

# From the Rector

The Rectory  
August 2010

Dear Friends



It was the postman who brought the bad news. In the summer of 1960 the envelope dropped through the letterbox telling me I had failed the 11 plus exam. My hope for a grammar school education died. I was to join all my fellow failures at the local secondary modern school.

During this month countless young people will endure a similar experience. They will receive their G.C.S.E. or A level results and know they have failed. Their grades will be insufficient to get them to their selected university course or onto the next stage of their lives.

Failure is common to us all. We might fail in our marriage or fail in getting promotion at work. We might fail a new job interview or fail a driving test. We might fail to make the grade in a chosen sport or fail in our attempts to win over the person with whom we are in love. As the writer Giles Cooper puts it, "I'm a connoisseur of failure. I can smell it, roll it around in my mouth, tell you the vintage and the side of the hill that grew it."

The life of Jesus gives us three helpful insights into failure.

- First: to fail in a particular thing does not make us failures as people. In the Gospel story Jesus meets many people living with particular failures but he never regards them as failed human beings. So with ourselves. To say, "I've failed to get the grades necessary for my chosen university course" is not the same as saying, "I'm a failure." If any of us experience failure in a particular part of our lives we can continue believing in ourselves as human beings. For in the economy of Jesus the only real failure is the failure to love and by the grace of God even that failure can be forgiven and reversed.

- Second: to the majority of those who knew him, Jesus was a failure. On the first Good Friday he ended his life on a cross. The cross is our assurance that God understands what it is to fail. In our feelings of rejection when failure strikes and our feelings of bereavement when our longed for future dies God knows all about it. He is somewhere in there with us.

- Third: the failure of Jesus was in fact God's way of success. Though most of those watching the crucifixion saw Jesus as a failure those with eyes to see saw the opposite. That is the funny thing about God as shown through the life of Jesus. God sees power as becoming like a servant. He sees strength as coming through love. He sees success as coming through failure. In short God has the knack of turning the values of this world

## Rector's letter continued

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on their head. Therein lies the hope in our own failures. God can help those failures blend into his way of success.

As I recall my 11 plus failure all those years ago I feel for the young people receiving their exam results this month. Whatever the outcome I trust they will continue to believe in themselves, know that God understands and know that God has a funny way of turning failure into success. It may be different from the success they imagined but it will be success none the less.

That certainly has been my experience. I wish it for us all.

Your Rector



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## August Parish Notes

### Confirmation coming

This year's service takes place in All Saints' at 3.00pm on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> September. The Bishop of Bradwell will conduct the service and candidates from neighbouring parishes will be joining us. If there remains anyone who might like to be confirmed at this service and has not yet come forward, please contact the Rector as soon as possible.

### Autumn dates include

- Saturday 2nd October:  
Harvest Supper in Church Centre
- Sunday 3rd October: Harvest Festival
- Sunday 7th November:  
Celebration of All Saints' Day
- Saturday 13th November:  
Annual Church Bazaar
- Sunday 14th November:  
Remembrance Sunday

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## in touch

The copy date for the September edition is Sunday 8th August. Please give items to Robin Stevens at 3 Aldeburgh Way – preferably on CD (he can't handle disks any more) or e-mail him at [rms@ukgateway.net](mailto:rms@ukgateway.net).

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## From the Registers

### Holy Baptism

27th June:

Tegan Rhiann Nevill  
Tilly Rose Leighton Pavitt  
Ada Maisie Hards  
Bethany Abigail Yetton

*"We welcome you into  
the Lord's Family"*

## **Churchyard Tidy Up**

Very many thanks to those who have been turning up on the first Saturday morning each month to work in the Churchyard. It does look wonderful at the moment despite the dry weather!

We will have a break for August and resume on the first Saturday in September. Do come and join us on 4 September. Anytime you can spare that morning will be much appreciated. If it is wet, then there are often jobs to do in the church centre instead.

## **Church Centre**

Our Church Centre is in almost constant use and is in need of a bit of a 'spring clean'! August is the month that has a little more free time in the diary and we are seeking a 'cleaning crew' to help with some of the bigger/one-off jobs that need doing.

