

SUMMER 2009

# Christ Church

WEST WIMBLEDON

1859



2009



## *Parish Magazine*

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# Welcome...

**T**his is the time of year when we welcome a new PCC as they commence their work. Whilst the majority of members are continuing, Chris Ayles and David Essex have retired as Churchwarden and Treasurer respectively. Chris has been caring and committed. His warm greeting of worshippers on Sunday mornings has contributed tremendously to that pervasive sense of openness and welcome that so many people refer to when they speak of Christ Church.

David has guided us on financial matters with clarity and vigour! Stewardship and mission go hand in hand. We are not, nor ought to be, embarrassed to talk about our income, expenditure or fiscal priorities.

Our thanks to them both and our welcome to Sharon Mawhinney as our new Warden and Rachel Harrison as PCC Treasurer.

Much of the past year has been taken up with our 150th anniversary. I would like to say how gratified and impressed I am that so many people are joining in and doing their bit. We had a really enjoyable Patronal Festival with the Bishop of Kingston; the children's party was one of the highlights of my 5 years at Christ Church and the rest of the year is

going to be just as good. I'm particularly looking forward to squeezing in all the former clergy readers, organists and other old friends that we are expecting for our centre-piece celebration on July 5th.

The last year has also been marked by the return of the parish magazine. Once more, we have a magazine to be proud of!

Earlier this year we began a theology discussion group, which has really taken off with attendances of between 14 and 20. Also, I have been completing my new members programme for the Iona Community and in July will be hallowed as a full member.

But there are some areas of concern. Numbers at activities outside Sunday morning are often low. I think we are a bigger community than when I arrived at Christ Church but one where we are all gathered



The children's party kicked off with a fancy dress parade

together much less frequently.

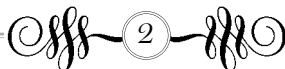
The PCC will be reflecting upon these changes and will begin to formulate a response to them. We celebrate, this year, a milestone on our journey of faith. We celebrate where we've come from, give thanks for who we are now and also, look ahead to what is asked of us next. In our liturgy, structures, buildings, music, worship, and communications, we will see where we need to be refreshed in order to effectively serve the people of this parish in the future. We can't just do what we have been doing all over again.

2009 closes one chapter in the story of our church and opens the first pages of a new one. It'll be exciting! It might be scary; it'll probably be hard work. But if we have ears to hear and eyes to see, we will recognize God with us every step of the way.



Ron's musical skills ensured the party went with a swing

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# PCC News

**Brenda Clark** gives us an update of the recent work of Christ Church's PCC

**T**he main topic discussed at the PCC's March meeting was the Treasurer's presentation of the Annual Accounts in preparation for the APCM which took place on April 23rd. David was warmly thanked for his work as church treasurer during the last three years. The new Treasurer is Rachel Harrison.

Other items included the proposed changes in the Christ Church boundary to include Hollymount School and a report on renewing the church lighting system with eco-light bulbs and appropriate fittings.

A successful 'Inspection of Articles' had been carried out, which is an inspection by diocesan staff of all church paperwork, service records, maintenance log books and utilities' inspection records. This meeting with the churchwardens is an opportunity to raise any issues relating to the operation of the church.

The Hall Committee report detailed the on-going repair and maintenance work being undertaken, and thanks were given to those who help to keep the hall running smoothly. More help is

always needed.

The main administrative event of the year is the annual APCM, which was held at Christ Church on April 23rd. The first part of this meeting is taken up with the election of churchwardens and the PCC for the coming year. Mark Adams was re-elected as churchwarden, and on the retirement of Chris Aylen, Sharon Mawhinney was welcomed to the post. Richard presented a gift to Chris with thanks for all his hard work during the past five years. The report on the new revised Electoral Roll showed the numbers now to be 203 names.

Reports from the Director of Music, Junior Church and Bruno Bear, the Pastoral Team, Book Club and Social and Fund Raising Team at Christ Church were all presented at the meeting and are available for all to read at the back of church.

Once again, more help is needed in some areas, please speak to Richard if you feel you can spare some time. Grateful thanks were recorded at the meeting for all who help to keep Christ Church the well-maintained, welcoming church that it is now and for the future.



