

ANNUAL REVIEW

The seventh Annual Stewardship Review was held on Thursday, 21st November, in St. James's Hall. After an excellent buffet supper some 75 people sat down to hear reports from Mr. G. Robinson and Mrs. M. Orton.

Mr. Robinson said that last year had been relatively an easy one from the financial point of view. There had been no major item of domestic expenditure and the last of the overdraft had been paid off. Our gifts to charities had increased.

However, this could lull us into a feeling of false security. With the decreasing value of money we were really no better off. Major expenditure could be foreseen on the Organ, Bells and Fabric of the church. Pledged giving had fallen by 30% and the number of pledges were now less than half of the highest numbers who had at one time been in the stewardship scheme. Remembering the increasing size of the Parish this position offered us all a real challenge.

Mrs. Orton in reporting on Time and Talents also presented us with a challenge. Much had been achieved. Faithful service by Bell-ringers, Sidesmen, Servers, Readers and Choir enriched the service in church although it was disappointing that church-going had not increased in proportion to all that was being done.

Administration, both in the "Office" and in Committee worked well. However the Churchyard and Distribution are a problem despite the hard work of a too small band of volunteers.

The Newcomers' Parties and other social functions expressed some aspects of St. James's as a caring church, although it had not yet been possible to use the offers of Hospitality which have been made.

There was evidence of a narrowing circle of volunteers and we cannot afford to be complacent.

The main address of the evening, by Mr. H. Roy Whiteley, was of such interest that we want now to print as much of it as we can as fully as we can, subject only to necessary limitations of space. Here then, is an almost verbatim report :

The Background to Stewardship

Although there had been some campaigns in the period 1955-1957, the movement of Christian Stewardship really started in the Church of England after the Lambeth Conference of 1958. Now that ten years have elapsed, and another conference has just reported, it is a suitable moment to take stock; consider what progress or success there has been; examine the areas of failure to see if they can be made good and look ahead to see what needs to be done and how stewardship may develop.

Naturally, a great deal of my examples and information will be drawn from the Diocese of St. Albans where I have lived since 1959 and been Stewardship Adviser since 1961, but some will relate to St. James and I hope that all will be of interest to you.

No New Thing

Of course, Christian Stewardship itself is not new. The principles upon which it is based are part of our faith and individual Christians have been putting them into effect since the Church started. In fact, the basic ideas were part of the Jewish faith and many of the Old Testament books are full of stewardship. The very first chapter of the Bible tells of God's creation and man is put into the world as

steward. In the first few chapters of Genesis we see how man gives back to God some part of his possessions as an act of gratitude and not merely for propitiation. The tithe, one part in ten, is frequently cited and soon became the standard for the practising Jew to give for the support of the synagogue system.

The principle of free-will offering arising from sheer joy occurs many times, a good example is the offering of gifts for the building of the Temple in I Chron., chapter 29. The prophets tried to ensure that worthy offering was linked to worthy motive. Throughout runs the idea that man is a pilgrim and sojourner and we are to treat this world and its goods responsibly but lightly.

The Christian Motives

The New Testament, of course, puts this idea of Stewardship into the new dimension of Christian Stewardship. Not only do we offer back in gratitude but now we are not our own, but bought with a price. Our motive is to be love and we are bidden not only to carry out the Jewish commandments of loving God and loving our neighbour but also the new commandment that we should love one another as Christ has loved us. An American has pointed out that every other parable is about stewardship and so is about one-third of the New Testament. The general themes are clear; we are to be prepared to give up anything however good in itself if it is dragging down our soul. Money and this world's goods are not to be thought of as evil but dangerous—they can seduce us from God or be used to help us nearer to Him. The test of our words is the extent to which we serve and give and this applies not only to individuals but also to the congregation as well. Our faith is clearly shown by our standard of living and our benevolence must include those who are trying to do us down.

