

**The Parish Magazine of
Whitchurch-on-Thames
and Whitchurch Hill**



July/August 2001

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A letter from the Reverend Father Peter Jefford

Dear People of the Parish,

THE JEWEL IN THE CROWN

Sometimes in life the Jewel, or even the Jewels, in the Crown can be hidden. But just of late one such Jewel is being discerned. Here I speak of the new awareness of the quality and the worth of the Church of England Primary Schools in the land. Suddenly they are all the rage, as they say. If I look back over those many years of ministry I can remember so well the work and the involvement and the care and the teaching that I, and others, put into our little Church Schools in our car. And now there is recognition of their worth.

Something else that has come from the Church and can be seen now as a Jewel in the Crown are holidays. For Holidays began as Holy Days. Like the early Sundays, they were at first a day off work for worship and recreation and a time for people to be with their families. But with the beginning of the recognition of Holy Places and the Saints then travel and pilgrimage came in their wake so that all of us really can enjoy both Holy Days still and Holidays as well. It is even now an entitlement and not a privilege.

I remember when I was a soldier how very important being 'on leave' became and things like Embarkation Leave and Disembarkation Leave became very important to us. In all the years of my Ministry I had to work in a parish with the multiple of churches, or else in multiple parishes (in my last years in Devon I was in charge of six separate

parishes). Without the time off, the Holidays, the chance for change and refreshment, I just would not have lasted the course—of this I am certain. So as we now approach the time of the Holidays I do hope that all of you getaway for the change, the renewal, and the refreshment that Holidays bring to us. And this is especially important to all mothers.

Keep safe, travel hopefully, and tell me all about it when you return.

I am to have a short break in July. I shall go back to my old Theological College of St Boniface at Warminster for the Annual Conference and Retreat. We shall all be in silence for three days, so that I shall be able to think of you all and to pray for you all in that time. Also I am to have a break in the autumn for two weeks and shall be far away, which will be nice.

But there are further Jewels in the Crown. They are the people of the parish. Soon it will be a year since I was first telephoned and asked to come across to Whitchurch to see whether I might be able to help in the vacancy after the departure of Richard, your last Rector. To me, and for me, you are all Jewels in the Crown and so I thank you for all the tangible things that you have given me (and us) and all those breakfasts now. But also for the intangible: the gifts of trust; friendships; companionship; good humour and, above all, faith that have now seen me through the year. As I say, some Jewels are not to be seen but must be discerned, and you are all my Jewels.

Last of all there are the two lovely Jewels of the two churches which are loved and cared for, the Church of St Mary by the River Thames and the

Church of St John on the hill. Here are two Jewels which are loved and perhaps, like the Church Schools, they are also waiting to be discovered anew. We must believe so, and we must hope so.

So keep safe on your holidays and when you are back there will be news to share as you tell me where you went, and how it was.

Do please pray for me as I endeavour to keep going to be with you, to share with you all in the adventure of our faith.

With my thanks and my best wishes to you,
Yours,

Peter Jefford

NOTICES FROM THE PARISH REGISTER

Holy Baptism

On Sunday, July 8th at St John's, Sebastian Lawrence, the son of Peter and Helen Sirrell of 20 Orchard Combe, Whitchurch Hill.

Holy Matrimony

On Friday, June 22nd at St Mary's, Ashley Cleland Levestam to Lisa Jacqueline Tandy

Please submit all copy for the next month's magazine by the 20th. There have been some production difficulties which I hope will be sorted out by the next edition. Meanwhile I look forward to receiving your news, views, letters, etc.

Sue Matthews

Mothers' Union

Rev. David Vail's talk to us in May about his and his wife Sue's 3 months Chaplaincy on the island of Ibiza last year was amusing and interesting and a very different experience for them.

Our July meeting is at Abbots Lodge at 2.15.p.m. on Thursday, July 26th. We are very fortunate in having our newly elected Oxford Diocesan President coming to speak to us on "What We Don't Know About The M.U." Felicity Randall is an excellent speaker so we are looking forward to her visit and hope some members from the other branches in the Deanery will be able to join us.

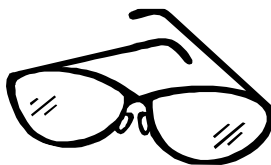
Our Prayer Group will meet at 2.30.p.m. on Thursday, July 12th. at Dorothy Baty's home, Roxana, Woodcote. *Mary Kent*

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IS MISSION A RISKY BUSINESS?

First, it is sad when factions or splits occur in the church over some petty disagreement. It is the duty of the Christian to build up and strengthen the church and as in St. James's Epistle to guard the tongue "for how can we at the same time bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse those who are made in the likeness of God?" (James3:9). This first example of unkindness could be associated with crusading minds that are dogmatic and cold.