# Charitable Giving Update

**Pat Spencer** on the Church Mission Society

**A**pril 12th was the 210th anniversary of the founding of the Church Mission Society so it was especially appropriate that our Easter collections that day were given to the work of CMS.

I'm not sure when Christ Church started supporting the Society but it has certainly done so for the forty two years I have been a member of the congregation. For many years we have cemented that connection by having a Mission Partner, someone working for the Society who sends us letters and asks us to support them through our prayers.

Our present link, Michael Green, is a nurse working with an outreach team in Jordan providing support and advice to children with learning disabilities and their families.

Jordan has many refugees from the wars in the area, including many long term Palestinian refugees. During Lent Michael and his church there raised money for the

UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees.

Mission Partners these days do not go to tell other people what to do but to offer their skills to the community where they are working. Mair and Duncan Rabagliati were very pleased to

have the opportunity of meeting Michael in Jordan recently. If you haven't seen the photograph on the notice board do go and have a look.

And please read Michael's latest link letter and remember him and his work in your prayers.



Michael Green's outreach work provides support in Jordan



## Social Side

**A**re you a gardener with green fingers or a cook with good culinary skills? This year we want to feature home-grown plants, fruit and vegetables, jams, pickles, chutneys and the like at our Autumn Fair on Saturday 5 September. We will be most grateful for all contributions, and we highlight this now to give sufficient lead time. The event will take place during the Parish Open Weekend and represents a good opportunity to meet members of the wider community in West Wimbledon while championing local produce.

Face painting and a splat-the-rat game will underpin our outreach activities on Saturday 20 June (10am – 4.00pm) when we will join neighbouring Anglican churches on a shared stand at the Wimbledon Village Fair. We will introduce Christ Church to fair goers and encourage them to visit us – offers to help on the stand will be greatly appreciated (list and rota to follow at back of church).

The Jigsaw Players will give a concert at Christ Church entitled *The French* featuring works by Debussy, Ravel and Faure on Tuesday 16 June; and on Saturday 25 July a free concert entitled *Composers on Holiday* (Dvorak and Tchaikovsky). To book tickets and for more information visit [jigsawplayers.com](http://jigsawplayers.com)

**Martin Evans**

# Parish

**David Essex** describes the

**O**ur church was built in 1858/9 at a cost of £3,425, financed by funds raised from a public appeal.

That's about £1.7 million in current money, but actually, less than half the rebuild cost we insure the building for, which assumes replication to the same quality as the original build.

So what has happened in between? The major change has been the relative increase in working men's wages compared to the professions. The average wage in 1859 was around £50 p.a. compared to today, of c.£25,000, a 500 fold increase. Applying that rate of increase to a teacher, a clergyman and an engineer, who in 1859 earned on average c.£94, £270, and £530 p.a. respectively, and you get £47,000; £135,000 and £265,000 p.a., significantly more than today's earnings in those professions.

This has two implications for church finances. The era of cheap labour has disappeared causing a disproportionate increase in building costs. Also, whilst (and because) West Wimbledon is an affluent area, average incomes have been squeezed relative to building costs, thus making it more difficult for us to raise the money necessary to pay for major repairs.

# Focus

challenges facing Church finances

Further, we have an additional problem in raising money: church attendances have decreased over the years. This is underlined by the decrease in the electoral roll which currently stands at c.200 compared to 670 in 1966.

For the moment we have been insulated from these pressures by the generosity of previous generations. We have inherited substantial investments from the sales of both the curate's and verger's houses. Both of which, at the time of original purchase, had been paid for out of funds raised by the parish. We have also had the benefit of rental income from the church hall (itself paid for from funds raised by appeal). Adding legacies brings the total contribution of previous generations to more than £400,000 over the last ten years (out of total income in the period of £1,250,000), the vast majority of the balance coming from committed monthly stewardship income.

So what have we done with this income? Well, in the ten years, we have given away just over £90,000 to charitable causes and we have given the diocese £643,000. This pays for our vicar and makes a substantial contribution to parishes in a less fortunate position than ourselves. The balance pays for parish and hall running costs and

major repairs. The latter have averaged just over £13,000 p.a., a large sum, but much smaller than if we had had to replace the church roof slates, renew the heating system or refurbish the organ.

