

THE NET

The Newspaper of i-church
www.i-church.org

Issue #2

August 2006

© i-church 2006

An online Christian community based in the Diocese of Oxford, part of the Church of England.

Food for thought

For those in i-church whom I have not yet had the opportunity to meet one-on-one, I am rather a Renaissance woman: I'm a published writer and photographer. I was designing and maintaining websites back in the HTML-code-written days, and have been a part of the Internet many, many years before the World Wide Web showed up in the mid-1990s. I am a retired university professor of English, Media Communications and Radio/TV.

These days, I'm semi-retired from most of the above but working harder than I ever did for the past four decades for much less money than ever before (relatively speaking). While I work part-time (20 hours plus or minus a week) at the local county newspaper, my major source of income, after my monthly pension, is farming.

Farming is the most physically exhausting job I've done in all my life but it's also the most rewarding. I love the land. I always have. I'm an organic farmer, and these days that can be a real trial, but I can feel safe eating what I grow.

On July 5th, Dorothy, one of my dear friends and a fellow produce farmer here, died very unexpectedly. The day after she was buried, her husband (Jimmy) called and asked my husband and me to take over tending Dorothy's garden for the rest of the season.

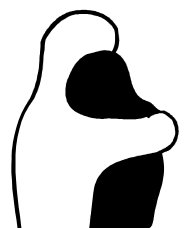
I was speechless and humbled. Dorothy's "garden" is beautiful (one of the best I've ever seen), but seriously in need of major tending now that she has gone. Jimmy shows up every morning/evening, waiting for us to arrive. He sits in that garden, awestruck at what Dorothy put together. And he waits for someone (me & Dan!) to come around and realize that as well.

We, none of us, have to be some global bright light here on earth to have our short time here valued. It's the small things that matter, who we touch and what we leave behind: the physical evidence and what we leave in other's hearts. And to me, that's i-church.

We're not here to change the world.

Just welcome one, and another one, and another one again.

Paula Franke



In this Issue

Pastors Letter (Joe Parrish in the chair)	page 2
2nd Anniversary of i-church	page 3
A faith lived out	page 4
Wordsearch (just for fun)	page 5
Concerning Christian Poverty	page 6
Recipe	page 8
Acronyms—what <i>do</i> they mean?	page 8
Tuesday—Open House	page 9
Fund Raising Day	page 10
Church photo	page 10
Forum Tip	page 11
PG21 focus—Peter Zerner on Psalms	page 12
August calendar	page 14
Worship in i-church	page 14
Service times	page 14

How to join i-church

Not everyone who reads The NET is a member of i-church, and if that applies to you, please read on . . . It is great to find you reading our newspaper. Hopefully reading these pages will whet your appetite to find out more about us.

If you go to our main website, www.i-church.org, you will find lots of information about i-church, what we do, when we do it etc and if this sounds like the kind of church you would like to belong to, please do ask to join.

We have members in the UK, Europe, The United States, Caribbean, South America, Africa, Asia, Australia and New Zealand. We are very much a world wide broad church, and there is usually someone around, somewhere in the world 24 hrs a day.

Whilst we are formally part of the Church of England, we have members of many denominations and varied churchmanship. It is our diversity which makes i-church such an interesting place to be. And you can be a member of both i-church AND a more conventional bricks and mortar church at the same time.

Assistant Pastor's Letter

Joe Parrish



No Round Stones?

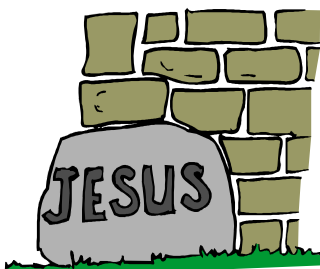
One of the difficulties of a religious listserv (internet posting board) like i-church is that there is a tendency to want to remake everyone in our own image. Maybe you can see where this is going. What we each have been made in, however, is in God's image, not in someone else's. Indeed our genes are inherited from our parents, but that is for the 'first birth', not for the 'birth from above', about which Jesus remarked to Nicodemus in John 3. In that birth, we share in the quality of 'incarnation' that our Lord had from his beginning on earth; one parent was God, the other, man (woman). In being born from above, born over again, we have a new parent, the Holy Spirit, and a new sibling, Jesus Christ. We still, like Jesus, have fully human characteristics, although not in perfect holiness as did Jesus have; but we do, like him, have another characteristic, that of a god who is eternal. We say we become 'one in the Lord' and will live with him forever. This miracle begins at the moment we have been accepted by God, as we have faith and trust in Jesus as our Lord.

However, in spite of our God-likeness, we still suffer from our less than perfect human condition. We are not holy, we only strive for holiness, well, most of the time. So we confuse our eternal inheritance with our earthly, and we tend to deem ourselves already like God, when in fact we are only on a lifelong journey towards that ideal.

