduced daily morning prayer which is still a feature of parish life; it's a wonderful interlude of prayer, psalms and bible read-

ings (often preceded by a rundown on the saint or martyr of the day).

A few members of the congregation attend on a regular basis, but Anthony Ball, a local Congregational minister who has preached here on occasions, comes nearly every day.

This service and Brian's presence there have been a big plus for me.

David Taylor

Read all about it!

We are enclosing a cheque to support *The Spire* magazine - always a good read.

Andrew and Rachel Craig