

## THE NET

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

### “The Waters are come in ...” (Psalm 69:1)

In terms of population, Oxford comes 111<sup>th</sup> amongst the town of the United Kingdom, so it is rare for it to hit the news, despite the advantage it has in being home to England's first university, which remains still an academy of international reputation, and so a place disproportionately familiar to the ruling and chattering classes. But we made it this last month! The unseasonal rainfall caused the Thames to fill right up, and then, in many places including Osney where our outgoing Web Pastor is parish priest, to break its banks and flood. There was tremendous anxiety and dismay, much damage to property, but as far as I know no one was hurt, so you might say that the Psalmist's prayer was answered: “Save me, O God, for the waters are come in, even unto my soul ... take me out of the mire, that I sink not ... let not the water-flood drown me, neither let the deep swallow me up ...”

The ancient Israelites hated and feared water. They appreciated rain for the harvest, of course, but deep rivers alarmed them, and they were terrified of the sea, that place of monsters and other perils. If anything was going to flow, let it be milk and honey, that was their preference. In Britain we take a rather different attitude. We are an island people, surrounded by the sea, and before the railways and then the demon motorcar, inland our major cities were linked by canals. It is written into my own family tree. My great-grandfather was a fisherman from Kent, his wife a tug-master's daughter from Norfolk. On the other English side, my grandfather's-grandfather was a canalman, who migrated along the canals from Walsall, to Manchester,

## Anniversary Issue i-church is 3 years old



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Next Issue will be published on September 7th.

and finally to Runcorn. Even my immigrant Italian ancestor was a bargeman. During the recent flooding, a fourth cousin (whom I have never met) in landlocked Derby offered shelter if we had lost our home. Blood truly does run thicker than water!

We are used to rivers, and used to the sea, and Britannia used to rule the waves. But the flooding was something new and strange, as one i-church member put it, “water getting where it shouldn't be”, and there was a fascination in that. I love walking along the Thames here, checking out the birdlife, and generally soaking up the tranquillity that water normally brings, but I couldn't resist coming out to see the chaos. Even so, I was surprised how many other rubber-neckers came out too. Are you familiar with that term? It refers to the people who, passing an accident on the motorway, turn their necks as far as they will go to try to see what has happened, to glimpse a bit of gore. The sight was certainly impressive. In many places you couldn't tell the difference between

river and footpath and field, all were levelled by the flood. Cycling down what was left of the towpath we came across a few places where the banks were broken just by a couple of inches, no more, and yet the flood coming in at those points had a force that made you want to rush through it, lest you be swept off your bike. No one died this time, but when it last flooded, in the early spring, a teenager was swept to his death and his body not recovered. Beneath the tranquillity lies lethal power.

More than anything it has reminded us hereabouts of the fragility of the balance of nature within which we live. Water, which one moment is irrigating the crops, washing, and refreshing us, the next is out of its normal course and threatening our homes and even our lives. We know that something isn't right with the environment, and every freakish meteorological incident demonstrates it afresh. Whilst the UK flooded, in the Greek islands temperatures were reaching the 40s. Truth be told, most of us were looking forward to a bit of global warming this summer – another long heat wave, like last year's, and many other recent years'. When I was a child, the summer of 1976 was remarkable for its heat, the first I remember in which there had to be bans on the use of hosepipes to water gardens and clean cars. In the 1990s these have been commonplace, and the high temperature records of 1976 have long since been broken. The world is changing, and we can see its signs.



But can we read the writing on the wall? Much ink has been spilt on this, and much more will be. Some argue that there is just natural cyclical climate change going on, and we are all making a fuss about nothing. Most are concerned that it is industry, commerce and transport which are raising temperatures and upsetting the hydrological cycle – water forced to evaporate into clouds by high temperatures in hot lands is dropped down as torrential rain as soon as it hits low temperatures in colder lands, then the water levels rise and there is flooding and so on. This industry and commerce pays, in our rich country, for our houses and our pensions, our packaged food, our obesity, our vices, and for our cars, which we then use for work and leisure, spewing out their poisons into the atmosphere (can you tell that I ride a bike?), allowing us to travel long distances to where the money is. And then there is the holiday and business trip industry, which fills the air with aeroplanes, which do no one any good long-term, although who would deny that vacations are good for us, and many of us need to see friends and family scattered around our global village.

Against such pressures, the pressure of inertia and indifference borne of comfort and affluence, what can we do? I look out of the window at a street lined with ugly green and blue plastic recycling bins, which many Oxfordites faithfully fill. This is as bike-friendly a city as you could get, and the bus service is excellent. Yet the roads are also lined with motorcars, almost one for every house. They are small roads, not designed for car-parking down each side. Who is going to give up their cars for the sake of the planet? And at a national level, as any i-church forum reader knows, the UK government is happy to go ahead with expanding rather than contracting the use of aeroplanes in this country.