The great advantage of i-church is that we 'try out' our ideas of holiness on each other. Maybe we tend to 'encourage' others to do what we think we do or what we think we want to do ourselves, things that we conceive of as holy. We want others to be concerned for peace, since isn't God interested in peace (blessed are the peacemakers)? Yet we often act on these peaceful instincts in a less than peaceful way. But most conceptions of God make God out to be a just being, even more than a peaceful being. Where there is no justice, there can be no peace, as the adage goes. So if we want peace, we need to work for justice, not just talk about it. Where there is true justice, there will be true peace. We want others to be concerned about the poor and oppressed humans of our world, but what have we done for those on our doorstep? It is so easy to look at those starving and oppressed 'over there', while we overlook those 'over here'. It is easier to be an idealist than to be a realist as far as our own actions are concerned. What have we done, not just thought about doing, not just offered to do, but what have we done, lately, recently, to bring about justice in our own neighbourhood? And particularly, since we are a part of our own neighbourhood, how have we shown more justice for the oppressed and worked to bring more justice for those poor souls in our place here where we live? And most importantly, how have we been more just ourselves today as compared with yesterday, or are we just 'resting on our laurels' of yesteryear?

A friend of mine spent his 'off duty' hours grinding stones, polishing stones. He would spin them in a container so that they would 'wear off' the edges of the other stones, while being 'worn off' themselves. The end was a perfectly round, smooth, stone. But if one tried to use such round, smooth, stones, say, to build a house, a wall, or anything of load-bearing quality, they would be dramatically deficient. Building stones need edges. The cornerstone is a good example for the other stones. It must have definitive borders in three dimensions; it needs bulk; it needs volume; it needs edges. If the cornerstone gets smoothed to a complete sphere, it is useless. So also are we. If we try to 'wear off' all the 'edges' of each other, then their ability to be the living stones of

Christ's kingdom on earth will be modulated, muted, even quenched. Beware of wearing each other 'smoothed' in our likeness. They have an inheritance that is eternal like ours. Let them be the building blocks they were called to be. Sure there may be some sharp edges that need a bit of 'fixin', but, in general, God has already made each of us in God's own image. Let us see that in each other. And let us continue to learn what mighty miracles that other person may work in us! Amen.



Birthday Reflections

i-church is two years old this August. We asked some of our pioneer members for their reflections of how it was in the early days. Please note, these are their personal views. First off the starting block was Lesley Howell from Sydney, Australia.

Well, I must say that I am still mystified as to the original selection process - How on earth did I get in? I must say I was more than delighted, and while I am not the most "active" participant, it is a constant - and one that fills what was once a void in my life.

I've watched as i-church has battled technology in a very satisfactory manner (Good on you Russell!) and has become much more user friendly. Now if we could get Skype under control - we could even sing hymns! (On second thoughts - maybe that's not a great idea as I, for one, don't have a single musical bone in my body. I think it's a family thing. We Howells can clear a room faster than a bad smell if we burst into song.)

I've made some new friends who've prayed for me with great success - Thanks guys! I've made more friends who've advised on everything from jobs to holidays. And all without leaving the house.

One of the things I really like about i-Church is its inclusiveness, gentleness and acceptance of a wide range of views.

Happy Birthday i-Church - may you enjoy many more.

And next, a personal view from Christine Shilling in the UK.

I'm still here 2 years after joining i-church at its start!

So why did I join? I'd only come to a living faith late in 2003 and had a great spiritual hunger which wasn't being met by weekly worship at my local church. I wasn't seeking knowledge - I could get that from books. I wasn't seeking God - He'd already reached out to me bringing me back from a pit of despair and hopelessness. But I'd not met anyone I could share my experiences with, nor anyone to accompany me on my spiritual journey - to challenge me, listen and share with me. So the idea of a 24/7 on-line church seemed like the answer to my prayers - a wind of change and life blowing through the Church - God active and present in the community.



I attended Alyson Leslie's inauguration in Oxford, was interviewed by the Voice of America about why I'd joined and am still a member of the first pilot pastoral group. I can see from comments I made to the Voice of America reporter what my dreams were for i-church. I saw i-church as the work of the Holy Spirit and hoped that by welcoming Christians of all denominations into a community we would be a visible symbol of how it is possible to concentrate on what unites rather than divides us and bring Christ's gospel to a tortured hurting world. So I guess I joined to meet a great spiritual hunger with the hope that i-church would be different - would evangelise.

And looking back what were those early months like? Exhilarating, heady, intense, exhausting, enriching - all I hoped for and more! From almost the first day we were chatting online in a rather primitive chat room. There were hiccups - some of us typed too fast for others, some couldn't access the chat room so we also used email loop discussions - introduced because everyone could be included. There were hassles, infighting, the usual storming, norming and forming one finds in all groups but all this was in the context of a growing camaraderie, a deep sharing, a sense of community, a learning from each other and a focus on Christ. And in those early days there were only 2 pastoral groups and one category of membership - few boards, no timetabled worship but spontaneous worship in one's pastoral group. And it worked! Those bonds grew stronger and most of us in those groups are still here.

And now? Well as i-church has grown the intimacy has gone, the spontaneity has gone, there

are more structures, more rules and now two classes of membership. I guess I've grown too – nurtured and enriched by many in i-church. Now I nurture others in my bricks and mortar church. I have found ways to meet my spiritual needs and feel fortunate to be walking with God in the company of a diverse, rich and supportive world-wide innovative Christian community and also to be able too to worship in my local bricks and mortar church.

But my dreams for i-church to become an evangelistic community haven't yet been met – will they ever be? Lately too I've wondered whether the internet is socially enabling or socially disabling. It can get too inward looking here – maybe even addictive – I hope i-church doesn't become a cosy club but a stepping stone – a bridge for us to link more effectively with our local communities and churches.

