

PRIORITIES AND POSSIBILITIES

A baffling choice: At its meeting on July 16 the Parochial Church Council was baffled by the number and variety of the avenues opened up before it for possible consideration at the Parish Conference in October. The four committees brought forward too many ideas for consideration in one day - or even one month! - and the Stewardship Committee was left with the invidious task of sorting them out and trying to produce something manageable in the time.

The general issue: Our new Archdeacon, John Perry, put this well and truly before us in a paragraph of his letter of introduction and greeting to us "My desire will be to discover with you the best ways, in the present circumstances of the economic crisis and the diminished number of Clergy, for setting forward the Church's mission in the world . . . We simply cannot go on as we have been going. There have got to be many changes. The purses of the Diocese and the Commissioners are drying up. We are at a point of enormous challenge and exciting adventure. It's a great time to be a Christian - provided we are not too attached to the buildings, structures and patterns to which we have been accustomed up till now, and by which we may have been spoilt".

The use of the church building: We have a spacious church building, as well as the parish hall and Wayside. We feel that such a building should be far more widely used. But should this wider use be only or mainly for what might be called specifically Christian purposes? It could be a centre for training-courses of various kinds: in Christian leadership, adult religious education, Clinical Theology, Christian Counselling, and so on. Should it be primarily a centre and springboard for mission, evangelism, healing and pastoral care, as well as a centre for worship? Or should it be used for the welfare of the general community, providing for social needs not already met? We have to resolve such matters before we can decide what adaption, alterations and additions are needed, and what extra facilities such as kitchens, lavatories and counselling-rooms.

A Church which has found its way: Five of us recently visited, as representatives of the Church Council, a Church in Bristol which has found its own answer to some of the problems which still confront us. Its 800-years-old building is extensively used and has many facilities which ours at present lacks. It is a centre of Christian work and ministry; here its members are helped to deepen their own spiritual lives, and equipped to exercise their ministry and mission in the world; here inquirers are taught, and those in need of pastoral care and counselling ministered to. The Church has found the role which it believes to be right for itself. It regards itself as a Man O' War, and proclaims: "We need crew members and cannot afford to carry passengers! We are committed to a programme of evangelism at home and mission abroad. We need Christians to study God's Word, to pray and to work with us". There are 120 committed members on the Electoral Roll (with another 100 and more regular attenders in the process of becoming committed), and these are expected to attend Church every Sunday evening for at least 4 hours, and at least one week-day evening for another 3 hours. In former days, when the Church was desperately seeking its role and in danger of closure, there were frequent nights of prayer. Now from time to time on Saturdays half-nights of prayer are held, and again the committed members - the crew - are expected - and want - to be there.

Giving is good for you!: In 1957, when four of us were given half-hearted approval by the P.C.C. to try to launch a Christian Giving Scheme,

we quoted a saying that an adult Church is one that gives away as much as it spends on itself, whereas a great Church is one that gives twice as much away, and we said that we hoped that we would achieve this latter status by the time of our Centenary Year, 1963. This goal still lies before us - but the Bristol Church has achieved it, and in a grand way. It lays all the emphasis on giving away, and an increased target is fixed for this at the beginning of every year. In 1974 over £13,000 was given away to missions and good causes outside the parish - for 1975 the target is £20,000. Until the target is in sight of being realised, only the most essential and urgent local needs are met, but in the end more than enough to meet all basic requirements and obligations always comes in. In leaflets, in sermons, in the preparation of confirmation candidates, and in visual aids such as decorated scrolls on the pillars, the Church stresses both the duty and joy of giving - 'giving is good for you'. The **minimum** standard aimed at is the giving of a tenth on one's gross income (the deductions for tax and so on are considered to be the normal dues for the privilege of living in England). The full joy comes when freewill offerings over and above this are given. Certainly at the service we attended there was great joy and enthusiasm. Few people pledge - the stress is on free, open, spontaneous giving, and the plate comes round overflowing with five-pound notes and large silver. But the treasurer is asking people to consider covenants: only 12 members have done this so far - if more did it, he says, the give-away target of £20,000 could be increased to over £25,000.

A footnote: I myself am not happy about this stress on the tithe. I remember hearing a wise Christian say that it was not so much the amount which you gave away which mattered as the amount you had left (cf. the Widow's Mite). A man with an income of £7,000 should find it very easy to tithe and still have more than enough to live on; but a pensioner with £700 is in a quite different position (and of course there are varying family obligations and so on).