The dates and times that we will meet are Monday 9th and Tuesday 10th August, from 9.30am onwards.

Do come along and join the team. In the past, these have been fun while at the same time help to improve our facilities!

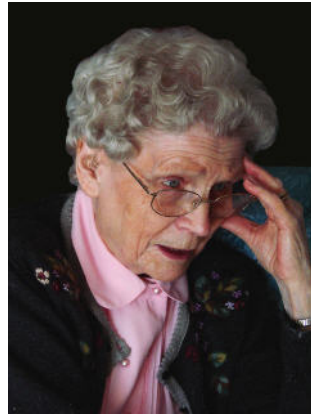
Thank you

*Barbara Garside*  
Churchwarden

## **Just Listen**

Many people today are crying out for someone to really listen to them – yet sadly sometimes we are too busy doing other things or, even more so, we feel inadequate about the skills that we have.

Good listening is about attitude and skill and so we are running a short course as a lively and practical way to begin to develop both of these. We have excellent material to use which includes a DVD.



So why not join us for this short course on

- Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> September
- Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> September
- Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> October

We will meet in the committee room in the Church Centre from 7.30pm to 9.00pm.

If you would like to know more just talk to us in church or ring me on 01245 261388. We look forward to hearing from you.

*Marion Hodges*  
on behalf of the Prayer Ministry Team

# The Queens Badge Journey

Although it has taken me almost 2 years to complete, I have finally achieved the highest award within the Boys' Brigade, equivalent to the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

I find it a great reward for all the hard work I have put in and it will be a reminder of the fond memories I have from my time in the BB. To gain the award there were a series of tasks I had to complete, in and out of the community, such categories as Physical, Expedition, Leadership and Practical Service.

## Physical

Following a warm-up, to avoid muscle cramps, my Physical was to partake in weight lifting, roughly 3 times a week. Training would last around an hour before packing away and cycling home from the gym in Chelmsford. It sounds strange to do more exercise after an intensive workout but it is best to slowly calm your body down, doing basic exercise. To keep my body in proportion I needed to build up my abdominal muscles with a series of sit-ups. Every week I would improve which made me very proud.

## Expedition

Most of you may know about this if you read my previous articles in the magazine on my trip to Nepal. Briefly, I spent 3

weeks hiking, exploring, white water rafting and helping out a local community by decorating a school. Although I did this with the Explorer Scouts I was able to use this "once in a lifetime opportunity" towards my award.

## Leadership

For this, I helped on Monday evenings with the Anchor Boys' Section which is the first step in the BB. The idea is for the children to have fun, make new friends and learn more about the teachings of God before they progress to the Junior Section. I felt really proud when, having taught some children particular tasks, they became able to correct

their own problems and pass their knowledge on to others.

## Practical Service

I wanted to look at another organisation similar to the Boys' Brigade and compare the two. I helped out with the Beaver Scouts of 1<sup>st</sup> North Springfield. I loved assisting the Beavers with their weekly crafts because of the discussions we had. It reminded me of what I was like at their age and how the child's mind works differently to an adult's. There were many similarities with the organisations but I think I enjoyed helping out at the BB slightly more.



*Oliver Milbank*



## Boys' Brigade

At the Family Service on 4th July various prizes were awarded to members of the Boys' Brigade.

The following Boys are shown in the photo above:

Benjamin Splarn – received the highest Anchor Award

Robert Thompson – received second highest Award in Brigade – President's Award

Oliver Milbank – received highest Award in Brigade – the Queen's Badge.

Also in recent competitions the Anchors retained the Anchor Fun Run Shield and Juniors retained the Sports Trophy.

*Pat Davis*

## Quotes

Going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than going to McDonald's makes you a hamburger.

A coincidence is when God performs a miracle and decides to remain anonymous.

Did it ever occur to you that nothing occurs to God?

Your worst days are never so bad that you are beyond the reach of God's grace.

And your best days are never so good that you're beyond the need of God's grace.

Science can add years to your life, but only Christ can add life to your years.