*“The floods are risen, O Lord, the floods have lift up their voice: the floods have lift up their waves. The waves of the sea are mighty, and rage horribly: but yet the Lord, who dwelleth on high, is mightier. Thy testimonies, O Lord, are very sure: holiness becometh thine house for ever”* (Psalm 93:4-6).

We seek God's testimony in this, illumination to know what to do to preserve our planet for our own enjoyment, but also as a sacred trust for generations to come. The evidence is growing that what is needed is sacrifice, self-sacrifice from our plenty. The question is, Do we care enough to do it?

## **Pastors' Letters**

### **Bishop Colin Fletcher**

Dear members of i-church,

As you probably know Russell Dewhurst will be stepping down as your Web Pastor at the end of July.

Although the Council, the Trustees, and indeed the whole i-church community, are working together on the process of appointing a new Web Pastor, there will, inevitably be a period of some months before any new Web Pastor can begin their work.

I am confident that i-church is in a good position to cope with the vacancy. The Council, elected by i-church members, will continue to provide support and leadership. The Trustees and I will be in regular touch with the Revd Joe Parrish, i-church's Assistant Pastor, and Ailsa Wright, the newly-elected Lay Chair of Council. Joe is taking overall responsibility for pastoral matters, and Ailsa will be chairing the business of the Council. They have my full confidence, and any issues arising during the vacancy, which would normally have been referred to the Web Pastor, should be addressed to either of them.

The i-church trustees continue to be impressed by the dedication of i-church members, as we see i-church continuing to grow and to flourish. There are certainly many challenges ahead, but we believe that i-church is well placed to face them.

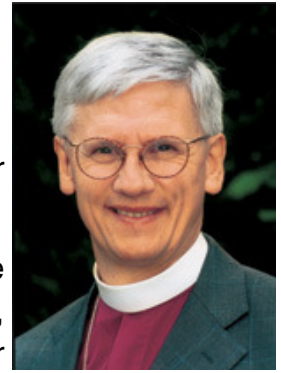
Finally may I put on record my thanks, and that of my fellow trustees, for the outstanding work that Russell has done in his time as web pastor. This role is, in many ways, even more demanding than that of a parish priest and Russell has not only done it very professionally, but also with deep pastoral compassion, wisdom and sensitivity.

I shall enjoy seeing how his work develops in the future and, in the meantime, may I thank him on behalf of us all.

Assuring you of my continuing thoughts and prayers.

Yours

+Colin



### **Joe Parrish**

We are in the midst of a transition, in case you haven't noticed. My good friend Russell Dewhurst has been up to his knees in the Thames River, God bless him, with the flooding in his B&M church in Oxford, but he really has gotten us on a wonderfully upward track since he became our Pastor nearly two years ago. Now we are without his services and are vigorously in the search process for a new Web Pastor.



In this interim Ailsa Wright is taking charge as our Lay Chairman of the Council, and I have a pastoral responsibility as the Assistant Pastor. Don't worry, I have done this before, three times actually, and have it 'in hand'. However, our election has put Ailsa into a new post, so she is getting settled into this new and now quite demanding responsibility. So I hope we all will just let her breathe from time to time and get things organised a bit before trying to overwhelm her with more wants and wishes, which many may have from time to time.

Secondly, we are overseen by the Trustees of i-church, who are our corporate and legal advisors, including of course Bishop Colin Fletcher who is the Bishop of Dorchester and has been our

generous and kind 'bishop in the background' from the very inception of i-church. Alastair Hunter is Chair of the Trustees and is intimately acquainted with corporate responsibilities and search processes and has the help of the other Trustees at his fingertips. He has always been our generous supporter.

So let us go forward with vigour over these next few months as we continue to uphold the mission of i-church in its unique effort to expand God's kingdom in our midst. And let us go in peace to love and serve the Lord and others.

Peace and blessings,

Joe

## **Three Years Old**

**i-church came on line on the 2nd. August, 2004.**

'Twas but yesterday, or so it seems, when a small group of stalwarts greeted each other for the first time, rather wondering what we had let ourselves in for, but enthusiastic about that future, and sure that God would provide.

So to those brave few who are still with us I offer thanks for your company, and to those who have joined us since, your typeface appearing on my screen has always been welcome. Meanwhile let us remember those who appeared for a short while and, for a variety of reasons have left us.

So friends all, and, indeed, I regard you all as friends, charge you glasses, and lift them to the years ahead, new friends, new topics, and ever our support and Love for each other, as God carries us forward to do His work in the wider world.