And a last word from John Thomas, from the United States

The was one Corgi-fast two years! I seem to remember those early years were fraught with confusion, dissension, and concession. There was a lot of moving about. We lost our group leader and our original web pastor. There were disagreements about a host of things - as there still are - but we made it through. I would say by the number of new members and the fact that the church is still standing, we done OK.

A faith lived out

In 1921 Lewis Lawes became the warden at Sing Sing Prison. No prison was tougher than Sing Sing during that time. But when Warden Lawes retired some 20 years later, the prison had become a humanitarian institution. Those who studied the system said credit for the change belonged to Lawes. But when he was asked about the transformation, here's what he said: "I owe it all to my wonderful wife, Catherine, who is buried outside the prison walls."

Catherine Lawes was a young mother with three small children when her husband became the warden. Everybody warned her from the beginning that she should never set foot inside the prison walls. But that didn't stop Catherine! When the first prison basketball game was held, she went ... walking into the gym with her three beautiful kids and she sat in the stands with the inmates. Her attitude was: "My husband and I are going to take care of these men and I believe they will take care of me! I don't have to worry."

She insisted on getting acquainted with them and their records. She discovered one convicted murderer was blind so she paid him a visit. Holding his hand in hers she said, "Do you read Braille?"

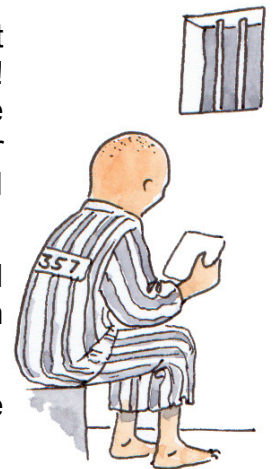
"What's Braille?" he asked. Then she taught him how to read. Years later he would weep in love for her.

Later, Catherine found a deaf-mute in prison. She went to school to learn how to use sign language. Many said that Catherine Lawes was the presence of Jesus that came alive again in Sing Sing from 1921 to 1937.

Then, she was killed in a car accident. The next morning Lewis Lawes didn't come to work, so the acting warden took his place. It seemed almost instantly that the prison knew something was wrong.

The following day, her body was resting in a casket in her home, three-quarters of a mile from the prison. As the acting warden took his early morning walk he was shocked to see a large crowd of the toughest, hardest-looking criminals gathered like a herd of animals at the main gate. He came closer and noted tears of grief and sadness. He knew how much they loved Catherine. He turned and faced the men, "All right, men, you can go. Just be sure and check in tonight!" Then he opened the gate and a parade of criminals walked, without a guard, the three-quarters of a mile to stand in line to pay their final respects to Catherine Lawes. And every one of them checked back in. Every one!

Tim Kimmel



From *A Barrel of Fun*, J. John and Mark Stibbe, Monarch Books

Wordsearch

Here is a new feature from The NET; a biblical wordsearch. Just for fun, no prizes for correct answers; if you want you can phone a friend. Enjoy

The Greatest Commandment

In the time of Moses, God gave the Ten Commandments and some other laws. Hundreds of years later, some men added hundreds and hundreds of extra rules on top of God's law and over the years people had got confused over what God had actually said.

Someone once asked Jesus what the most important rule was. Jesus told them the most important rule is for us to love God with all our heart, all our mind, all our soul, and all our strength. He said the second most important rule was to love other people as we love ourselves - everything else in life follows from these two rules. (You can read about this in Mark 12: 28-34)

S T D O G E V O L H C L
R F D Y J A E Q T X O A
E H P Y I W J G D Z M W
H Y E I K Z N N I D M S
T O I A U E O W H D A K
O L B N R C P R D J N T
E Y H T E T R N U E D X
V T S S T S I V A L M X
O S M R D M L U O S E J
L R G R E A T E S T N S
W I M P O R T A N T T H
R F V E H F P I W O N Q

commandment
first
greatest
heart
important
laws
love God
love others
mind
rules
second
soul
strength

Produced by QuickSearch Word Search Maker - Software Copyright 2001-2003 (familyinterest.com ltd) Level M

A woman approached the minister after the sermon, and thanked him for his talk. "I found it so helpful," she said.
The minister replied: "I hope it will not prove as helpful as the last sermon you heard me preach."
"Why, what do you mean?" asked the astonished woman.
"Well," said the minister, "that sermon lasted you three months."



Concerning Christian Poverty

From time to time the problem of Christians and material possessions crops up, and gives cause for concern to those who are not sure how to interpret the Christ's teachings on giving up all to follow Him. I do not believe that Jesus intended that everyone should slough off their *riches* and take to the road as itinerant beggar preachers, although the more who do so the closer we come to the dawning of his Kingdom. Some promote the Marx, Lenin, Engels idealism in the mistaken impression that here lies the key to true communism, an equal sharing of all wealth, with each person responsible for their neighbour's well being. Even if such a state could be achieved it is based on accruing material wealth, albeit spread evenly amongst all people, ignoring the spiritual aspects of our lives, and fails to take into account humanity's acquisitive nature for power and money for the benefit of the self.