*anon*

The Christian's chief occupational hazards are depression and discouragement.

*J Stott*

Until you are free to die, you are not free to live.

*Anon*

Life is 10% what happens to you and 90% of how you respond to it.

Learn from the mistakes of others. You can't live long enough to make them all yourself.

# **We were sad to see that Hope has gone But don't despair – the walks go on!**

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I can already hear indignant voices loudly saying, "How can this fellow write in the church magazine that hope has gone?" To this I calmly reply, "Take a second look at what I wrote and note the capital H." No, I didn't think that hope has gone but Hope certainly has gone and by this I mean the Hope Inn at Tollesbury which, as we could see as we drove past it, has now got wooden boards over the windows.

The other pub in Tollesbury is still open but as it is rather expensive, we had our lunch at the Tollesbury Café which served its purpose very well as it was welcoming, friendly and, most importantly, cheap. For leading us once again on this familiar route around Tollesbury Wick, 10 ramblers all said, "Thank you, Tony."

I have just said that the route was familiar and indeed it was but there will always be features which will vary and incidents that are unique to the occasion. An obvious example of a feature that varies is the state of the tide; our walk was mainly on the sea wall and as soon as we were on it we could see a large expanse of mud flats but as our walk progressed we saw them become submerged as the tide came in quite rapidly.

Another such feature is the weather which fortunately was kind to us as it was sunny and quite hot. High above our heads some skylarks reminded us of another variable feature as they cheerfully proclaimed, "This is our territory but we don't mind you being here provided that all you do is admire the view across the estuary to Bradwell and the summer flowers. From our vantage point high in the sky we can

see bright red poppies, purple sea lavender and pink and white dog roses. We can also see an oyster catcher on the mud flats and swimming in a drainage channel two handsome ducks which, by the way, are not common mallards – no, they are golden eyes."

There were also features which were unique to the occasion. The Worldm Cup was still in progress and even remote Tollesbury was full of the red and white flags of St George fluttering optimistically and defiantly in the breeze – reader please note that this was before hope had gone!

As we were walking along the sea wall I thought I heard the iconic droning sound of a vuvuzela; however when I looked towards its source I could see that it was only a cow in a waterside meadow.

That was during the morning; during the afternoon we saw several dogs swimming in pools in the marshes and clearly loving it. However there was only one dog who was having great difficulty finding the ball that his owner had thrown for him to fetch. The audience on the sea wall could see where the ball was and some of them called to the dog and threw small stones at the ball in an attempt to show him where to find it. This took a few minutes but eventually the persevering dog did retrieve his ball and the appreciative audience applauded. I am not sure if the Magnum ice creams we ate when we were back in Tollesbury were unique to the occasion but, after a walk in the hot sunshine, we certainly did enjoy them

*Robert F Lloyd*

# 1st North Springfield Beaver Scouts – All Saints' Church Quiz

*This quiz was devised for the Beaver Scouts when they spent the evening brass cleaning. We thought it might be of interest to our readers.*

- 1 How many sheep are there in the stained glass window behind the altar?
- 2 On the kneeling cushion in front of the altar rail, how many times is the word "HOLY" written?
- 3 What was Charles Paynter's middle name?
- 4 How many organ pipes are there at the front of the church?
- 5 How did Francis Arthur Paynter die?
- 6 How many plaster apostles' heads can you count near where the choir sit?
- 7 Where did R.W.Peacock work?
- 8 What was Daniel Holt's wife's name?
- 9 How old was Adolphus Pledger when he died?
- 10 When was Thomas Jackson born?
- 11 In 1866, how much money was given to the church to help pay for seating and restoration?
- 12 Who was the Rector in 1745?
- 13 What was the rank of John Alfred UNETT?
- 14 What is the name of the window without any glass?
- 15 How many organ pipes are there at the back of the church?
- 16 When was the organ dedicated?
- 17 How many children did Richard and Edith MAGOR have?
- 18 Who are the 2 paintings at the back of the church of?
- 19 How many people can you count on the Millennium Window?
- 20 In what country was Christopher Ridley killed?
- 21 When sitting in the pews in the winter, what must you be careful of?
- 22 How much do the post cards cost?
- 23 How many rows of pews are there on each side of the church?