Jayne

## **Anniversary Service**

**Ailsa Wright**

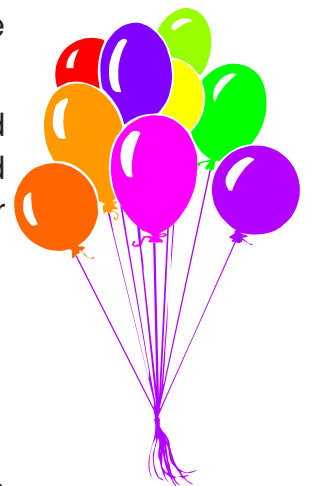
Not wishing to let the 3rd Anniversary pass without marking it in some way, a special anniversary service was arranged in chapel. Ten of us gathered there to give thanks for all that i-church means to us, and to pray for our future. Those attending were mostly from the UK but one was from the USA and one from China. Their join dates ranged from December 2004 to May 2007 so that was quite representative.

Debbie led the service with five others taking part in leading prayers, readings, etc. Richard gave the homily which you can read in this issue of The NET.

I found it to be a wonderful occasion. I couldn't help thinking of the many times when I have been in chapel alone or just with one other person when worship was first becoming established on a regular basis. I looked at the ten names listed and I thanked God for all he has done for us and how he has helped us to flourish.

Like Jayne, I call the members of i-church friends. These people support one another in whatever way they can, by prayer, advice, listening, just being there. It's an incredible privilege to be part of this community.

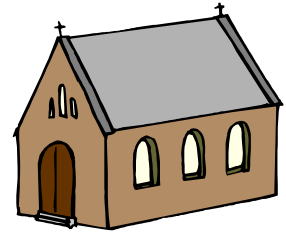
I look forward to being able to welcome and share with many more people in the months and years ahead as we follow our vision to open i-church to the world. I'm sure there will be challenges as we try new things but there will be wonderful experiences too.



## Ps & Qs

### Puzzles and Quandries on the Way Richard Haggis

#### What does “churchmanship” mean?



Once upon a time C of E Christians identified themselves as “high church”, “low church” or “broad church”. High church types liked ritual and communion, low church types liked simplicity and long sermons, and broad church souls liked to get home in time for Sunday lunch. The 19<sup>th</sup> century spoilt all that, as first the Evangelical Revival and then the Oxford Movement caused a lot of rumpus. The high church types now started calling themselves “Catholic” or “Anglo-Catholic” and the low churchers were now “evangelicals”. The broad church people were bewildered, and so they remain, as churchmanship becomes increasingly hard to call.

I suppose “churchmanship” is a package of things – worship, doctrine, and morals – which together help us to define each other’s core values. A lot is revealed by the wording of the church noticeboard – what do they call the services? If your local church advertises “Solemn Mass” and “Evensong with Benediction”, you can reasonably bet that it is old-fashioned smells-and-bells Anglo-Catholic, full of ritual, symbolism and dressing up. You won’t see a woman priest, and (in my experience) divorcees get a rougher ride than gay couples. If it’s “Family Praise”, it’s very likely evangelical, simple, accessible, Bible- and family-based. Evangelicals are divided about women priests, but they are coming to terms with re-marrying divorcees, and a few are OK with gay couples too. Of course, there’s a lot in between. “Modern or Liberal Catholics” might prefer a “Parish Eucharist”, or “Sung Eucharist” - still formal, but with slightly fewer rules (such as the one about the direction in which you must light and extinguish the candles – no kidding!). They are probably OK with women priests and gay marriages. Charismatics are another thing altogether – evangelical to start with, but deeply committed to discerning the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit, which can occasionally be sought in boisterous and disturbing ways.

Then there’s the liberals. This is more of an intellectual stance than a liturgical or moral one, as liberals can be found in both high and low church congregations. Sometimes the ritualism of Anglo-Catholicism and the emotionalism of some evangelicalism appeal as a sort of antidote to all that cerebral grey-mattering they do. Of all the types here, these are the ones most likely to say that worship is a matter of taste, not truth, and the least likely to appreciate anyone’s certainties other than their own.

If you’re doing the I-Spy book of churchmanship, one that you won’t often see these days is “Prayerbook”. These dinosaurs (I used to be curate for such a congregation, and very lovable and kind dinosaurs they were too) like to worship the way their forefathers did – right back to 1562 – after breakfast, Morning Prayer, the Litany, the Athanasian Creed, and Holy Communion, and the delightful service of Evensong to round off the day. Some say that liturgical experiment emptied the churches. S. Giles-in-the-Fields never experimented, but it emptied all the same. (Incidentally, writing saint as “S.” is rather a high church thing to do ...)