The Bishops' Challenge and the Church's Response

This brief outline, with which you will be familiar, forms the background to the words of the Bishops in 1958. How did they put it?

“There can be no forward steps without a full acceptance of Christian Stewardship. By stewardship we mean the regarding of ourselves—our time, our talents and our money—as a trust from God to be used for His work in the world. This teaching is an urgent need in every congregation; a parish without a sense of stewardship has within it the seeds of decay.”

This was their first strong challenge. How has the Church responded? In the latest Year Book of the Church of England, it seems that by the end of 1966, 3,081 of the 14,585 parishes had had campaigns and these covered about half the population. In St. Albans Diocese, which covers the two counties of Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire with a total population of about one and a third million (which incidentally is the fastest growing diocese in the country) 119 of our 354 parishes have had campaigns and these cover two-thirds of our population. More than 25,000 families have pledged and the Diocesan Clergy voted in 1959 to practice stewardship themselves and teach it to their congregations.

The second quotation from the Bishops is “The conference recalls Church people to the duty and privilege of stewardship of which sacrificial, planned and systematic giving is a part, to the end that the souls of the people may be enriched and the needs of the Church met, including the adequate support of its ministry and provision for the extension of its work. The conference urges that the Church in

every field be encouraged to become self-supporting.”

So far as parish incomes are concerned, it is interesting to note that in the 10 years from 1956 before stewardship started to 1966, incomes from planned giving schemes in parishes rose from about two and a half million to about twelve million. In St. Albans we reckon that the total incomes from all sources of our parishes has increased by 70% as a result of stewardship campaigns. This has enabled the Diocesan Common Fund to be raised five times and now our Clergy get adequate stipends and reasonable pensions. A very large number of new Churches, new halls and new parsonages have been built mainly to meet the vast increase in population. As an example, 30 new Churches have already been built since the War and two others are planned. Also older buildings are in better repair (like your record here); giving to the Church overseas has more than doubled and substantial sums are sent overseas to meet human need.

But . . . no parish gives away as much as it spends on itself; the Church is nowhere near self-supporting; the interest on investments (“the stewardship of the dead”) is about £25 million pounds per annum—a hidden subsidy of about £1,200 per parish—whilst we give overseas to both Missions and Charities rather less than £5 million.

The Challenge to the Individual Christian

The third and final quotation from the Bishops is as follows—“A man who refuses to be a steward of his time, talents and money is unworthy of being in the Father’s house. Therefore it is primary that all clergy and lay readers practise and teach stewardship as an integral part of Christian life and worship. Not only do we have full Biblical warrant for practising stewardship; we have further the scriptural injunction to give a tenth of our possessions for God’s work. Tithing, however, is not an end in itself. Sacrificial giving of our financial resources begins only when our parochial and diocesan obligations have been met. It is only when we give with no possibility of receiving material return that we can be said to be giving sacrificially.”

This is of course the personal challenge to each of us as individuals. The test of our response is to be the enrichment of our souls. Only you can answer for yours as only I can answer for mine. So far as statistics go, it is obvious that only a few of us are actually tithing. A very large number of our pledges are for 5/- per week or thereabouts and this is about 2% of take-home pay of the average earner. So even if they also give the same away to charities and good causes—and it is very much part of stewardship that our giving is channelled wisely—the total is still only 4% and this is a very generous estimate. So we are way off the tithe; let alone sacrificial giving as the Bishops define it.

Achievements and Opportunities

Of course, it is easy to become pessimistic and look only at the way there is to go. In the few years in which it has been acting the stewardship movement has made very great progress indeed and much of this is not to be measured in terms of money alone; impressive though the financial response has been.

The principles of Stewardship apply to Time and Abilities and there have been released very large new resources which have enabled parishes to work much more effectively for the spreading of the Gospel and the relief of human need. Although much of the Time and Talents has been used in the everyday running of the Church machinery and in the Church organisations, not all has been absorbed and schemes

such as Road Stewards (or Street Wardens) would not have been possible at all were it not for stewardship. Many parishes in St. Albans have set up these schemes and several of them have moved on to the only really effective basis—that is for the Road Stewards to be appointed ecumenically. Although there are difficulties, I believe that this is one of the most effective ways forward for Christianity in this country.