# General Synod – What actually happened?

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*For the past five years Robin Stevens has been a lay member of the General Synod. Here he reports on the recent discussions on issues surrounding women bishops.*

Most of us get information about what is happening in the rest of the church beyond our parish from the mass media. Understandably, in a fierce ratings war and in the struggle to get religious news of any kind reported, there is tendency to hype and dramatize and to give undue prominence to extreme voices.

Almost every week we are told that that the Church of England faces “the greatest crisis since the reformation” and “that a split is imminent”. Whilst some members of the Church will have difficulty with the outcome of the Synod’s debate, there wasn’t a sense that the Church is in major crisis over the issue.

The Church of England had already agreed to ordain women as bishops and the meeting of the General Synod in July had to decide how best to frame the measure (i.e. the rules) to allow that. The question was basically whether the legislation could meet the needs of traditional Catholics and conservative Evangelicals, who hold principled theological convictions against the oversight of women bishops. At the same time others felt that the legislation should not enshrine in law any suggestion that women are second class bishops.

The outcome is that the measure to

permit women to be consecrated to the episcopate has been passed on for consideration in the Dioceses. This process will take about eighteen months before the matter returns to the General Synod.

## **Majority in favour**

There is no doubt that a substantial majority in the Synod and in the Church is strongly in favour of this change and for many, the Synod’s decision will be a cause for heartfelt rejoicing. It was also significant that only a very few of those opposed to this measure sought to delay the process. There is a general feeling that it is urgent to conclude a debate which can appear somewhat introverted when our real focus must be on our unity in mission and in service to a country facing turbulent times. In consequence much of the discussion was about how to secure an honoured place for those who cannot accept such a decision as one authorized by scripture and tradition and who believe that it will erect new obstacles in our relations with other parts of the “one, holy catholic and apostolic church” to which we claim to belong.

It is emphatically not true to say that the measure as it stands contains no provisions for those who hold such a view. Attempts during the two days of debate to amend the draft measure to remove any arrangements to assist those who adhere to the present practice of the Church were decisively rebuffed. The draft as it stands

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offers a “statutory code of practice” to protect the position of those opposed to this development.

The question which occupied much of our time was – “Is it enough?” There was clearly an anxiety in some parts of the Synod that, given the sense among a number of supporters of the proposal to ordain women as bishops that this was a gospel and justice matter, “a code of practice” would not be strong enough to ensure respect for the minority who on theological and biblical grounds continue to resist the change. It is a complex question particularly given the fact that the contents of such a code have not been worked out.

One of the issues led to the coining of a new phrase (well, it was new to me) – “sacramental assurance”. This means that those who oppose women as priests or as bishops need to be assured that male priests are in an unbroken line of male priests back to St Peter. In years to come, if a male priest has someone in their lineage who was ordained by a woman bishop, then they are not a priest who could celebrate at the Holy Communion. For them there needs to be a part of the Church that is restricted to maleness.

The Archbishops attempted to clear a way through the impasse by introducing the concept of “co-ordinate jurisdiction”. The contents of such a “co-ordinate” would also have to be settled by reference to



the, as yet undrafted, code of practice. It is unsurprising that there was a good deal of confusion about what such a concept might mean in practice. The Archbishops’ proposal failed to secure a majority in the House of Clergy although it passed in the Houses of Bishops and the Laity. I voted against it.

The important point is that valiant attempts are being made to open the way for women to be consecrated bishops without excluding from the church those who adhere to the present position and who share the faith which inspires our mission. We now have an opportunity to consider the draft legislation in the Diocese. At the same time the House of Bishops is charged with working on the vital question of the Code of Practice.

I think it’s clear that the majority will is to ordain women bishops while at the same time preserving, as far as possible, the unity of the church in her mission and service to our country.