For each Church its own way: What is right for one local Church is not necessarily right for another. There is much we could learn from such a Church as Pip n' Jay, but also features that would not fit into our life and thought here. We liked the friendly and welcoming spirit, the way in which the Vicar and his colleagues put themselves out on our behalf, the fellowship and love of the brethren which was so obvious. They have achieved what we have talked about for ten years - the church actually fills up **from the front!** The congregational singing nearly lifted the roof. Sermons always last for at least 40 minutes, but the one we heard - by a visiting evangelist - though gripping, contained points which were quite unacceptable to us.

To sum up: the priorities of a Church must not be self-chosen or simply copied from another - they must be chosen and laid upon a Church by the Holy spirit. He knows all the problems and possibilities, he knows what our priorities should be. And he has ways and means of making them clear to us - if we want him to, and are open and receptive. This is one reason why prayer is so important, not only at the conference itself, but in the weeks during which we are preparing for it.

THE HEALING NATURE OF A HAPPY COMMUNITY

This thought was continually in my mind as I prepared for my sermon at Evensong on July 13.

The two lectionary readings both contributed to the theme of community. In Chapter 8 of Zechariah there is a good picture of the new age of salvation:

Jerusalem will be called City of Truth, and the people will enjoy health and well-being and the divine blessing of long life. A delightful quotation illustrates this:

"Once again shall old men and women sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each leaning on a stick because of their great age; and the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets".

In the past there was insecurity and danger; but now in the new age there is safety, trust, truth and justice, good social relationships. God's people will return from the east and the west and join in the community of the blessed in Jerusalem. God's blessing is promised. There is the exhortation "Be of a good courage", "Do not be afraid". And as a response to the blessing there has got to be an inward urge to respond and carry out the commands: Love God, love your neighbour, respect people, let there be fair and just dealing in the community.

In this Old Testament picture the scattered return to Jerusalem. In the second reading from Acts Chapter 8 there is the exact reverse. There is a great out-going. Violent persecution followed the death of Stephen, and many followers of Christ were scattered over the country-districts of Judaea and Samaria, and they went preaching the word. In a city in Samaria great crowds listened to Philip; they heard his preaching and saw his miracles and healings, "and great joy was in that city".

Throughout this chapter there are references to good news, happiness and joy. The infectious happiness of the new Christian communities is spreading out:- to the Gentiles, to Greece, to Rome, along Africa. And we know enough about the history of the early Church, the Christian Community, the ecclesia, to know that the members of these early Christian groups had a brotherhood and a desire to share things and a love for each other which have been distinctive signs of Christian communities from that day; and among the signs of many of these communities have been healings. There is now the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and in response to the new life in Christ and to the Spirit the little groups meet together in worship, in fellowship and in joy.

Throughout the history of Christianity we can trace this happiness and wholeness: "The healing nature of a happy community". It comes of course to groups when the Christian message is heard for the first time; the new message, the gospel of good news, the enthusiasm of passing it on, of realising the new friendship of Jesus as Lord, and the new friendship between brother and brother in the new community.

When things are being built up and there is much enthusiasm things go swinging along; it is not so easy to continue once the new awareness starts to fade, and here is the testing time. Christian communities have got to go steadily on, remembering the words "Be of good courage", "Do not be afraid", "Go on". There has got to be a conscious determination to continue on with the loving community; it may have got a bit frail and weak, but as the Vicar said in his sermon at the Parish Communion, also on July 13, it is in this loving community where people will truly learn to love each other, where dislikes and difficulties will disappear under the influence of the Holy Spirit, and where there will be a wholeness if we truly ask for God's blessing and for the presence of the Spirit in our midst.

The community has not got to be exclusive; in the Old Testament the community of the chosen people **was** exclusive; our Christian communities have got to be much more all-embracing, all welcoming, more catholic in the sense

of being more universal. Community in the sense of all being aware of each other in brotherly love is needed as never before. Here in many areas of the west we have become too sad and lonely in our individualisation and isolation from each other. I think this is why I have felt it has been right in the past year to give a great deal of my time to the Hampton and Hampton Hill Community Care Group. We need each other so badly: the young mums in the Mums' and Toddlers' Group need to meet, the members of the One-Parent Family group need to meet; there is tremendous need for the support of a supporting community. The Community Care Group owes much to our Vicar who has held the Group in his prayers from the start. We have a loving community at St. James's, we have a loving Community Care Group supported by prayer in the neighbourhood. Loneliness and isolation are healed through these groups because there is love apparent in them. The influence of these supporting communities and their gifts of healing, wholeness and happiness must spread.

