

COR Newsletter – 25 February 2009

Dear all,

Well, let's start by going back a bit beyond Sunday to talk about.....

The BRITANNIA BALL 2009

Suffice to say that everyone seemed to enjoy themselves. I've spoken to a few people and I'm glad I'm not the only one who felt a bit fragile on Saturday.

Thank you to everyone who contributed in any way shape or form, but special mention must go to our church warden Lillah Houghton for her tireless efforts on behalf of the church. About **£10,000** was raised for the church on Friday. You can look at that in two ways. First of all you may be disappointed that it isn't nearly as good as last year. But more positively we now have £10,000 more than we did on Thursday! Even during a recession that is now biting harder and harder in Eastern Europe, people still came out and supported us. The important thing is that the future of the Church of the Resurrection is more secure now than at any time in anyone's memory. Money isn't everything, but you have to keep away from the danger levels that mean that all we ever worry about is survival at the expense of witness and mission and communion. I'm glad that everyone enjoyed themselves, but now back to the reason we were raising it - **our church!**

Last Sunday in Bucharest

We were reminded in 2 Corinthians (which is an extended defence of Paul's own ministry and authority) and superlatively in the story of the "Transfiguration" of the surpassing importance of Jesus. Greater than all the law and the prophets (symbolised by Elijah and Moses) - **God is as Jesus is.**

On Friday we were raising money to help the church survive, but for what reason? The only way to judge a church's authenticity is how it always points away from itself towards God as revealed in Jesus. I hope and pray that this is what we do, so there must never be any embarrassment in raising money to support the structure that does this. On a slightly different note, we also said a big thank you to **Florin** our organist this morning. He told me that he has been playing at the church for 27 years. Here's to the *next 27.*

And also Thank you to Su Yen and Ming Lee for their hospitality afterwards, and a lovely authentic Chinese meal in good company.

Note: Their experiences under Chinese communism and Taiwanese dictatorship and comparisons with western capitalism together with Eugen's experiences of being tortured in communist Romania was an education. Their profound insights I will percolate and write about in a future communication.

Today is Ash Wednesday.

Said (that means no hymns - keep up) **Holy Communion at 7pm** this evening with the imposition of ashes if desired. This marks the beginning of the season of Lent, which leads to Easter. Services outside of Sunday have *never* been well attended at the COR for many and various reasons, but let's try to mark the start of this particular and important season if we can. Why not even consider breaking, changing or postponing some other engagement to make time for it!? The mood of this service is unashamedly quiet, reflective, intimate and invites us to enter into gigantic themes such as our own mortality, and the nature of suffering and sacrifice.

Next Sunday

The first Sunday of Lent. **Holy Communion** at 10am with **Sunday school** and our monthly **produce sale**.

Revision of the electoral roll.

As announced in church on Sunday. In the Diocese of Europe, because of our high turnover in congregants we renew our electoral roll completely every year. This would normally be done in April. However, as I am leaving at the end of April the church council has decided to move this process forward by one month to March leading to our Annual General Meeting after the service on the 29th March.

You are entitled to be on our electoral roll if you are 16 years or older and have been baptised in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

However, along with this right comes four main responsibilities. You should..

- * Attend worship whenever possible
- * Contribute financially according to your means
- * Pray for one-another on a regular basis - not just on Sunday.
- * Live your life in a way that is pleasing to God

It also gives me the opportunity to get your names, contact numbers and email address so that we can keep in touch more directly. Once you are on the roll you are also entitled to **stand for election** to the church council and various other posts. If you are interested in taking a more leading roll in the running of your church please see me or an existing council member or one of our church wardens **Lillah Houghton or Nicholas Hammond**. Especially during an interregnum the church will need a committed and loyal core of people to guide the church.

Thought for the day

It was my birthday on Monday and one of the best things was receiving an unexpected email from someone at my previous church in Margate. I had no idea that he even knew!

Apparently my new move has now been announced in the Church Times (I don't get my copy here for a week or two), and this apparently prompted another announcement in Margate. Going even further back, people from the church that I attended before ordination - St. Paul's Sandgate- are wanting to know my licensing date so they can be praying for us even if they can't be there in person though I understand that some are actually planning to be there, which is wonderful - and I was last at that church eight years ago.

This is a great reminder to me, if one were needed, that a church is *people* - a *community* - a living .breathing supportive community of *people*. And even though we are now far apart in time and distance, little reminders that people are still thinking of you, and praying for you, really lifts the spirits. Time and distance collapse when people think and pray about you.

In such a rapidly changing church community like Bucharest and Sofia, I get reminders of this all the time, when people I got personally very close to leave, but then remain in touch by the miracle of email. The extended family of the church of the Resurrection is now spread around the four corners of the globe. Our strange little church (come on, admit it) has touched so many people, briefly perhaps but certainly

indelibly, is unlike any other church I have ever come across. We have had huge problems to overcome, but we overcame them - "Line 'em up, Knock 'em down" - and I think that this is at least one factor - adversity - that binds us together. I am not going to embarrass people by name but when I know that our international newsletter is being read in places as far apart as Canada, Indonesia, Australia, many US locations, China, the UK of course, Bangladesh, Albania, Botswana, South Africa, Egypt, Romania and Bulgaria of course, it gives me a really warm feeling inside. The body of the church is the people bound together by the same Spirit. We are one, even though we are apart. This is writ large on the international arena. And we are still "one" even when someone dies. Being apart by physical distance and time is one thing, but even when we are parted by death we are still bound by the same spirit. Love transcends time, distance and death. "Love never fails" as Paul said. The body of the church extends not only to this physical plane but also includes those who have died. This is called, theologically, the "communion of saints" and we affirm our belief in this every time we recite the Nicene Creed on Sunday. A church is a community that spreads across the world but also beyond this physical world, all bound by that same Spirit. In the fullest understanding of "church" as a community that even transcends death, you are never, never, alone, not now, not ever.

There were a few prayers that I could have used but this **prayer for today** by someone called Dick Williams seemed to fit the bill.

*We remember Lord,
the slenderness of the thread which separates life from death,
and the suddenness with which it can be broken.
Help us to remember that on both sides of that divide
we are surrounded by your love.
Persuade our hearts that when our loved ones die, neither we nor they are parted
from you.
In you may we find peace,
and in you be united with them in the body of Christ,
who has burst the bonds of death and is alive for evermore,
our Saviour and theirs, for ever and ever.
Amen.*

Love and peace

Martin