Over the millennia of Christendom's existence, a number of saints have espoused poverty, and preached the need to cast off all our possessions if we are truly to experience God through the Christ. Such teachings led, in the early centuries, to individuals leaving the world and becoming hermits, and eventually to the setting up of the monastic orders, where not only physical poverty was taught, but also poverty of the spirit, allowing that inner space to be emptied in order that it might be filled with God's own Spirit. However one of the foremost proponents of poverty appeared



in the thirteenth century, and has left behind a legacy of writings and stories far greater than almost any other saint, until more modern times. This may well have been because he refused to shut himself away behind walls, but claimed the life of those giving themselves totally to God, denying wealth and comfort, should be outward looking, working and teaching out amongst the populace, relying on the latter for sustenance and, at times, shelter. This Saint, as you will likely have guessed by now, was St Francis of Assisi.

It is true that he embraced Lady Poverty, and wed himself to her, and he encouraged total dispossession of the material things of life by those who would join him on the road. Indeed those early ones needed no encouragement, neither did Clare of Assisi when she begged to be allowed to follow him.

Yet Francis recognised early on that only a few would be able to take his road, and he did not seek to impose his austere poverty on people as part of the road to God. However he did encourage those who would follow Jesus to strip themselves of all their excess materialism.

This became the basis for his third order, people who remained in their homes, following their trades, honouring their responsibilities to family and society, while giving to, and serving the poor,

retaining only enough to allow them to do God's work.

He recognised that one person alone was a poor sign of Love, and early on he envisaged a brotherhood of people who, together, could make people stare and truly say, 'Look, see how those Brothers Love each other*' For to Francis Love was the secret of moving closer to God. Being poor in itself was not sufficient, indeed there were already those who claimed poverty, and waved it like a banner. They scourged themselves and wore hair shirts, demanding the same of all those who would follow the Christ, yet showing little real Love for their fellow citizens and God, but with pious and stern face demanded to be listened to. Without Love in their lives there was no Joy, for to Francis real Love was, in itself, the root of joy, a Love that enabled him to dance and sing his way along the roads and into the countryside surrounding Assisi, Joy that caused him to be given the name God's Fool.

To him Lady Poverty was the symbol of the paradoxes of the Gospel, a great richness in poverty, life through death, strength in our very weakness, beauty in the ugliest scenarios, from conflict and

temptation peace, a fullness that only emptiness can give us. But above and beyond all these, something which makes them useless unless we can fill our hearts with it, to be found in detachment and deprivation, Love.

As his band of followers on the road grew, so did the numbers in the towns they preached in, and from these people emerged the third order. Those in that order, as indeed he preached for all Christians, were enjoined to follow their trades, continue to exercise their responsibilities to their families and in their communities, following Francis' example of a simple interpretation of the Gospel, Loving God through Jesus. They were to find the joy of Love through service to others, and by that service to draw on God's Love as He pours it into us. Now, as then, our deprivation lies not so much in giving up all worldly possessions, but rather in giving up ourselves, our aims and ambitions, our hopes, and yes giving up our fears, for in embracing Jesus through poverty, we have nothing left to trigger those fears.



We are in the world, though not part of it, and we need to use the mechanics of worldly living to enable us to spread His Word. That means, in a world where plastic has become the common currency, we need to have bank accounts, and access to money machines, and telephone banking, because if we are going to be effective in using what we gain, for the benefit of others, we have to be able to store it, and draw what we need when it is appropriate. We do not need credit cards, or HP, or any other form of borrowing. It is here that, if we are not careful, we cross the line from being in the world to becoming part of it. We become immersed in gathering material things around us, and in the worries the material brings we lose the freedom to be joyful.

Real poverty is not just materialistic poverty, but that poverty of the spirit in each of us that allows God to enrich us with His Love, if we but allow Him in.

So I believe the Gospel teachings on poverty are as real today as they were 2000 years ago. If we gather around ourselves the materialistic riches to be found in many Christian homes, we become so bogged down in ensuring that we keep up with the Jones's, or the Smiths or the Gates, that we become obsessed with the need for even more, more that we don't need, more that prevents us from truly knowing God in our everyday lives. More that breeds fear of deprivation, a fear that leads us to strip this planet in such a way that we are surely bound on the road to our own destruction, that commands us to defend what we possess, even if that means going to war to ensure that the raw materials our wealth is founded on remain available to us. No it is the Francis of this world that we need to match ourselves with, it is the spirit of giving and serving in Love, God's love.



Only when we can put aside all that collection of worldly goods, retaining only that which is needful for our survival in a manner that allows us to do His work unhindered, can we truly start to know freedom from fear, freedom to experience true joy, revelling in the creation that surrounds us. We have to bring ourselves to trust that He will provide for us, not what we want, but what we need. That applies to the spiritual side of our lives as well. In laying our materialism at His feet, we must also lay before Him a spirit empty of all covetousness, a Spirit He can take and use as His, handing back to Him the gift of free will to receive the much greater gift of His will. Only then can we take the dream of Marx, Lenin, and Engels, and merge it with that of Francis, in a true spirit of community, that gives us the strength, through His Love, to overcome our inbred natural acquisitive instincts. Yet is not so much an overcoming, as a redirection, in that we come to want what God offers us, rather that what the world we live in says we should possess.

For me, one of the greatest joys is the wonder that God does provide for my needs in ever differing ways, but if I squander His provision, then I have to make it good. This is when I know I have crossed the materialistic barrier, and retreat is required.

Recipe

Not Zucchini again?

As the years pass we get bored with the same old vegetables, and look for new ways to serve them. Here is an easy to cook alternative for serving Zucchini.