In total, our income has been almost entirely offset by charges of just over £1,200,000. So, despite approximately one third of our current costs being paid for by previous generations, this means that we have only been able to put aside less than £50,000 over ten years for future repairs. Two years ago it was estimated that the renewal of the major components of church fabric would cost c.£500,000. So it can be seen that the funds we are putting aside are considerably short of what is necessary if we are to build up the necessary funds to pay for these future costs. In the face of declining congregations CofE churches are being closed at an increasing rate. At Christ Church West Wimbledon we are fortunate to know that our short term future is reasonably secure. Nevertheless unless current trends are reversed we will be very lucky to still be in existence as an autonomous parish in 100 years time. So it is not unreasonable to ask whether there is anything we can do now to improve the chances of our long-term survival.







# 'Exhilarated

**Marion Stewart** on her voluntary work at

**P**icture a school built for 900 children that now accommodates just under 1400 between the ages of 4 and 14. The area round the buildings is pretty exposed, with few trees, the ground uneven, the football pitch rough with patchy grass. The classrooms are a mixture; some cheerfully decorated with children's work, others pretty bleak. The furniture is second-hand at best. This is Emafini School in the township of Kwadwesi in Port Elizabeth, South Africa.

The children themselves, however, are unfailingly cheerful, greeting me each day with a 'Hullo Marion' or with a high five and a big smile as they cram themselves into their classroom, 40 + in each class.

I was over in Port Elizabeth working with the Calabash Trust, which was formed about 7 years ago. A Scottish lady, Marion Gate was over in PE; while her husband was at work she went on a township tour with Calabash Tours and was immediately struck by the conditions there and felt that something must be done to help the township people to recover after apartheid. The Trust now supports and sponsors feeding and craft projects in many townships. The Volunteer Project was what involved me.

Volunteers have been working in township schools for nearly 3 years in a variety of capacities. Most of my work was with Grade 2 with children of 6 or 7 who are about to start learning English. We learned parts of the body by sticking labels on ourselves; we talked each day about what clothes we were wearing and cut out paper garments which did not look much like how they were meant to; we climbed on and off chairs, over and under the table, put items in and out of pockets, cupboards and drawers, sat down and stood up, all in the pursuit of learning English! The children really enjoyed making books about themselves, using their drawings and photos that I took; the prospect of taking these books home to show family was greeted with glee. (You notice I say family rather than parents; some of these children may be orphans.) Each day on returning to their class they explained what they had been doing. During the four weeks I was there I really got to know these young children quite well, and it was a joy to have a small hand put into mine when I went to collect them. The confidence of many of them was much improved and several became quite adventurous in their speaking. Much singing is done in Grade 2 and I ended up

# & exhausted'

a school in Port Elizabeth

singing Old MacDonald Had A Farm eight times in all (twice with each class); all this at a temperature of about 30 C in a crammed classroom. Not surprisingly, I ended up exhilarated, but exhausted.

Four weeks went all too quickly; I felt that had I had another two weeks I could have started some of the groups with phonic sounds and easy words, but that will have to wait until next time.

I also worked with Grade 4 with reading; it was a particular joy for me to see large numbers of sets of group readers had been bought with money I had sent out last year that I had received, in lieu of presents, for my 70th Birthday. Other money that I took with me was raised from the sale of marmalade at Christ Church and other donations; with this I bought over 50 pairs of netball shoes and white socks. Until now

the girls have played in bare feet on a hot, gravelly paved playground. The shoes made such a difference; the girls' faces were a sight to behold.

The teachers at the school were unfailingly friendly and welcoming. In 2007 when this scheme was in its infancy, there was a certain reservation on both sides. They did not know what was coming and how we would react to their situation and we did not know what was expected of us. Now after 3 years of volunteers with Calabash, things are really improving, though there is still a long way to go.



Proceeds from the sale of Marion's delicious marmalade pays for school books and shoes!



Marion and the children of Emafini School in Port Elizabeth after a hearty rendition of "Old Macdonald Had A Farm".

# Health in the Parish



Since the church was built in 1859 there have been great improvements in health and the provision of healthcare in the parish and in the local community.