The ideal is for every 20 to 30 houses or flats to have a Road Steward; for the stewards themselves to be grouped into teams of six to ten and to meet regularly in their groups so that at street level, there can be real unity in action. As these groups get down to solving the problems thrown up by their threefold assignment—that is to be the eyes and ears of the Churches; to act as a clearing house for statutory and voluntary welfare agencies or organising help from among local Church folk if no-one else is available; and evangelism—as the groups get down to the problems raised by this work, they will ask for training and the Clergy and Ministers instead of trying to do everything and wondering what on earth to preach about, will be enabled to become what they have been trained to be, the trainers and servants of the servants of God.

What of the Future ?

This then is one of the trends which I see and which I feel is very important. It has several important repercussions. It means that the local congregation will have to change its whole idea of what it is for and how it should be run. If in future it is to concentrate on outreach, care and witness, then its best people must be freed from administration and organisation to be leading Road Stewards. Finances will have to be based solely on direct giving; one person may have to act, say as treasurer, for several Churches and the concept of committees may have to be dropped !! The Church building may become subordinate to the home as the centre for worship. The Church may have to pull out of many cultural and civic functions until it is strong enough to get back in. In other words, we may have to do what is important and not what we have been used to.

That all this can be talked about realistically is due I believe to stewardship. Whereas ten years ago, very few parishes helped each other, now there are hundreds of laymen prepared to go out and help. One of the ways in which I have altered the traditional form of campaign is to replace the supper with a Sunday afternoon service to which people are invited by their hostess. They sit with her at the service and afterwards go to her home for tea—and at every tea party we have a man from another parish who is a practising steward who leads a discussion on stewardship. We have had 20 such campaigns ranging from villages where 80 people went to 6 homes to large towns where we had 65 and 90 parties. They are very successful and not only produce a better response in all aspects of stewardship but make people really feel that the Diocese is a family where people help one another.

I am encouraged to think that these are not wild speculations but part of the way ahead by the report of the latest Lambeth conference. In their message, the stress is that the role of the Church in the world is to be that of her Lord, the servant. To quote “We have to confess that all too often we have failed to serve as our Lord served. Consequently, to many men and women inside and outside, the Church too often appears as a self-centred or inward-looking, sheltered and privi-

leged institution. The test of every penny that we spend; every meeting we attend and every service we hold, is whether it makes it easier for Jesus to be seen as Lord and the Church as his servant."

How far the Churches can meet this new challenge will depend on how far each member is a practising Christian Steward. In these days of high mobility, each congregation must be geared to the problems caused by changing personnel. This is why the annual Stewardship review is so essential and why it must be backed by frequent newcomers' parties. We can no longer think in terms of a congregation which grows in understanding over the years but a school where new pupils are always joining and old boys and (dare I say) old girls are leaving. So we must sit lightly on our material heritage maintaining it and improving it where it is helpful and changing where it is not.

Two other looks into the crystal ball! First, the challenge posed by the possibility of Anglicans and Methodists reuniting. This if it comes, will be the biggest test of our stewardship for years. We can either go on duplicating work and dividing our witness and resources or we can leap ahead with a whole new group of comrades and the sharing of resources. And incidentally we Anglicans may find that the Methodist standards of giving of all three aspects are higher than ours.

The second challenge is that of the hungry and underdeveloped world. To many in the southern hemisphere (where nearly all the poverty exists), the world is divided between the Christians who talk about love and giving and yet who have more than they need and the non-Christians who go without. How far can we ever hope to bring them the joy and blessings of our Gospel if we do not show forth in our lives what we say with our lips? Our stewardship will be worse than useless unless we redress this imbalance.