Hannah Stanton.

ORDINATION

The ordination will be at St. Paul's Cathedral on Sunday 21 September. There will be no service here at 9.30 that morning, but a coach will be outside the church at 9.15 to transport those who would like to come to the cathedral. It will arrive in plenty of time for the service which begins at 10.30. The ordination takes place within the communion service, and any present are invited to make their communion. There is of course no limitation on seating in the cathedral, but space on the coach is limited so those who would like to reserve a seat should contact Mrs. Dawn Harris - telephone 979-3163 - as soon as possible. The return fare will be 45p.

THE WELCOME SERVICE

It has often been pointed out that some of the best-attended services in Church have been those that have been held during the afternoon on such occasions as St. James's Day, Mothering Sunday, and Christmas. These have been occasions when families, individuals, newcomers and oldcomers have alike been present. As a result of suggestions made both before and at the Parish Conference in May it has been decided to arrange for a series of these, to be held on the second Sunday in the month at 4.30 p.m., starting in September. They will be known as Welcome Services, will consist of some community hymn-singing, drawn from sources both old and new, short reading and address, with prayers, and an opportunity to meet and talk over a cup of tea afterwards. We hope that these will be the kind of services that will be suitable for the whole family to attend, and also, as the name implies, that those who have not been used to the traditional liturgical forms will find them a helpful step towards deeper involvement in worship. We know that there are many who find our traditional worship unhelpful. If you know of any, this will be the service to bring them to, knowing that they will find a warm welcome there.

S.D.H.

ADVANCE NOTICE

The Hampton Council of Churches is holding its next United Service on Sunday October 19 at 6.45 at St. Mary's Church, Hampton.

This Sunday evening occurs in the Week of Prayer for World Peace,

and we have been very fortunate in getting Monsignor Bruce Kent, an authority on World Peace, the Secretary of Pax Christi, and a man who has travelled widely in the East, to be our preacher at the service.

Book the date now!

During the Week of Prayer for World Peace the Vigil of Prayer for Racial Harmony occurs. This is being held this year, in conjunction with the Teddington Christian Council, at 8 p.m. at St. Francis de Sales Church on Tuesday October 21. Our theme will be how minority groups fit into our British scene, and we are hoping to have a preacher and members of a Chinese Methodist community with us, and a member of a Polish community.

Hannah Stanton.

MICHAELMAS DANCE

An important date for your social diary is Friday 19 September. A Grand Michaelmas Dance will be held from 8 p.m. until 11.45 p.m. in the Church Hall to the music of the Knightriders Dance Band, brought to Hampton Hill at great expense for your terpsichorean delight. A sumptuous buffet and ample liquid refreshments will be included in the ticket price of £1.50 per person. Since numbers will be limited for what promises to be St. James's major social event of the year, obtain your tickets as soon as possible from members of the Social Committee.

Ron and Roma Bridges	(979 6865)
Roger Bucknell	(979 3529)
Martin Edmonds	(979 1589)
Dawn Harris	(979 3163)
Margaret Lawrance	(977 5775)
Margaret Leatherdale	(979 6999)
Avon Pailthorpe	(977 3585)
Hal and Eila Servern	(979 1954)

It is hoped that a smattering of D.J's will add further class to the evening, but otherwise dress is optional. Make sure you will not be the one who misses out on a memorable evening. Make sure of your ticket now.

RB.

to sing

YOUR FAVOURITE HYMN

. . . . for the love of it.

So many people have expressed a wish to sing a particular hymn, that an opportunity to do so is offered on Friday November 7 at 8 p.m. in the Church.

Members of the Young Choir will come round the Church and note your request which should be selected from "Hymns Ancient and Modern Revised" or from "100 Hymns for today".

If, however, there is a particular hymn or tune which is not in these two books and which you wish to request, prior arrangements should be made with me to see if we can get sufficient copies of the words prepared.

R.J.C.D.

THE SCOUT GROUP

At a very lively service on June 22, two new flags were dedicated by the Vicar, one for the Cub Scouts and one for the Scouts themselves. The new flags are to replace the old ones which have now become obsolete. The Scout movement revamped its image about ten years ago, when the Wolf Cubs were in future to be dubbed Cub Scouts, but the old flag still sported a rather nice brass wolf. The new flags are bright and gay, and a suitable home is to be found for the old ones in the church.

Many parents and friends were in church for the service and the hymns were popular modern ones; also included was the National Anthem, first and last verses only - this seems to be so rarely sung nowadays that it sounded almost foreign, at least to my ears!