*Robin Stevens*

# St Augustine's *City of God*

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You may recall that, in my article [June edition] on St Augustine's *Confessions*, I said that the books of interest to modern readers were *Confessions* and *The City of God*. *The City of God (Civitate Dei, De)* was written between AD 413 and 427 and it is Augustine's major and longest work: 22 books. Rome was sacked by the Visigoths in 410 and Augustine's purpose in writing this work was to console Christians, reassuring them that, although earthly cities collapse, God's city was indestructible and that it would ultimately triumph.

Augustine places humanity into two categories: those belonging to the 'city of God' symbolised by Jerusalem, and those belonging to the 'earthly city,' symbolised by Babylon. These two cities are under different leaderships: 'that of the Devil, and that of Christ, and with their kings the Devil and Christ.' The two cities are not cities in the ordinary sense but in an allegorical sense.

## **Earthly and heavenly cities**

Augustine says that the important difference between the two cities is the type of love in which they place emphasis: the earthly city on self-love whereas the Heavenly City on love of God. The citizens of the earthly city believe that they are able to solve the problems of this world and act as though God does not exist. Their lives are centred on non-spiritual matters. 'He goes on to say that 'the citizens of the earthly city are produced by a nature which is vitiated by sin, while the citizens of the Heavenly City are brought forth by grace, which sets nature free from sin.'

Augustine talks about the universality of the two cities and that it is possible for people of other nations to be part of the City of God: 'I have no doubt that it was the design of God's providence that ...there could also be those among other nations who lived by God's standards and were pleasing to God, as belonging to the spiritual Jerusalem.'

Augustine says that there were non-Israelites belonging to the City of God even before the coming of Christ: 'But it must not be believed that this was granted to anyone unless he had received a divine revelation of "the one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."' The two cities, however, are inextricably mixed: 'In truth, those two cities are interwoven and intermixed in this era, and await separation at the last judgement.'

Although there is a clear distinction between citizens of the City of God and the earthly city even though we do not know who belongs to which, this is not the case between the Church and the world (non-Church). The Church is the body of Christ, and although Augustine sometimes equates the City of God with the Church ['The City of God which is the holy Church,...'] he is at pains to point out that there are false Christians within the Church. 'Also those who boast the name of Christian and yet live scandalous lives...It was of such people that we read in Scripture, "You will recognise them by their fruits."'

The question one might ask is why God permits false Christians in his Church.

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According to Augustine:

‘God gives time for repentance even to those whom he knows will preserve in wickedness in order to test our patience and form us by his own example, so that we may know how important it is that we tolerate the wicked, since we do not know what they will be like in future, while he, knowing the future perfectly, spares them and lets them live.’

### **Belonging to the City of God**

Going to church does not therefore automatically qualify a person for membership of the City of God. Furthermore, Augustine says that there are those outside the Church who belong to the City of God: ‘but if he is reborn in Christ, and makes progress, he will afterwards be good and spiritual’. The same holds true of the whole human race.

Augustine in Book XIX discusses the ‘arguments advanced by mortal men in their endeavour to create happiness for themselves amidst the unhappiness of this life.’ In this connection, he uses the classification of philosophies contained in Marcus Varro’s book *On Philosophy*. According to Varro’s classification, there are four things that people ‘naturally seek, without the help of a teacher, without the assistance of any teaching, without conscious effort,’ and these are: pleasure, repose, a combination of both and finally physical and mental well-being. These things are desirable for their sake or when they are pursued for others’ sake as well. According to Varro, ‘the only purpose man has in philosophizing is the attainment of happiness but that which makes him

happy is the Supreme Good itself.’ Such a philosophy centres only on what could make man happy in this earthly life.

To Augustine, the ultimate good for Christians is eternal life and the ultimate evil eternal death and that to ‘achieve the one and escape the other, we must live rightly.’ Augustine rejects the notion that man can find happiness and virtue by his own efforts. He goes through a catalogue of life’s miseries to show that man cannot find complete happiness in this life. He begins with family life ‘voicing a sentiment which all mankind agrees: “I married a wife; and misery I found! Children were born; and they increased my cares.”’

City life is not pleasant either: ‘The larger the city, the more is its forum filled with civil lawsuits and criminal trials, even if that city be at peace, free from the alarms or – what is more frequent – the bloodshed, of sedition and civil war. It is true that cities are at times exempt from these occurrences; they are never free from the danger of them.