Very few labels are ever a perfect fit. I found one for myself once – some years ago I worked out that I am a High Church Latitudinarian, and since then I have forgotten why, which fits me perfectly. But the labels ultimately don’t matter. High, low or indifferent, if there is no welcome, no hospitality, as much for God as for the people, our hearts will not be touched, and we will not come back. I used to work with a priest who often said he had no time for “high church or low church, a curse on both their houses; give me *deep* church”. And out of deep faith comes deep love, deep joy, deep peace. What kind of label can you put on that?

## A Load of Bull (part 2)

Jayne Tite

But I did try. Honest!. We played ring a ring a roses around that perishing duck pond for nearly an hour. Twice I got the bulls in with the heifers, and twice they split away. The heifers just wanted to play, it seems, tossing bits of wood into the air with their wee snouts, kicking their heels up in a race across the paddock and back round the pond, and generally enjoying life, paying little attention to what I wanted them to do.

At last, hot and thirsty - read that as soaked in sweat - I retreated defeated, returned to the house put the kettle on and rang Michael. After I told him briefly what had happened, feeling an utter idiot in the process, with all the "if only's" passing silently through me wee mind, he suggested to leave them and when he came across to feed the calves in the morning he would bring Angela and they would move the lot out. With words of gratitude, deeply felt I might add, I put the 'phone down, made me a cuppa, retired to the lounge and a large armchair, from which I had to evict a disgruntled cat. But I didn't care.

Later it was out to feed me own wee calves, and checking across the paddocks, low and behold the boys were mixing with the girls, well doing a bit more than mix, which is precisely what they were there for. So once my lot were settled, off I went again, and this time they went like lambs, through the gate, across the holding paddock to a second gate and.....slam! Well in a manner of speaking, 'cos I closed that gate so fast if there had been a frame around the opening it would have shuddered and shook.



It was with a great deal of smug pleasure that I again rang Michael and told him the news, well I was really telling him how clever I was. I forbore to mention that they went like lambs to the slaughter, but then that's human nature, and I be nothing if not totally 'uman.

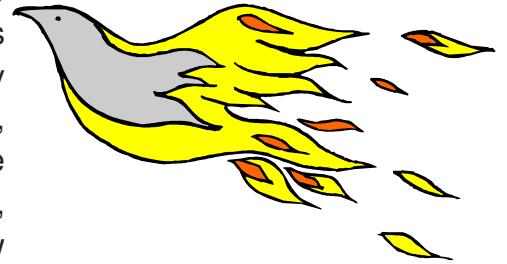
And it's the humanity in us that leads us to side step children's questions about missing parents, particularly fathers who have taken off well before the birth, and to give them false hopes, which build in the young minds to proportions that we all too often fail to understand. I don't believe we should sow seeds of hate and nastiness into young minds, but I do believe that they should be told the truth. Gently, and as much at a time as they seem to want to know, but without giving them any false hopes that "daddy" will one day surface. Indeed he may, but more likely he won't.

Likewise I have seen in recent years a tendency to give false hope to people looking for God. Wonderful pictures of golden halls and angelic choirs singing to God all day, are held before them, and all for just saying that they accept Jesus into their lives. Such pictures may well be the correct ones, or endless green pastures, tinkling streams and all creatures living together in harmony. Or it could be we are absorbed into the totality that is God. Or a combination of any or all of these and many, many other possibilities. I believe we just don't have the knowledge or understanding to have even the faintest idea of what lies beyond this life. Only God and those who have gone before know that. The seeker's awkward questions are neatly side stepped with soothing bible quotes, and the impression given, without it being realised by the givers in most instances, that once people have accepted Jesus they can get on with their lives because He will forgive all their sins in the future.

Such converts either wither eventually, and disappear from our midst, or they become so enraptured with the idea of golden cities, and endless leisure that they lose sight of the message

He gave, that is if anybody has ever taken them through His teachings and worked at them in the first place.

We are told to spread the Word. Simply and without exaggeration or blandishments. To tell the truth as He gave it to us. Maybe it has to be in instalments, to allow people to absorb it at their own pace; it took the disciples three years of constantly being with the Christ for them to finally take it in. Even then they had to see Him risen from the dead, and later they needed to be anointed with the Holy Spirit, before being ready to move out into the world, founding a Church that, despite its trials, tribulations and schisms, continues to grow across the denominations. But that does not mean trying to take short cuts, hide reality, or bend the truth in order to get people to commit themselves to what well may be a falsehood.



When we in turn cry “Daddy, Daddy!” let it be with our minds truly oriented towards God, and not some convenient fiction that some one has planted there for us.