The secondly the parable of the "Good Samaritan" (Luke10:25-37) seemed that the Samaritan was moved with pity and took a risk. The risk was that he would be contaminated, something that the priest and Levite were not prepared to jeopardise. The Samaritan displayed a characteristic of the crucified mind that is filled with compassion and care. So how does knowing about a crusading or crucified mind help us with Mission of our churches at St Mary's and St. John's?

There are some harmful Christian responses which it may pay us to examine. There is a fear of closeness and contamination, fear of taking risks, fear of the possibility of losing control. So our ministry becomes genteel, careful and emotionally removed from the needs of people. Because of this fear, we are paralysed and avoid the places where people are hurting. We protect ourselves from the possibility of hurt by acquiring false certainties. A fear of being really close to people is the adoption of what Kosuke Koyama calls "the crusading mind". The crusading mind is sure of everything. It is utterly secure. It has God taped. It is loud, insensitive, aggressive and never stays to listen, to know people, their feelings, hopes and fears. The crusading mind is rooted in fear. It is intolerant and born of fear. So we need to guard against this kind of missionary zeal.

Koyama goes on to talk about the crucified mind, which is rooted in love and suffering. Its aim is to transform through the sharing of pain. When we examine the ministry of Jesus, we find that he had a particular closeness and solidarity with outcasts, lepers and those who were hurting, in the pursuit of proclaiming the kingdom of God of equality and justice.

Kenneth Leech in his book "Care and Conflict" talks about building up

(Continued on page 10)

CHILDREN'S PAGE

Shimon's Story Part 2

Imagine your bath full of water. Now imagine all that water filling a huge pot. You'd be able to stand up inside the pot, it's that big! Now imagine six pots like that. And now we can start the story.

Shimon had gone with Yeshua and their friends to a wedding. Yeshua's family were there too. It was a very happy day. The sun was shining. The bride looked wonderful. The guests were enjoying themselves. There were lovely things to eat. There was plenty of juice and wine to drink. The music was just right for dancing. The party was set to go on and on and on.

But something terrible happened. The wine ran out! No more to drink. How could you dance and chatter and sing with nothing to drink? Shimon felt sorry for the bride and groom. It was like bad luck. And it made it look as if they had been mean.

Yeshua's mum came across and whispered something to him. Shimon watched carefully. Strange things happened around Yeshua. But what could he do about there being no wine? Yeshua told the servants to fill up six big water pots standing by the doorway. (Now you know where your bath came in!) Imagine how long it took to do that. Bucketful after bucketful from the river and the well, and they were moaning all the time about it. Shimon knew how they felt – but he knew because it had happened to him, that when Yeshua told you to do something, somehow you found yourself doing it.

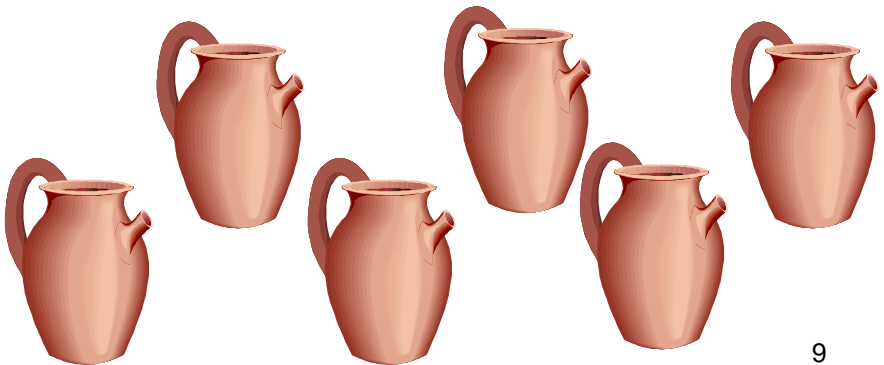
At last they were full. ‘Now, give a cupful to the man in charge,’ Yeshua told one of the servants. The man looked puzzled, but he did it anyway. And the puzzlement changed to amazement when the man tasted the liquid in the cup and shouted, ‘But this is wonderful. It’s the best wine I’ve ever tasted’. Everyone rushed to fill their cups in the pots full of water-that-had-turned-into-wine.

And the party went on and on.

Yeshua smiled at Shimon. Shimon smiled back. Once again Yeshua had changed a disaster into an adventure. Piles and piles of fish one day; huge pots full of wine the next. What fun it was being with Yeshua! What next? Shimon wondered.

Jesus still enjoys it when people are happy. He said once that he came to give us ‘life in all its fullness’. Can you fill these six water pots with things that make you happy? They could be thing you own, or things you do, or people or anything. How about thanking God tonight when you go to bed, for all the things that make you happy? You could talk to Jesus about them; because he is God, he would hear you just as clearly as he heard Shimon talking to him at the wedding party!