Augustine then talks about the world saying that it is ‘obviously more full of danger than the other communities by reason of its greater size’. He abhors wars even just wars as they are none the less terrible: ‘in all their horror and cruelty, must acknowledge the misery of them.’

Augustine’s message is that man should strive for ultimate bliss to be found only in the City of God, as life in the earthly city is one of ultimate misery.

*Irving Eberwein*

# All Saints' Prayer Corner

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## Praying for others

Lord grant me a portion of Your heart for others. I do not always know what needs a person has or what sorrows he or she holds inside. Give me your eyes to notice such things. It is easy to distance myself from the hurt of a stranger or even the struggles of friend who do not speak out. Give me love so deep that it forgives, it covers, it embraces, and it protects the people you bring into my life.

*(One Minute Prayers – Harvest House Publishers- ISBN 13 978 0 7369 2104 6)*

Prayer for others, whether loved ones or people in trouble for whom we feel concern, has always formed a considerable part of our Christian life of prayer. What we are trying to do is to act as a link between people in need and God. In these prayers we are expressing our care and concern for people in their need and our care can grow deeper as we perhaps learn more of their circumstances.

We can show our love for them when we call upon God to show his even greater love by coming into their lives and lifting them up into His presence, however low they feel they are, his arms will be beneath them.

Sometimes we make lists of people we need to pray for and that is fine but I try also to hold each name for a while perhaps repeating it in my mind. We all at

times feel quite inadequate at praying for others, what should we pray for? But you see we do not have to proceed by telling Him how to solve the problem he is always praying/interceding for us and others, he started long before we did! Just ask him for help and he will help you to pray from your heart.

Lord Save us from being self centred in our prayers, and teach us to remember to pray for others. May we be so bound up in love with those for whom we pray that we may feel their needs as acutely as our own and intercede with sensitivity, with understanding and with imagination. Amen.

*John Calvin*



Whilst writing this I recall the following:

The Spirit comes to help us, as we are. For we do not know how we ought to pray; the Spirit himself pleads with God for us..... And God who sees into our hearts, knows what the thought of the Spirit is; because the Spirit pleads with God on behalf of his people and in accordance with his will.

*Romans 8:26-27*

## The Prayer Ministry Team

During our 10.30am Holy Communion Service on Sunday mornings, we offer the opportunity for personal prayer from members of the Prayer Ministry Team. Those wishing to receive prayer for worries and concerns, or for encouragement and a blessing, for themselves or others, can go out through the Clergy

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# Mothers' Union

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Vestry door or North door where they will be met. We are also available during coffee or at any other time, just contact me or another team member. (Please note there is also a box for prayer requests in the church porch and a list of our names and telephone numbers.)

Before the services start the team meets for prayers of preparation. This is one of the prayers that we use and I pray that you can personalise it and that it will help you when you wish to pray for someone.

Wherever you call us, Lord, our God, we want to be willing to go.  
Whenever you need us, Lord, our God, we want to be available and attentive.  
Whoever turns out to be our neighbour in need, we want to be happy to serve, without exception.

Live within us, Lord our God, so that we notice with your discernment,  
Respond with your compassion and speak with your integrity.  
In our lives and in our world, let your kingdom come.

*Susan Sayers*

I thought I had finished this article last night but now I will end by quoting some words that Raymond ended his sermon with today. They were so meaningful for me – his sermon was based on the Parable of the Good Samaritan.  
“We can know and trust that God does not pass us by because it is through other people that he comes and he also comes to others through us”.

*Marion Hodges*

On 23 June eleven members of the Mothers' Union visited Hylands House and Gardens for a talk and tour led by Dawn Hoyle the Education Officer for Hylands. Her purpose was to explain by means of pictures and diagrams how the gardens and the house itself had evolved since it was first built in 1730.