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## **i-church Council Announcements**

As previously announced, Russell Dewhurst is standing down as i-church Web Pastor from July 31st 2007. Russell will remain the priest-in-charge of St Frideswide’s Church Binsey, Oxford.

All the editorial team here at The NET thank Russell for his contributions over the past year and wish him the very best for whatever he undertakes in the future. We understand that a further degree may well figure in his plans.

i-church will shortly begin the process of advertising for a new Web Pastor. As suggested by our Trustees, Council recently elected a Lay Chairman and a Deputy Lay Chairman to chair council meetings and to generally take up some of the slack that inevitably comes when a key person leaves.



As a result, Ailsa Wright has been elected Lay Chairman of Council and Tim Hutchins has been elected Deputy Chairman, both with immediate effect. Ailsa and Tim will serve in these capacities until the next Council elections in April 2008, whereupon the council in place at that time will elect a Lay Chairman and Deputy Lay Chairman afresh.



## **Farewell service**

It was hoped that we would be able to have a farewell service for Russell before he finally left his role at Web Pastor. However, the floods had other ideas. Russell has been very busy helping in his parish which was featured on the news coverage from Oxford. Other areas of the country have been even worse hit of course but there was still an awful lot of water to be seen.



It has now been arranged that Russell will make a special visit to i-church on August 9th for a service to wish him well in the next stage of his journey. The service will take place at 2000GMT in the chapel and everyone is welcome to attend.

# Communion

Richard Haggis

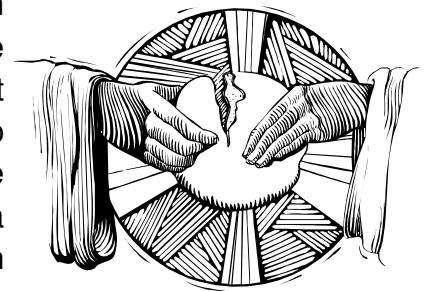
“They all hated him. They hated him because he was cleverer than them.” That was my introduction to Austin Farrer (1904-1968), the Oxford theologian and preacher who, much later, became one of my heroes. I was a student at the time and talking to my philosophy tutor, and, it being somewhat after lunch (let the reader understand), he was rather more loquacious and less focussed than usual. I can’t remember how Farrer’s name came up, but I had innocently asked why he never became a Canon Professor at our college, which at the time I rather foolishly equated with the pinnacle of achievement for a priest-theologian in those days.



Since then I have read some of Farrer’s books, learnt a little of his life, and come to the conclusion that Oscar must have been wrong. Farrer wouldn’t have wanted to be a Canon Professor of Christ Church. He was happy as chaplain at Trinity College, for many years, and finally, in his last eight years, as Warden of Keble. He continued to write and to preach, whatever his circumstances, and earned the admiration of colleagues and listeners and readers, students and would-be preachers, in the little village of Oxford University (he calls it that himself) and far beyond.

It was one of Farrer’s sermons I was reading on a recent journey to meet my fellow cell group members in Germany. You may have heard of this phenomenon. Often, when people train for the priesthood in the C of E, they make a deal with a few fellow students to meet and pray and discuss together their vocation and ministry in the years to come. My active ministry had come to an end over a year previously, and my attendance at church had become sporadic and indifferent. It is hard to know what to do about church when you have held a role of leadership and must now return to the cheap seats again. Farrer would have had no time for such self-indulgence. He was a good Prayerbook Anglican, as well as a High Churchman. His is a practical spirituality. Of communion he says “Remember that Christ has chosen us, we have not chosen him; and because he has chosen us, he drags us out into the light of heaven, and stamps on us week by week the visible mark of our membership in his body; and then bids us go and be what he has made us. And therewith he gives us his grace.” And then he says “If you haven’t a handy friend to wake you, buy an alarm clock.; there is no better use for money. Do it to-morrow before you forget!”. (“Fish out of Water”, in *Said or Sung*)

So, I resolved that I must try harder to come to church. “Fine words butter no parsnips”, of course, and I found, as I first found when encouraged to come to communion by friends at college just before I was confirmed twenty years ago, that it took another human voice to say “come to Christ at the altar” to make it happen. That voice belonged to a great friend, a member of the local congregation here at S. Alban’s, in Oxford (and the mother of my splendid godson, who was baptised here). So, to church I went, and into communion once more I was immersed, rather like a sort of weekly baptism. It was a kindly welcome. I don’t think the congregation is all that good with newcomers (few are), and for a decade previously I have had a collar round my neck to make small-talk easier. But it is a warm place, a real place of communion, where we meet God and God meets us, and we are all the happier and better for it.



