

COR Newsletter – 06 August 2008

Dear all,

### **Last Sunday**

The summer hols have bitten hard and after a full house the week before, we are all the way down to the twenties - but even so, we welcomed two new families to the church. The produce sale was also expanded this week to include some jewellery and bookmarks.

### **Next Sunday**

**Holy Communion** at 10am. Sunday school is in suspension for the school summer holidays at the moment. **Florin**, our regular organist returns, but this Sunday we also say goodbye to another stalwart of our community as this week we bid a fond farewell to **Philip Hall**. He and Karine are moving to Brussels along with Olivia and brand new addition to the family, Astrid born on the 13th July!! Congratulations to the whole family. With the impending loss of **Philip and Karine**, the departure of **Noldy and Lafi** soon, the departure of **John and Ela** and the recent departure of **Jo, Rene and Neve**, the re-location of **Martin and Joanna** to Tirana, Claire returning to the UK, the COR is going through one of its periodic convulsions when key people all seem to leave at once. The same thing happened last year but even though you know it is going to happen, it still involves a kind of grieving process. Our prayers go with all those of our family who are leaving or have already left, while we pray for the continuing renewal of our community by new arrivals.

### **Letters from abroad**

John and Ela send their love to all in the Bucharest and Sofia congregation. They are settling in to their Skopje apartment and living out of boxes at the moment but Ela has managed to get her first swim in the pool there.

### **The church Garden**

On Sunday a member of the congregation left a donation in memory of his Father who died fifteen years ago. I think they would prefer to remain anonymous. Not wanting all of John's hard work to go to waste in clearing the church garden, Alex, Claire and I went out and bought some shrubs for the Garden and planted them. (Claire did most of the work!) The person who made the donation wanted the money spent on flowers and cookies etc for the church but I thought that plants for the garden would make for a more permanent suitable tribute for at least some of the money. Though I say so myself the garden is now looking great - totally transformed.

### **Open church**

The weather is sweltering at the moment, and the vestry and kitchen especially are pretty unbearable - so until September it would be better to check first to see if I am actually in church or not Tuesdays to Thursdays. I am always available by appointment of course. Sorry for any inconvenience.

### **Thought for the day**

*Note: Thank you for all your positive responses to my piece on Adrian including someone who now also wishes to visit him in prison.*

Question: Who said the following great things about the Church of England at the Lambeth conference?

Clue: It wasn't Bishops Michael Nazir-Ali, Peter Akinola or Peter Jensen! (For the uninitiated, these Bishops all deliberately boycotted the conference - keep up!)

"I'm speaking from the heart. I have no right to say it. The hardest thing in the world is to hold adherents of a faith together. Every faith faces schisms and cracks"

"The Anglican Communion has held together quite different strands of Christian theology and practice more graciously and successfully than any other religion I know. The fact that you hold together in spite of difference is something I view with *wonder and admiration*"

"And you must hold together for the future for it's your ability to hold together in a world driving apart that is your unique contribution to a world with a landscape of division. You are a wonderful church"

You are a "*wonderful church*", and "*I view you with wonder and admiration*" - so no prizes for guessing it wasn't one of our Christian brothers from another denomination either - no, it was the leader of Britain's Jewish community Sir Jonathan Sacks, the chief Rabbi.

When we are in the midst of the storm it is hard to see things clearly. I haven't heard anyone be so positive about the CofE for ages, and then when it comes, it comes from the leader of the Jewish community in Britain. And as an "outsider", who has had nothing but positive experiences of the CofE right from when he attended a Church of England primary school and had instilled in him there the virtue of tolerance he speaks with trepidation perhaps. He even says he has "no right to say it", but the fact that he did say it and felt the strong need to say it, must tell us that what we have is really quite precious.

It makes it all seem well worth the effort, worth all the brickbats, worth being called woolly and spineless, worth being accused of not believing in anything very much, worth being accused of being neither one thing nor another. God save us from the extremists from both the catholic and evangelical wings!

The Church of England was formed around a centre - an accord to stop Catholics and Protestants killing each other. The alternative way was played out in France. You know of course that I have a French name. This is because my forefathers were French Protestants who had to leave France and find refuge in Britain after the Catholics perpetrated a particularly vicious event known as the St. Bartholomew's day massacre when anything between 10,000 and 100,000 Protestants were butchered in mob violence. (Incidentally, on my Mother's side we are Irish catholic with ancestors in Sinn Fein who had to leave the farm and emigrate with a price on their heads,- so you could say we are a mixed bag)..The French and British experiences were the alternatives at the time - live together or kill each other. Whilst we generally don't go around killing each other any more, the options are basically the same - we live together as best we can or split apart and directly oppose each other.

When you hear the words of Sir Jonathan Sacks, who while not a Christian, obviously admires us greatly, we hear something about us that is perhaps so obvious that we take it all for granted. It is always worth talking to each other no matter how arduous the process, in order to try and understand each other. It is a pity that some of our own Bishops don't share this point of view.

The **prayer for today** is nearly 2000 years old and is taken from something called the liturgy of St Mark.

*O sovereign and almighty Lord,  
bless all thy people,  
and all thy flock.*

*Give thy peace, thy help, thy love  
unto us your servants, the sheep of thy fold,  
that we may be united in the bond of peace and love,  
one body and one spirit,  
in one hope of our calling,  
in thy divine and boundless love.  
Amen.*

Love and Peace

Martin