Although by the mid 19th century, the provision of safe drinking water had reduced water-borne diseases like cholera and typhoid - meaning the village well on Southside was no longer required - infectious diseases were the major causes of infant and adult deaths.

However, over the last 150 years, modern medicines, new technology and immunisation have reduced or eliminated many diseases such as smallpox and polio. This may have reduced the need for hospital beds but there is a greater burden on caring in the community - something which church members see.

These changes can be seen in the local buildings. To meet the local needs, a Wimbledon Cottage Hospital was opened in 1869 in Thurston Road off Copse Hill. It provided local services, but with the changes outlined above, eventually closed in 1977, not without some questions from the local community including from the then MP

Michael Havers.

Also in 1859, but Mr Atkinson Morley, one of the governors of St. George's hospital at Hyde Park left the trust £150,000. A plot of land in Wimbledon was purchased and what was to become a world-famous hospital specialising in neurology and neurosurgery - the Atkinson Morley in Copse Hill - was founded in 1869. The site however closed in 2003 when the facilities moved to St George's Hospital at Tooting, though the Wolfson Rehabilitation Centre remains.

Now, the surgery in Pepys Road is the only NHS facility in the parish - although there are plans for a new surgery in Lambton Road.

Nevertheless, there are of course improvements in overall health. Whereas life expectancy (at birth) in 1860 was around 35 years, now in wealthier parts of the borough such as our parish it is around 82 years for men and 86 for women. But shockingly in some parts of the borough the expectancy is 10 years less, and Raynes Park has an area of deprivation.

In the near future the NHS is planning to improve the facilities in

the local areas under a major £200m programme "Better health-care closer to home". This is consistent with the latest policy on healthcare, particularly the reviews by Lord Darzi (who is a doctor himself) which suggested that people should be treated locally where possible and in specialist centres where necessary.

So there will be a major £20m redevelopment at the Nelson Hospital to upgrade the facilities and provide more outpatient services, modern X-ray facilities and GP surgeries. A new wing, costing £140m, will be built at St Helier providing more single rooms.

In the meantime the maternity areas in St Helier are currently being modernised, to provide a midwife-led unit with birthing pools. The paediatric wards are also being upgraded.

In addition to these facilities, it is expected that there will be a new specialist stroke unit at St George's in Tooting, where those who have specific symptoms will be taken. Ambulance crews are now highly trained and, in conjunction with the central control centre, a decision is made as to where best to take any one who is seriously ill. St George's is also likely to be one of the major trauma centres for London.

A major challenge for hospitals is to contain the spread of infection.

In the year to the end of March, St Helier reduced the rate of MRSA infections by 40%, and some of the patients in this total had acquired the infection before they arrived at the hospital. Reducing infection is largely a question of cleanliness - by staff and visitors alike.

Although increasing obesity in the population is a threat to health, it is predicted that life expectancy will continue to rise, generating demand for health care. There will be a trend for people to be cared for at home. This will put increasing pressure on carers. Christ Church's support for the charity Carer Support Merton is most timely.

*John Davey*

John is Chairman of Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust and a director of Carers Support Merton. He is an avid sailor and a stalwart of the Evensong congregation. Since last autumn, John has been, with the Readers, part of the rota of four who lead Evensong, a much valued 'lay ministry'. He also does sterling work in the ranks of the choir and has recently retired as light bulb changer in chief!

John was educated at Cambridge University and Manchester Business School and has served at Board level in various companies. He is a qualified accountant, past Treasurer of Christ Church and current member of the Parish Finance Committee.



# Voicing Christian Values



## View from the Pews

**F**ifty years ago the Roman Catholic Church in England was an isolated institution. It was pre-occupied with its history as an excluded group, dependent on a recusant minority and ministering largely to working-class and immigrant communities.

Sacred Heart Church in Wimbledon was a lonely beacon of confident mission to a wider community. Not now. Within the last decade the leaders of our three main political parties were each worshipping in Roman Catholic churches. The Queen is said to have referred to Basil Hume as 'our cardinal' and recently dined privately with Cormac Murphy-O'Connor.