A few weeks after I started coming to S. Alban’s I decided I must make a little pilgrimage to Austin Farrer’s grave. I knew he and his wife were buried in the churchyard behind S. Cross, Holywell, near the centre of the city and set off in high hopes. I had rather a tour of the place, finding the



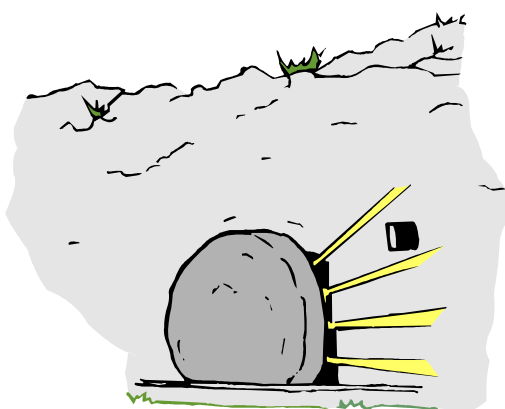
graves of people like Charles Williams, the spiritual writer and novelist, and F H Bradley, O.M. the philosopher, and Kenneth Grahame of *"The Wind in the Willows"*, before finally finding Austin and his wife Katherine (herself a writer of detective novels). Their gravestone is simple and clear, recording their names and dates and nothing more. I knelt, not in homage (I'm not that high church!), but to take a photograph – or is that modern homage? It was only the next morning that I realised that I had been to visit Farrer's grave on the 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my ordination to the priesthood – the eve of the Birth of John the Baptist – and so also the anniversary of the first time I celebrated Holy Communion as a priest on the evening of that same day, in the same church, where I was curate. They were happy memories, uncomplicated by anything more than the passing anxiety to get things right, which even at the time was ameliorated by the knowledge that no one would mind at all if it didn't (apart from the lay reader, and frankly, without criticism from her, the sacrament was never valid anyway).



In the Anglican churches lately we hear a lot about communion, a lot of strange talk in which we speak of "communion" but may not choose to receive the sacrament with other people. I truly do not understand this. Some of you may have had occasion to read the old English Prayerbook Exhortations before communion, when the priest finds his congregation reluctant to come to communion "Ye know how grievous and unkind a thing it is, when a man hath prepared a rich feast, decked his table with all kind of provision, so that there lacketh nothing but the guests to sit down; and yet they who are called (without any cause) most unthankfully refuse to come. Which of you in such a case would not be moved? Who would not think a great injury and wrong done unto him?" It seems to me that these days we talk about refusing to share communion with one another altogether too glibly, and a great injury and wrong is done to God and to one another.

For me, Farrer makes an unassailable point about the irrelevance of our fretting about our worthiness to receive communion – let alone the spiritual state of other people – in his words on the Collect for Quinquagesima:

*"O Lord, who hast taught us that all our doings without charity are nothing worth; send thy Holy Ghost, and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace and of all virtues, without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before thee."*



Farrer says "God does not have love, he is love, and to have love we also must become it. Why then, if to be alive I must have love thus, it is plain enough that I am dead. Let me be dead; I come to this sacrament to take part in the resurrection. I throw myself into the hands of God, and God is known by this token: he raises the dead" (in *Crown of the Year*).

May the dead be raised.

The work of a Beethoven, and the work of a charwoman, become spiritual on precisely the same condition, that of being offered to God, of being done humbly "as to the Lord". This does not, of course, mean that it is for anyone a mere toss-up whether he should sweep rooms or compose symphonies. A mole must dig to the glory of God and a cock must crow.

## Reunion 2007

In October we are holding the first ever i-church reunion - where members can meet face to face. There will be a meeting in Yorkshire on the weekend of October 6th and in Oxford on the following weekend, October 13th/14th.

For the most up to date information please visit the discussion which is under "The Sofa" (it's called Reunion 2007). We'd like as many people as possible to meet, and we will have i-church visitors from the USA with us on both weekends!

This is a great chance to meet friends in the flesh. Whilst it is wonderful to get to know people via our keyboards, there is nothing quite like being able to sit and chat in real life, so to speak. We already have confirmation that Paula Franke from Kentucky and Nick Battaglia from Chicago (along with his wife Phyllis) will be visiting the UK and joining us at the Wakefield and Oxford events.

### Saturday October 6th

Open house at the home of Ailsa & Phil Wright in Crofton, Near Wakefield in West Yorkshire. Cold buffet lunch, BBQ in the evening. The exact address and directions will be posted in the Social Club forum.

We will try to get accommodation sorted for anyone who wants to stay over. We can try friends and there is a reasonably priced B&B down the road.

### Sunday October 7th

11.30am sung Eucharist in York Minster.

Afternoon - Have a look round the Minster, walk round the walls, visit one of the attractions in York, Jorvik perhaps.