Zucchini with tomato and Garlic

6 medium sized Zucchini
2 table spoons of butter or oil (or a good olive oil based table spread)
2 cloves of crushed garlic
2 firm ripe tomatoes, peeled and diced (A good way to peel tomatoes is to carefully slit the skin top to bottom on opposite sides, then bring a pan of water to the boil and drop the tomatoes in for approximately 30 seconds. Remove from water and carefully remove skins.)
Freshly ground pepper, and salt to taste
2 table spoons of finely chopped parsley

Wash zucchini, remove ends and cut into fairly thick rounds. Heat butter / oil in a heavy saucepan and fry garlic on low heat, add the tomatoes and stir gently but well. Add the Zucchini and season with pepper and salt. (This requires tasting the mix, cooks privilege) Cover and cook on low heat for 15 minutes, or until zucchini are tender, stirring occasionally, and adding a little boiling water if mixture is dry.

Serve hot sprinkled with chopped parsley.

Serves 4

One of the joys of this kind of recipe is that you can experiment with different ingredients, even using alternative vegetables.



*(And in case, like me, you didn't know what Zucchini's are, they are also known as courgettes! You knew that?
Phil Wright)*

Acronyms

Have you noticed that on the forums or in Live Chat more and more acronyms are creeping in? Here are some recently spotted within i-church and their meanings (just in case, like me, you have been wondering what people are saying).

AFAIK	as far as I know
ANS	Anglican News Service
B&M	bricks and mortar (church)
BRB	be right back
BTW	by the way
CU	see you
CUL	see you later
ETA	extra text added
F2F	face to face
FWIW	for what it's worth
GBU	God Bless You
HTH	happy to help
IMHO	in my humble opinion
IMO	in my opinion (not humble!)
IYKWIM	if you know what I mean
ISTM	it seems to me
IRL	in real life
LOL	laughing out loud
NP	no problem
OTOH	on the other hand
ROTFL	rolling on the floor laughing
TBH	to be honest
TTFN	ta ta for now
TY	thank you
WB	welcome back



Open House on Tuesdays

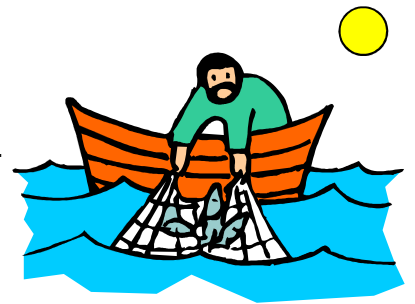
For more than a year there has been a regular Friday Bible study at around 13:00GMT in i-church. However, recently numbers attending have dropped and a new time and format was proposed. On Tuesday evenings (1900GMT) there is a meeting for discussion in the Chapel. This can take the form of a Bible study or some other form of study or a question and answer session to someone. After half an hour, participants go to the café for a social time, returning to chapel at 2000GMT for worship.

The first of the new style sessions took place on 27th June when we studied the parable of the sower. I wondered if I had chosen too familiar a passage but about a dozen of us spent the whole hour discussing this. Farming methods occupied some of the discussion. We recognised how liberally the seed (God's word) was being spread in that it went in places other than where it was likely to grow. We noted that none of the seed in odd places did grow in the parable but we have seen plants growing in the oddest places. We also noted that not all the seed that fell on good ground produced a yield.

The normal interpretation of the parable is that the word of God is reaching different people who vary in their receptiveness to it. However it was suggested that maybe it could also mean one person at different times of their life. Sometimes we are receptive to God and sometimes we are not.

The discussion looked at the need for places where the seed could be nurtured, a community where people can grow in their faith. This seemed particularly relevant to us in i-church as many of us find the support we receive here is very helpful to our spiritual growth. By the time we had discussed all this we were just in time for worship and had had no time for socialising but it was a great discussion.

The second study was led by Phil and looked at the parable of the net in Matthew 13:47-50. Phil thought this was particularly appropriate as the first issue of our new newspaper, The NET, had just hit the 'streets'. Phil even recorded the passage for folk to listen to instead of reading it! The discussion touched on our expectations of being one of those caught by the angels and thrown into the fiery pit of hell or not! (we all decided that not was better!) This time the group managed to have about 20 minutes of socialising after their study before spending time in worship in chapel.



In the third week we looked at the information about stability and conversion of life that we have posted on our website. It is pointed out in this that living in community is difficult. We discussed how we felt about this and concluded that the plusses of community are worth the occasional difficulty. Most of us have such good friends in i-church. We recognised the danger of speaking more than we should, or in our case, typing more than we should in responses to posts in the forums. It is too easy to dash off an answer and then regret it later. The idea of working at being holy kept us busy as we tried to see what holiness might mean. Once again this was a long study with a lot of sharing and took us to the worship time.

Our fourth meeting found us looking at Proverbs 1 led by Paula. Numbers at the study were lower but we still spent most of an hour discussing the first part of this chapter. The phrase 'the fear of the Lord' caused some concern as fear and God seemed hard words to put together. We recognised that the word fear is used here to mean reverence or respect not fright. The idea of our parents' advice being worn as a chain around our necks or a pendant captured our imagination.

The move to a new time seems to have been a success with much higher numbers attending the studies and lively discussion taking place. It is still not possible for everyone to attend who might wish to but that is a constant issue as we have members across the time zones. If you can make this time, pop in and join us. There is no need to contribute if you don't feel confident in doing so. It is easy to just 'listen' if you prefer that. You never know, you may be tempted to make a point of your own. You will certainly find food for thought.