The Vicar preached and reminded us of the old-time practice of raising the Standard in battle when everyone would know that where the flag was there the rallying point was also. So today the Scouts' new flags were to show us the rallying point for the standards for which Scouting stands: honesty, loyalty and justice - noble virtues indeed.

H.T.

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Ever caught **your** reflection unawares?

TRY THE SHOP WINDOW TEST

which one is you?



A Reserves one hour exercising and relaxing her mind and body the Eileen Fowler way.

Result: SHE PASSES THE SHOP-WINDOW TEST.



B Gets all the exercise she needs - shopping, cleaning, gardening etc. She has no time for Keep Fit.

Result: THE DROOPS.

Try to be an **A** person. Join us in the Parish Hall, School Road, on Tuesdays at 2 p.m. Autumn term starts September 9.

MOTHERS' UNION

We start our new session on Wednesday, September 3, in church. We shall have a service followed by a discussion, and you will find it useful to have a copy of the new prayer form and of any old ones if you still have them, and there will be quite a lot of information about activities at various levels.

There is to be a Central Overseas Sale again this year, but in the Hampton Deanery members have felt that with the high cost of postage and fares we could more fruitfully have a local sale. This will be held at St. Mary's, Twickenham after the Deanery Service on Tuesday, September 30. Will you plan what, that is saleable, you can bake, make, beg or grow and take it to St. Mary's Hall? We shall not have many cars available to help carry, so please try to arrange your own transport. If you can't or if you are not able to be at the service, please tell Dorothy and she will see that your merchandise arrives.

C.H.B.

CHRISTIAN AID WEEK

The total for the whole Hampton area was not received in time for the last issue of The Spire. It was £833.22, an increase of £160.92.

Our own collection was an invigorating experience. In nearly every case the collectors brought in more than last year and only a few people refused to give.

We had the faith to deliver envelopes over the Bishop's Grove and Chambery Garden Estates - entirely new ground. At the time the envelopes were delivered by a team of volunteers there were no collectors available, but new volunteers came forward to help the stalwarts who collected two areas, and the whole new territory was covered. Next year we hope to find a volunteer who will make himself responsible for collections in this far-flung part of our parish.

This year we welcomed a team of eight new collectors from St. Francis de Sales, and they were splendid. Next year they may well send more volunteers into the field.

As a result of all these people's efforts our own collection was £100 up on last year - £280.

Thank you everyone concerned. If there are still collectors who do not know how much they collected and would like to know, I should be pleased to tell them if asked.

Margery Orton.

DEANERY INTERCESSION LIST

August	17	The Mayor and Corporation of the Borough.
	24	Hospitals within the Borough.
	31	Homes and Day-Centres for the elderly.
September	7	Schools and Colleges within the Deanery.
	14	All other Christian Denominations.

SOME DATES TO NOTE

- August 7** 15.99 Garden Party for members of Forget-Me-Not Club
(Vicarage)
20.00 Prayer Meeting (69 St. James's Avenue)
11 10.30 Editorial Board (21 St. James's Road);
20.15 Hall Management Committee
13 07.30 Holy Communion
20 07.30 Holy Communion
21 20.00 Prayer Meeting (69 St. James's Avenue)
26 SAINT BARTHOLOMEW'S DAY : 07.30 Holy Communion
29 BEHEADING OF ST. JOHN BAPTIST : 07.30 Holy Communion

September

- 3** 14.30 Mothers' Union: Service followed by discussion
4 20.00 Prayer Meeting (69 St. James's Avenue)
8 20.00 Properties Committee (151 Uxbridge Road)
9 20.00 Stewardship Committee (106 Park Road)
20.00 Tuesday Club: Social Evening (W)
10 07.30 Holy Communion
14 16.30 Instead of Evensong, WELCOME SERVICE at 16.30
15 10.30 Editorial Board (21 St. James's Road)
16 20.00 Parochial Church Council (W)
17 07.30 Holy Communion; 20.00 Wayside Project Training
Session (W)
18 20.00 Prayer Meeting (69 St. James's Avenue)
19 20.00 PARISH DANCE (Hall)
21 SAINT MATTHEW'S DAY: **No** Parish Communion or Breakfast,
but other Sunday arrangements as usual. Coach leaves at 09.15
for ORDINATION in St. Paul's Cathedral.

N.B. All departments of the Sunday School are now closed for the Summer break. Infants' and Rectory open again on September 7; Junior on October 12.

MARRIAGE

July 12

Stephen Roger Fancy to Pauline Ann Spear.