**Monday October 8th** - Visit to Castle Howard for Paula, Nick, Phyl and the Wrights. Join us if you fancy a day out.

**Tuesday October 9th** - Visit to Fountains Abbey and possibly Bolton Abbey

**Friday October 12th** - Travel to Oxford.

Lunch - Gee's: 100 year old greenhouse housing a restaurant

Afternoon - look around Oxford including the Upper Library.

Evening - pub crawl with food. Meet at Linton Lodge Hotel.

### Saturday October 13th

10.30am Eucharist at St Andrew's Church Oxford, Revd Pam Smith.

Lunch - Far from the Madding Crowd (one of Oxford's best pubs, with food)

Afternoon - sightseeing round Oxford with Richard. Maybe including the Museum of Oxford and botanical gardens finishing with evensong at Magdalen or New College.

Evening - pub crawl with food (carry on where we left off the night before!)

### Sunday October 14th

11:15am service at Christ Church

Lunch - at the Big Bang (sausage restaurant, voted Britain's best, local bottled beer)

Please contact Phil Wright for further details if you want to come to any of this.

## Harvest time

Paula Franke

Following weeks of weather extremes, the fields here at our farm are bursting with fresh produce.

Except for a few hours during the extreme heat of the day (which fortunately coincide nicely with daily i-church worship services for me) we are out in the fields weeding and picking, or in the house washing and sorting, or at the local farmers market selling.

The pickup truck always has an assortment of fresh fruit and vegetables whenever my husband or I are running errands and, invariably, sales are made here and there. Customers also show up at the farm in the evening where produce is available at discounted prices and they can go to the fields to pick exactly what they want (it doesn't get much fresher than that!).

Here in eastern Kentucky, the local farmers markets are often social events. People come to buy, to visit or just relax. Farmers swap stories about the difficulties raising a crop. Old-timers tell how farming was "in the old days". Favourite recipes are shared and new ones developed.

As the day goes on, the crowds dwindle and eventually we pack up our trucks to head home and start all over again. Unsold produce heads to the kitchen for supper or to be processed for winter use.

It's a busy time of the year but also a time for contemplation, especially when working in the fields.

Looking down the rows of tomatoes and green beans, it always amazes me how much food comes from the seed planted months earlier.

I also notice how alive the gardens are. Not just the plants. A distinctive drone fills the air as bees busy themselves in the tomato and melon flowers. A cat slowly stalks grasshoppers. A toad suddenly jumps up when startled by one of the peacocks parading down the rows.

As evening settles, and the last of the field boxes are carried out, I'm hot and tired and looking forward to a relaxing soak in the tub.

But, along with an aromatic cloud of mint that grows by the front door, the overwhelming sense of all the little miracles stays with me, a comforting end to the day.



## Open House – All Welcome!

Richard Haggis

We thought it was about time to remind everyone that Open House exists as our weekly chance to meet and discuss all manner of things. Sometimes we have an agenda – as for instance, in the weeks after Easter with all those great festivals of the Christian year – and sometimes we just show up and talk about whatever is on people's minds. Sometimes it is topical stuff – like floods and disasters lately – sometimes items taken from the forums which have attracted a lot of attention – like church accessibility. It's nice to have a theme, but we try also to be flexible with it, so that if there is really a more burning topic that everyone wants to discuss we can turn our attention to that.

Despite taking place in cyber-space, this brief hour is a real opportunity to get to know one another, and the time passes all too quickly. There is usually someone there to kick things off (Helen, until quite recently, and me, quite often lately, but I hope to be sharing that role pretty soon!) and also to keep the peace – although there's not much call for that. Discussions are courteous and gentle by and large, and nothing to scare even the most timid newcomer – even when some of the Forum Monsters are in .... If there's no one there to chair the discussion, it just happens anyway, which is

surely a good way to be?

We meet each Tuesday night from 20.00 – 21.00 BST (sorry, I'd love to do the GMT, but my brain just can't work figures backwards and forwards like that in number-base 24), and we try to post a reminder on the Monday, or early on Tuesday. You can roll up at any time – someone will give you a quick summary of where we are – and contribute in whatever way you feel is appropriate. There is always a cut off just before 21.00, because evening prayer happens then, but it's surprising how often the chat continues, both during and after evening prayer.



So, give Open House a go, you'll be most welcome!

## Humour

### Three Holy Men and a Bear

A priest, a Pentecostal preacher, and a rabbi all served as chaplains to the students of Northern Michigan University in Marquette. They would get together two or three times a week for coffee and to talk shop.

One day, someone made the comment that preaching to people isn't really all that hard. A real challenge would be to preach to a bear. One thing led to another, and they decided to do an experiment; They would all go into the woods, find a bear, preach to it, and attempt to convert it.