Ailsa Wright

Fund Raising Day

Many, if not most, churches have some sort of fund raising appeal during the year, to help supplement the collection taken each Sunday through the plate or in specially provided envelopes. Well, we may not have the collection plate, but we can have our equivalent of a fund raising day!

Here's how it might work. The period **October 27th to November 5th** is designated i-church fund raising week. Each member, assuming they wish to participate, runs some kind of event in their own locality to raise funds for us, and at the same time promote i-church. What you decide to do and how you do it is up to you, but to get your creative juices flowing, I have made some suggestions below. My list is by no means exhaustive; you probably will have much better ideas than I have using a particular skill or talent you have, or perhaps taking advantage of something unique in your area.

Your event does not have to be done solo. As far as I know Ailsa and I are the only couple in i-church, but there is nothing to stop you roping in your friends or family—it is after all, in a good cause. Consider running an event with another group to provide mutual support and split the proceeds; you might be able to do something with the local Scout or Guide group, or your local Youth Group, your local B&M church even. If , at the same time you can show something of what i-church does, so much the better; it will help spread the news about our world-wide organisation.

Church Photographs

Send us your pictures of your B&M church so we can see where you worship. Here is another St Mary's, this time the home church of Paul Sibley, in Godmanchester, Huntingdon.



To help get this underway, it would be great if you could tell me what you plan to do, where and how you are going to do it. All the ideas will be pooled to give others an idea of what is already planned, and even allow them to copy—this really is a case of mimicry being the best form of flattery.

So, what might you do? In no particular order of importance, here are some ideas straight off the top of my head. Use them, abuse them, adapt them , improve them as you will!

- hold a Coffee Morning
- bake cakes, cookies for sale
- sell home made jam
- hold a dinner party
- Bar-b-que (might be cold in Europe!)
- Bonfire Party (Nov 5th in UK)
- Car Boot Sale
- Garage Sale
- sponsored walk, cycle, run, swim
- sponsored prayer
- ebay Sale
- hold a raffle
- run a games night
- donate a day's pay

The car boot sale, garage sale, ebay sale all involve you searching out all your unwanted items and selling them on—it is amazing what others will pay for what you think is junk!

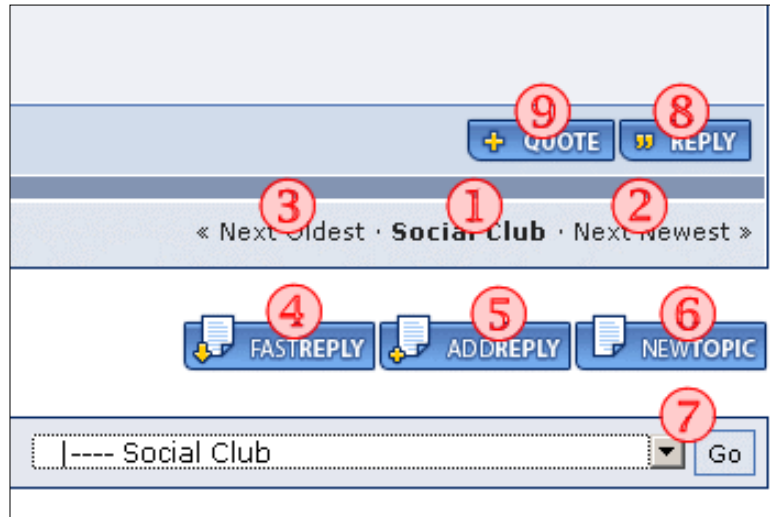
Whatever you do, have fun, tell people all about i-church and raise lots and lots of lovely money!

When does all this happen? Any time you like between October 27th and Bonfire Night.

Forum Tip

What do those buttons do?

You've probably seen these buttons and links at the bottom of every topic. In fact, you've probably worked out what most of them do. But many won't know what all of them do. And some of those you don't know just might prove useful to you. So here goes; hopefully you'll recognize this picture, apart from the numbers of course.



1. A straightforward link back to the topic listing of the forum you are currently in.
2. A link to the next newest topic in the forum you are currently in.
3. A link to the next oldest topic in the forum you are currently in.
4. "Fast Reply" opens an extra reply box at the bottom of the topic you are reading. There are no formatting options in there, although you can still use them all if you know the BBcode to type. It's ideal for use when you want to make one of those quick little replies to a topic -- maybe that's why it's called "Fast Reply".
5. "Add Reply" takes you to the full posting box, with all the formatting options, and allows you to add your comments to the current topic.
6. "New Topic" takes you to the same posting screen as with "Add Reply", but this time starts a new topic in the forum you are currently in.
7. This is what's known as the "Forum Quick Jump". You can use it to jump to any other forum within the board, without having to return to the main listing. For instance, you may be reading a topic in the "Social Club" and want to go to "Spirituality" next -- quick jump allows you to go straight there with just a mouse click.
8. "Reply" allows you to make a direct reply to the post you are reading, and includes a quote of that post too.
9. "Quote" is possibly one of the least understood buttons in the forums; but once you realize how it works, is one that you may well find yourself using a lot. It's actually a "MultiQuote" feature. If you click on it, you'll notice that it turns red, and has a "minus" sign instead of a "plus" sign on it. The way it works is, you click on it, then click on "Add Reply" or even "New Topic", and the post you've clicked on will be quoted in your new reply or new post. Not much use, you might think, it does the same as "Reply" but I have to click an extra button. But this is, as I said, a "MultiQuote" feature. If you're reading a long thread and decide you'd like to reply to several posts within it, just click on the "Quote" button below each of them, then when you click on "Add Reply", you'll see all of them quoted in there. Then you can just add your replies between the quotes. It can actually be used to quote from multiple posts all over the forums, but that will only have limited uses for most people.