The secular press, bemused by issues of faith and looking for clarity and consistency from religious leaders, turns increasingly to the Archbishop of Westminster for a lead and a story.

The appointment of Vincent Nichols to be leader of the five million Roman Catholics in this country will prove timely for Christian witness in our country. Already he is talking of the need for society to find "ways of rebuild-

ing trust into civic and public life". He has challenged the insistent claims of contemporary culture that everything of value must be determined in materialist and scientific terms.

His international credentials for positive action in dealing with world poverty and climate change are well-established. He derailed the Government's attempts to impose control on faith schools by clever argument and canny tactics.

Watch out for his master-minding of the exposition of Christian social teaching in the run-up to the next election. He sees the Church not only knitted into the fabric of society but bearing a vital responsibility for its welfare and improvement. And, not least, he is a highly savvy political operator, schooled on Merseyside, trained in Rome and strengthened by wide experience in London and Birmingham.

Unsurprisingly he is, as even a casual listener to Radio 4 will know, a skilful communicator. Take this piece of Nichols's plain-speaking. "It is now clear that multi-culturalism is never going to work within a secular model. The diversity of cultures has been encouraged, but without genuine engagement with their moral values or beliefs. This

has left us with a spiritual vacuum at the heart of life."

Such clear and authoritative views are less likely in the Church of England. Our bishops are more diverse in their outlooks, theological positions and churchmanship.

In the Church of Rome there is no argument about the central body of belief, no distracting synods and no real truck with the laity, men or women. Pope Benedict may apologise about his lack of familiarity with the internet but on doctrine and discipline he speaks with incontrovertible authority.

Contrast and compare the position of Michael Nazir-Ali, the Bishop of Rochester, who, a decade before he need retire from his see, has stepped down to "undertake a new ministry in places where the Church is under pressure and Christians are in a minority".

Nazir-Ali is a scholar and theologian with exceptional clarity of mind and expression. Born in Pakistan with both a Christian and Muslim background, he became in 1994 the first non-white diocesan bishop in the Church of England.

He has been general secretary of CMS, chairman of the ethics and law committee of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology

Authority, a trustee of Christian Aid and Traidcraft and president of the Network for Inter-Faith Concerns in the Anglican Communion. He is described by his suffragan as: "a true prophet in the way that he has courageously spoken out against both injustice and compromising the Word of God".

In a cogent resignation article Nazir-Ali writes, "Every society, for its well-being, needs the social capital of common values and the recognition of certain virtues which contribute to personal and social flourishing. Our ideas about the sacredness of the human person at every stage of life, of equality and natural rights and, therefore, of freedom, have demonstrably arisen from the tradition rooted in the Bible."

Surely here is another voice for our times? Not in the view of the Dean of Southwark, who told worshippers on Easter Day that Nazir-Ali "has placed himself outside full communion, and his status as a bishop of the Anglican Church must be open to some debate".

How has such polemic come to blunt our Church's message? That, I fear, is matter for another article.  
*Colin Holloway*

# A society of many faiths, and none!

## The Wide Angle Lens

Until the 1950s the UK was a 'Christian society': it was pervaded by shared knowledge and assumptions about Christian heritage. With growing affluence, that background began to be eroded.

After half a century of secularisation, the C of E remains legally established, but culturally speaking it has been disestablished. It still has a remarkable place in the cultural life of the UK, but it is now a minority faith in all the ways that count, like Catholicism. Over the same period, they have been joined by significant minorities from other faiths. And a 'fundamentalist atheism', with its own 'high priests' and an aggressive approach to religion, has emerged since 9/11 and the rise of militant Islam.

We now have a society of resurgent interest in and controversy about religion. How should Anglicans respond to being in a society of many faiths and none?

I take it that two approaches have to be ruled out. First, there is the 'fundamentalist' view that everyone else is wrong and has to be treated as such, i.e. as targets

for conversion and opposition. Apart from being arrogant, this is asking for trouble in a plural society.

Anglicans have lived with doctrinal differences for centuries and have found ways of reconciling them and finding common cause in spite of disagreement.

The Communion has shown signs of losing this spirit of compromise and acknowledgement of scriptural uncertainties and the mysteries of faith. That would be a disaster, just when the genius of Anglicanism for enabling the co-existence of perspectives, and



finding common cause on the essentials, is needed more than ever.