Over a period of almost 300 years successive owners had made changes to the layout of the gardens and altered the design of the house adding wings as well as a second storey along the way. The Council bought the house in 1966 and after some years began a major restoration not just of the building but of the gardens. The aim for the gardens has been to restore them to the “naturalistic” design of Humphrey Repton a leading 18th Century architect. The work was completed in 2007 and is a testament to the imagination and hard work of the Parks Department.

Dawn took us round the gardens to show and explain what has been achieved. She also explained the significance of the “One World Garden”, a 21st century addition to commemorate both the centenary of Scout movement and the World Jamboree held in the grounds of Hylands in 2007.

A marvellous afternoon was completed with tea and biscuits. The weather was excellent and Dawn proved not only to be a very knowledgeable historian but a true enthusiast for her subject. We were grateful to her and would strongly recommend a similar visit by other groups.

*Lesley Mann*

# The privilege of reading God's Word

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Reading the Bible, along with prayer and Christian fellowship, is a key aspect of discipleship. We don't have to read the Bible to be a Christian – after all, most people had to manage without a copy of the Scriptures until the first printing press was set up in 1476. Until the advent of free education, the ability to read was far from widespread and engaging with the Bible would have meant hearing it read aloud in church. Although, thanks to translators such as William Tyndale, it was at least available in a common language.



Being able to read the Bible for ourselves is, then, a wonderful privilege that we should not take for granted. It is important that we sustain our delight in this privilege and we can do so in a number of ways.

**Firstly, we can ensure that the translation we use is one that enhances our understanding of the passage.** This does not necessarily mean a modern translation. After all, we may find that we have grown so familiar with our usual up-to-date version that what we read somehow begins to lose its freshness.

**Secondly, we can develop our understanding by using Bible reading aids, which range from 'thought for the day' Bible notes to in-depth commentaries.** If we have been using the same approach for a while and we are starting to find it a bit stale, the answer is not to abandon Bible reading, but to try a new approach! For example, we may have

grown as much as we can on a 'thought for the day' diet and we should try the 'stronger meat' of an accessible commentary.

**Finally, whenever we turn to the Scriptures, we should do so prayerfully.** If we read the Bible as believers, it is more than a cultural treasure, or a collection of moral insights or inspiring stories. It is a means of connecting with the living God, whose Spirit inspired those who wrote it and those who helped to shape the canon of Scripture. As we read and reflect, so, amazingly, we will find that over time we continue to be transformed into the likeness of our Creator.

No, we don't HAVE to read the Bible – but who could turn down the chance of such blessing?

*Naomi Starkey is a commissioning editor at BRF and also editor of BRF's New Daylight Bible reading notes. For more info, visit:*

<http://www.brfonline.org.uk/daily-bible-reading/>

# Bishops highlight unchanging duty to share the Good News

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The Church of England's long history of witnessing to the unique significance of Jesus Christ is a duty that continues in today's multi-faith environment, says a new report.

Following a debate in February 2009, the General Synod asked the House of Bishops to produce a report on "their understanding of the uniqueness of Christ in Britain's multi-faith society [and to include] examples and commendations of good practice in sharing the gospel of salvation through Christ alone with people of other faiths and of none".



A small group led by the Bishop of Willesden, the Rt Revd Pete Broadbent, drafted the

document, which was subsequently commended by the House of Bishops at its recent meeting. The report affirms that missionary activity has always been a hallmark of the English Church's life, whatever the country's social and political context, and should continue to be so.

While acknowledging the "shadow side" of some historic evangelistic endeavours, the report notes that: "...the fear of getting it wrong should never obscure the Christian's commitment to the good of all and to making Christ the centrepiece of that good. Too much reticence is as untrue to our history and our vocation as too much stridency."

Within this context, the report urges caution about the language of 'market choice' when used in the context of religious belief. The foreword summarises this idea with the reminder that "it is not we who bring others to Christ but God working in them", suggesting that "when our encounters with our neighbours, of other faiths and none, are distinguished from exercises in salesmanship, we can be confident that we are sharing God's love rather than marketing another lifestyle choice."

The report is on the Church of England website at: <http://www.cofe.anglican.org/about/gensynod/agendas/july2010/gsmisc/gsmisc956.pdf>