I hope that has gone some way towards making things a little easier for you around the forums.

Paul Sibley

Each issue we will focus in turn on one of the Pastoral Groups. This month we turn to PG21.

PG21 Focus

I have been trying to recall how I undertook the project of translating and commenting on the Psalms. When I became a community member of i-church, Joe informed me that the password for entry into the inner sanctum was PG-21 and that it stood for Psalm Group 21, although that particular psalm number was of no particular significance. I have not gotten that far (only through 16), so I'll have to take Joe's word for it. At any rate, that designation must have served as a spur or at least a good omen for commencing on my project.

I had of course read the Psalms before, although not in their entirety, and not with the care of a translator. At any rate, several months after I joined i-church, I began my work in earnest. Here is how I go about tackling a psalm: First I read the psalm in Hebrew and read it enough times to think I understand it, although in almost every psalm there is a debatable word or phrase, which can be translated in various ways. At this point, especially recently, I have been delving into my Hebrew-English lexicon in order to track down the root meaning of Hebrew words, to try to discover what they really mean, at least to me.

Once I feel familiar with the Hebrew and have written my first draft in English, I read the psalm in Jerome's Latin Vulgate version. Jerome in the 400s translated the entire Hebrew bible and journeyed to the Near East to learn Hebrew first hand from the Desert Fathers. His first translation of the psalms, however, was from the Greek Septuagint, the work of 70 Jewish sages (Septuagint means 70), who were housed in an island fortress by Ptolemy Philadelphus in Alexandrian times. Dissatisfied with the Greek and wanting to get to the original source, Jerome translated the psalms again directly from Hebrew. Jerome's translation is splendid, and it inspires me poetically. I have been translating Latin poetry for many years and find, as poets in English who are classically educated do, that it adds much to my English version. My reading of Jerome also leads me back to my Latin dictionary, from which I receive further inspiration, or at times consternation, in that even the saintly Jerome gets the Hebrew wrong quite often.

After Jerome and a bit out of order chronologically, I look at my psalm in the Septuagint Greek. This too has much to offer linguistically and as a means of getting at the real meaning of the Hebrew. Then, after wringing what I can out of the ancient tongues, I look at the translation of Miles Coverdale, which I have available in the Psalter at the back of a tiny, black-leather-bound Book of Common Prayer that once belonged to my wife's great-grandmother. His translation is splendid of course, as is the King James Version. At times I also inquire into the Revised Standard Version, New International Version, etc. but although these modern translations are sometimes more accurate, I often find the style is quite flaccid in comparison to the robust vigor of Elizabethan times.

The psalms were all the rage in the period of the writing of the King James Version. The fascination with translating them and setting them to music has led scholars to describe this period of English history as a "psalm culture." Along with translating Ovid from Latin (William Golding) and Homer (George Chapman), many people tried their hand at psalmody, including Philip Sidney, his sister, the Countess of Pembroke, and of course, John Donne and Henry Vaughn. Thus, the psalms are central to the Anglican tradition and no less central to the formation of English literature in modern times.

It is interesting to note that most of the early translators of the psalms in England, Coverdale included, did not know Hebrew, so they were mainly translating from the Vulgate Latin. John Milton and a few others did know Hebrew, however, but the recovery of the study of that language in England is another subject entirely.

I myself have managed to learn Hebrew, and I have certainly deepened my knowledge of it by undertaking my translation of the psalms. In terms of the venerable tradition of creative literary translation in England and America, I would like to think that I am carrying on the torch by "making it new," while remaining as faithful as I can to the beauty and sense of the original.

The Commentaries I have been appending to my translations have been particularly gratifying to

me. I have been surprised and encouraged by the fact that I personally always seem to have something to say about the psalms. I am not quite sure why this is. I think that the psalms possess a unique universality that speaks to everyone's hopes, joys, sorrows and fears. Perhaps, having lived a while on this earth, the psalms now offer me an opportunity to filter my own personal experiences through them, so that like silver fired in a crucible of earth, they can shine again with the Psalmist's own reflected light.

I would like to thank PG21 and i-church for the opportunity to pursue this task. I have been encouraged to continue many times by the kind interest shown in them. In closing, I would like to add a representative psalm and commentary, so that other members may have the opportunity to see what I am doing.

Psalm 14

Fools say in their heart, "There is no God."
They are corrupt, their actions detestable.
Not a single one among them does good.

From heaven the Lord bends down to look upon the children of men,
to see if there is anyone with understanding, seeking after God.

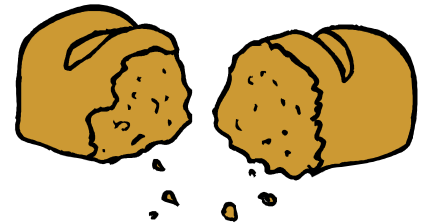
But all have turned aside.
All have turned away, congealed
into a curdled mass.
There is no one who does good, no not one.

Will they never learn, these workers of iniquity
who devour my people like a crust of bread and
never call upon the Lord?