Second, there is the view that every perspective is equally valid - an extreme form of 'live and let live'. Every doctrine and value is simply 'what works for you' and there is no such thing as Truth which is 'out there'.

But most people aren't attached to their values and beliefs in this way. Having a properly humble and ironic perspective on the mystery of God and (for example) the variations in the Gospels is not the same as thinking that God and the stories of the New Testament are 'just' about our subjective values.

So what could work? Is there a middle way between fundamentalism and 'anything goes' subjectivism? And is this middle path more than a soggy compromise, reminiscent of Anglicanism at its most vapid?

A promising pair of thinkers on this complex set of issues are the Chief Rabbi, Dr Jonathan Sacks, and the Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu. Sacks, in a series of brilliant books on religion in multicultural secular society, has developed ideas about what people of all faiths and none have in common.

These relate to the values that allow people to cooperate in the building and maintenance

of society, *'the house we build together'*. Sacks is reclaiming the idea of 'secularism' from hardline atheists who think it means a society in which religion is gagged and driven into private life. Secularism creates a common public realm in which all can add their voice but no faith can trump another. Agreement is based on shared values of reasoning and common morality, which faiths can *inform* but not *monopolise*.

Dr Sentamu adds something else: a way of speaking of faith that does not evade the fact that what I think

*'We now have a resurgence of interest in, and controversy about, religion'*

is True is not necessarily what you see as Truth - but I think it all the same and can't hide it. When he meets non-Christian visitors he will deftly acknowledge the difference in their

perspectives. So he greets Muslim friends in the name of Christ, *'to me a Saviour, to you a prophet'*.

This difference does not close the discussion, or start a row, but subtly acknowledges what each party sees as a deep Truth and allows the search for common ground to begin. In the next issue, we'll consider what that common ground could look like.

*Ian Christie*





# Common Talk

**Peter Haldane** on the perils facing our returning swans

**D**uring the spring and summer of 2007, a pair of Mute swans nested and successfully reared young on the Queensmere. It was the first time in living memory that swans had nested at this site and everything was done to ensure their every need was catered for.

Protective fencing was erected around the nest site, bedding material provided and a food supplement of mixed corn was brought to the enclosure by staff each day. Unfortunately, the safety of the swans was soon compromised by the sheer weight of predators in the area.

After losing one of their young to crows, the adult male received injuries from two separate dog attacks and then finally in October 2007, it was discovered that one of the adults had been killed by a bolt from a crossbow.

Following this final incident, we felt the best option was to contact London Wildcare and arrange for the swans to be relocated to the safety of Kingston Lock.

Now again, in 2009, the Queensmere has attracted another pair of Mute swans, one of them possibly from the 2007 brood. In recent months we have improved measures to protect the pond's resident bird life. We have constructed two floating platforms that

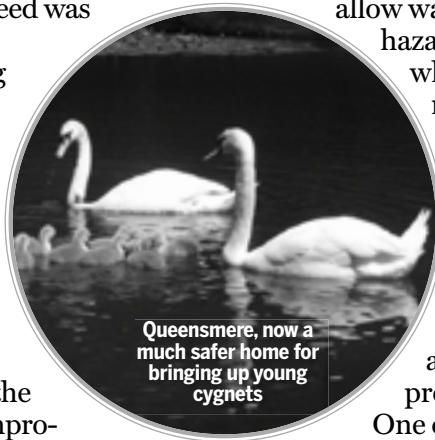
allow water fowl to avoid the hazards encountered when nesting on the marginal banks.

In addition, three new bye-laws introduced in November 2008 relate directly to the control of dogs on the Commons and provide added protection for wildlife.

One of these bye-laws allows the Conservators to temporarily designate areas of the Commons as dog free zones for the protection of flora and fauna. We now insist that during bird nesting season, dogs are kept on leads around the Queensmere and are no longer permitted to enter the water.

In mid May eight cygnets were born, and we look forward to watching their progress.

*Peter is Assistant Ranger and Wildlife Liason Officer for Wimbledon and Putney Commons*



Queensmere, now a much safer home for bringing up young cygnets