Geraldine Witcher



(Continued from page 7)

relationships and community development where he works as a parish priest in the East End of London. He says it is hard to adjust to the ministry of Aids where each encounter must stand on its own, and time is not on your side. Suffering is not knowing the answers and being honest about this and allowing others to set the agenda where we receive more from the sufferer than could be given. When confronted with the sufferer at the point of desperation or death, one is near holy ground. The sufferer has learned lessons about love, suffering and sacrifice; about loneliness, rejection and pain; about solidarity, frailty and imperfection; about hope and transformation. It is a time to refrain from slick comment and learn from sufferers who have the most profound kind of priesthood thrust upon them, the confrontation of death. It is the way of learning to be patient; of waiting; of silence; of the discipline of attention. To have ministered at this level is to allow oneself to be very vulnerable, very shaken, very crucified.

How can we strengthen our selves to face perplexity? Kenneth Leech points us to a monk called Thomas Merton who was an advocate of a spiritual life of contemplative prayer, by waiting on God in darkness and silence. He was not a believer in rushing around communicating exhaustion and inner emptiness. The closer we are drawn to God, as Julian of Norwich says, the closer one will be drawn to others, in suffering and turmoil. The redemption of the world is not our responsibility, therefore we must allow God room for both time and season.

Merton saw conflict lying at the heart of a spiritual life. For our Christian life is one of questioning and struggle before it becomes a principle of certitude, faith and joy. He sought to unmask illusion and face reality. The danger was in nurturing false securities, which preserves the believer in false comfort. Contemplation concerned a clear vision and silent attention to God and listening to the neglected voices of the world, crying out in pain and suffering. It is inner stillness, St. Gregory of Nazianzen claimed as the essential characteristic of calm, tranquillity and peace.

May God bless our churches when we risk our vulnerability in pursuit of mission and set us free to love in the name of Jesus Christ.

Peter Ferguson

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**Notes on the Church
Calendar**

July

In July, we've got lots of *Xth after Trinity* and *Yth after Pentecost*. But we've also got the feast of *St Mary Magdalene*.

Poor Mary – she's probably the most misunderstood saint in the calendar. For some reason, she's become saddled with a reputation as a prostitute (albeit a repentant one), yet what little we know about her has nothing to suggest anything of the kind. She's mentioned briefly in all four gospels (though her mentions are at crucial points in the story), and we find out just four things: Jesus had cast seven devils out of her; she was present at the Crucifixion; she kept vigil outside Christ's tomb; and she was one of the first to see Christ after the Resurrection (though she mistook him at first for a gardener: *John xx, 15*). Other than that, all we know is that she probably came from Magdala, a large city on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee – hence her name.

But prostitute? No evidence. (Nor is there any evidence for the other Magdalene myth, that she was one of the women who anointed Jesus's feet (*Luke vii, 36-50*).

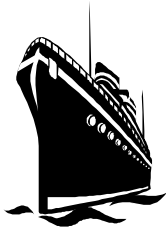
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To all those who so generously contributed to the beautiful gift and lovely bouquet which I received on Sunday—my very sincere thanks.

It was a great privilege and pleasure to serve as church warden, due, in no small measure, to the wonderful friendship and willing and pleasant co-operation which I received from you all. The gift will be one of my proudest and most treasured possessions (and become, I hope, a family heirloom) - a constant reminder of those very happy years.

My grateful thanks to you all,



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Reverend Father Peter Jefford
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Churchwardens:

Alan Matthews, Ashdown, Duchess Close
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Editor, Parish Magazine

Sue Matthews, Ashdown, Duchess Close
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Services for

JULY/AUGUST

15th July, 5th Sunday after Trinity

St John's	8 a.m.	The Holy Communion
St Mary's	10 a.m.	Parish Communion

22nd July, Mary Magdalene

St Mary's	8 a.m.	The Holy Communion
St Johns	10 a.m.	Parish Communion

29th July, 7th Sunday after Trinity

St John's	8 a.m.	The Holy Communion
St Mary's	10 a.m.	Parish Communion
St Mary's	6 p.m.	Evensong

5th August, 8th Sunday after Trinity

St John's	8 a.m.	The Holy communion
St Mary's	10 a.m.	Parish Communion

12th August, 9th Sunday After Trinity

St Mary's	8 a.m.	The Holy Communion
St John's	10 a.m.	Parish Communion
St Mary's	6 p.m.	Evensong

19th August, 10th Sunday After Trinity

St John's	8 a.m.	The Holy Communion
St Mary's	10 a.m.	Parish Communion