But see how they shudder with dread!
For it is in the company of the righteous that the Lord lives.

You who scoff at a poor man's wisdom – "To think
the Lord is their refuge!"

But who will bestow salvation on Israel from Zion?
When God restores the captivity of his people,
Jacob will leap for joy and Israel will
tremble with delight.



Commentary:

The word I translate as "fool" (along with many other translators) in Hebrew is 'naval' – which really means one who is morally rather than mentally deficient. This noun is singular in the original Hebrew, but, for the sake of readability, I have changed it to plural because the following nouns and verbs are plural. Denying the existence of God in his heart means either that this is a deeply held belief, or perhaps one that immoral person keeps to himself, maybe even engaging in outward, socially desirable, displays of piety. This denial of and turning away from God means that God and his goodness cannot dwell in such an individual, thus cancelling out that individual's capacity to do what is right and good. He is an empty vessel.

The psalmist seems appalled by the near universality of corruption. Everyone has gotten totally off the track, and although people might seem to err in different ways, their avoidance of doing what is right imparts an essential unity to their errancy.

There is a nice anthropomorphizing touch in describing God as bending down from heaven to look upon men, as if from some skyey window. That is the exact meaning of the Hebrew verb 'ha'shkif'. Wisdom and a genuine searching for God are in short supply in David's time.

I have used the word "curdled" to describe this process of congealing into a sour, monotone mass

of evil. I have done so for two reasons, at the prompting of two ancient versions, first by Jerome's Latin vulgate, and then being led from there to scrutinize the original Hebrew with greater care. Jerome in his translation from the Hebrew psalms (he also first did a separate translation from the Septuagint Greek), uses "simul conglutinati" which means "are joined/glued/cemented together." My Latin dictionary says that "conglutinati" was a "favorite trope" of Cicero, and this recalls Jerome's famous dream, related in his letters, where the finger of God appeared and his voice admonished him that he was "no Christian but a Ciceronian." I, however, was smitten with the gluey quality of the Latin adjective. Pursuing the meaning of the Hebrew still further, I was interested to learn that the Arabic cousin of this Hebrew word does indeed mean curdled, as in the formation of curdled milk and eventually the more massy cheese. Thus I feel there are lexical grounds for my innovation.

The picture of God's people being gobbled up like bread is a description of the ultimate in harmful consumer behavior. In David's day, God's people, the poor, the widowed and the orphaned, were being steadily devoured by those who exploited their labor and laid their lives to waste. To describe the producers of the wealth that goes into the pockets of the very rich as the bread on which they sup is a very apt metaphor and strikingly novel.

For all their self-centeredness and denial of God, those whose unbelief enables their criminality can still discern the power of God about them, especially when they behold the fervor and thirst for justice in the assembly of the righteous. For amidst the solemn assemblies of God's people resides the awesome power of the Lord. The rich and powerful, especially those whose wealth is obtained by unethical means, can scoff at the poor individual and her claims of refuge in God, but when they behold their powerful assemblies, they must shudder with dread at the presence of the Lord, not within their own hearts, but within the church of God.

The captivity of the people will be restored from out of Zion, the earthly seat of God's divine presence (shekinah). Being loosed from their shackles will cause God's people to dance and sing. It will cause them to tremble too - not with fear, but with overwhelming joy in God's saving grace.

© Peter Zerner 2006

August Calendar	Service Times																				
<p>Birthdays as per Calendar (there are 4 in the month on the 9th, 17th 22nd and 31st August)</p> <p>August 18th, 19:15 GMT Café—meet Revd Leanne Roberts, Chaplain to Hertford College, Oxford.</p> <p>August 18th Deadline for The NET</p>	<p>Keep this guide by your computer to help you remember when all the service times are. There is space for you to write in the local equivalent times:</p> <table data-bbox="877 1433 1356 2038"> <tr> <td><u>Worship</u></td> <td>GMT</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mon to Sat</td> <td>08:00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sunday</td> <td>09:00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Daily DIY</td> <td>11:00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Daily</td> <td>20:00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mon to Fri</td> <td>02:00</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2"><u>Open House—Tuesdays</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Study</td> <td>19:00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Chat</td> <td>19:30</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Worship</td> <td>20:00</td> </tr> </table> <p>You can now get services in your local time on the member Home Page. Check it out.</p>	<u>Worship</u>	GMT	Mon to Sat	08:00	Sunday	09:00	Daily DIY	11:00	Daily	20:00	Mon to Fri	02:00	<u>Open House—Tuesdays</u>		Study	19:00	Chat	19:30	Worship	20:00
<u>Worship</u>	GMT																				
Mon to Sat	08:00																				
Sunday	09:00																				
Daily DIY	11:00																				
Daily	20:00																				
Mon to Fri	02:00																				
<u>Open House—Tuesdays</u>																					
Study	19:00																				
Chat	19:30																				
Worship	20:00																				
<p>Worship in i-church</p> <p>In June 39 different people came to services in the Chapel at some time in the month, which is 3 up on May's figure.</p> <p>The numbers of people attending each session does seem to be on the increase, it is becoming more and more common for 6 or more people to be worshipping together. This is terrific, and marks a big change from the early days when only one or two people dropped in to worship.</p> <p>What is also noticeable is that some of our newest members are fast becoming regulars. If you would like to join them, please do; there is always a comfortable pew available for you!</p>																					