SOCIAL COMMITTEE NEWS

The Carol singing organised by the Social Committee has now been fixed for Thursday, December 19, to enable the Church choir to join us. We are meeting at the church at 7.30 p.m. and refreshments will be served at Wayside afterwards.

The New Year's party is to be held on Saturday, January 11, 1969, in the Hall. After several years in fancy dress this year we are reverting to present day party wear. Tickets will be available shortly, price 5/- including refreshments.

THE MOTHERS' UNION

Miss Dines paid us a welcome return visit, and told us a great deal about life and work at the Mission at Harari. The January meeting will be on New Year's Day at 2.30 p.m. in Wayside when Mrs. Brunt will demonstrate the Puppet Theatre which is used in the infant Sunday School. It will be interesting to see something of the work done among the Infants, so, we extend a warm welcome to any in the Parish who would like to join us then, to come along. There will be Carols and other items, followed by the traditional mince-pies at teatime.

Sierra Leone should be more real to us when we keep the Wave of Prayer from 11.15—11.30 a.m. on Monday, January 13. If you are prevented from coming to Wayside then please make a point of using the Overseas prayers at home, but do try to join us there.

A Happy Christmas to all our members and "adherents."

I.V.R.

SOME DATES TO NOTE

- Dec. 15.—Third Sunday in Advent and our DEDICATION FESTIVAL: Sunday services and other arrangements as usual—also at 5.15 p.m. St. James's leads the service at Laurel Dene.
- „ 16.—8.00 p.m., Meeting of the Parochial Church Council and those engaged in work among children with Sister Crew of the Church Army (W).
- „ 19.—7.30 p.m., Parish carol-singing.
- „ 24.—CHRISTMAS EVE: 9.30 a.m., Decoration of the church; 11.45 p.m., Midnight Eucharist.
- „ 25.—CHRISTMAS DAY: Holy Communion at 8.00 a.m. and 12.00 noon; Parish and Family Communion at 9.30 a.m.—but **no** Parish Breakfast afterwards.
- „ 26.—St. Stephen's Day: Holy Communion at 10.00 a.m.
- „ 27.—St. John the Evangelist's Day: Holy Communion at 9.30 a.m.
- „ 28.—The Innocents' Day: Holy Communion at 9.00 a.m.
- „ 29.—First Sunday after Christmas: Instead of Evensong at 6.30 p.m., a special form of carol service—'A CHRISTMAS READING.'
- Jan. 1.—The Circumcision of Christ: 9.00 a.m., Holy Communion; 2.30 p.m., Mothers' Union Christmas Entertainment (W).
- „ 6.—The Epiphany: Holy Communion at 9.00 a.m.
- „ 10.—10.30 a.m., Editorial Board (43, Wellington Road).
- „ 11.—7.30 p.m., Parish Christmas Party (Hall).
- „ 13.—11.15 a.m., Mothers' Union Wave of Prayer (W); 8.00 p.m., Committee of Hampton Council of Churches (Congregational Church Hall); 8.15 p.m., Properties Committee (W).

N.B.—All offerings at Christmastide (Dec. 24—28) will be sent to CHRISTIAN AID, especially for urgent relief work in Nigeria and Biafra.

BAPTISMS

On November 24:

Alan James and Lisa Jane Ball, 24, Winifred Road.

Nicholas Robert Basson, 18, Laurel Road.

Gary John Gibbs, 2A, Laurel Road.

Julia Rowena Penn, 10, Seymour Road.

BURIALS & CREMATION

On November 27:

Henry William Medley, Hartswood, Uxbridge Road,
aged 79 years (at the South-West Middlesex Crematorium).

On November 29:

Amy Martha Mann, 35, Wolsey Road, aged 75 years (at Hampton Cemetery).

On December 5:

Winifred Ewen, Laurel Dene, aged 92 years (at Hampton Cemetery).