Seven days later, they all came together to discuss their experience. Father Flannery, who had his arm in a sling, was on crutches, and had various bandages on his body and limbs, went first.

"Well," he said, "I went into the woods to find me a bear. And when I found him, I began to read to him from the Catechism. Well, that bear wanted nothing to do with me and began to slap me around. So I quickly grabbed my holy water, sprinkled him and, Holy Mary Mother of God, he became as gentle as a lamb. The bishop is coming out next week to give him first communion and confirmation."

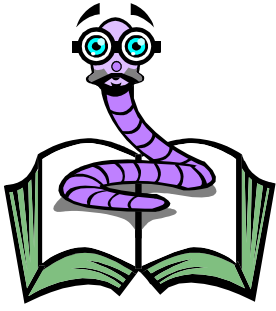


Reverend Billy Bob spoke next. He was in a wheelchair, had one arm and both legs in casts, and had an IV drip. In his best fire-and-brimstone oratory, he claimed,

"WELL, brothers, you KNOW that we don't sprinkle! I went out and I FOUND me a bear. And then I began to read to my bear from God's HOLY WORD! But that bear wanted nothing to do with me. So I took HOLD of him and we began to wrestle. We wrestled down one hill, UP another and DOWN another until we came to a creek. So I quickly DUNKED him and BAPTIZED his hairy soul. And just like you said, he became as gentle as a lamb. We spent the rest of the day praising Jesus."

The priest and the reverend both looked down at the rabbi, who was lying in a hospital bed. He was in a body cast and traction with IVs and monitors running in and out of him. He was in really bad shape. The Rabbi looked up and said,

"Looking back on it, circumcision may not have been the best way to start."



## Book Review

Jayne Tite

How Christianity changed the world. Alvin J Schmidt.

Most of us have a working knowledge of Church history, but usually it relates primarily to the founding of the Church, it's development and spread throughout the world. What we seldom look at is the history of it's impact on society as a whole.

In this book Alvin Schmidt takes us for a journey that travells the road from people ransformed in the Christ's presence, onward past signposts marked with signs such as the sanctification of hman life, morallity, human dignity, on through health education, science, the Arts ending with the influence on holidays and daily living.

And to help us along there are 86 f illustrations and charts, scattered through the text. And right at the back there are a serie of discussion questions for each cahpter.

This is a book that would be a good base for group discussions, making a change to the normal sudy and bible groups we have all attended from time to time. At the sme time the indivisual reader will, I suspect get much of interest from it, and a new insigt to the bright side of our faith, and a guide to how we can live today.

It is not a high powered scholastic work, yet the scholarship is there in an easy to read, and follow, form. Don't miss out on this one.

## Recipe by Mindy Sheer

### Festive South India Rice Dish

2 cups of Minute Rice

2 cups of water

1 nice scoop of Land o' Lakes Buttery Spread

A little sprinkle of McCormick's Garam Masala

A little sprinkle of McCormick's Red Curry Powder

A little sprinkle of McCormick's Ground Mustard

1 handful of Sweetened Shredded Coconut

1 handful of Crushed Cashews

1 handful of Crushed Slivered Almonds

1 handful of Raisins

½ cup of Milk



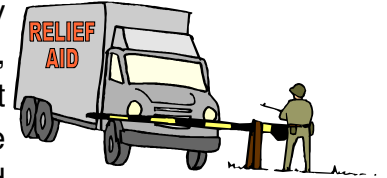
Put all items into a large microwave safe bowl. Stir and cover. Cook 8 Minutes in a microwave oven. Stir again and let cool a couple of minutes before serving.

## Council report

Ailsa Wright

The council is a busy place with all sorts of issues coming up, some brought about by circumstances, some the result of a throw away comment that strikes a chord, some planned well in advance. The length of discussion can vary also depending on how complex the matter is or whether we have to wait for some information from elsewhere.

The recent floods in Oxford and around the country showed just how quickly it's possible to act if necessary. Within 6 days of the suggestion that we donate some money to the relief efforts, a brief discussion had taken place, followed by a poll, quickly followed by the raising of a cheque for £325 which has gone to St Frideswide's so that the PCC can use it to help those in need around the parish. A donation was also made to Christian Aid during Christian Aid week.



At the other extreme, discussion on vision issues continue and have done for several months. There will soon be a new membership form for everyone but there has been a delay in implementing this. It will happen but not as soon as we had hoped. Other vision ideas include a new website which is well on the way to being developed but is not something that can be rushed. We hope it will offer so much more than the current one. As part of this development we have discussed a new logo and this has now been adopted.

Careful work has gone into creating the guidelines for new groups to be set up in i-church. Our thoughts have now gone to the Trustees for their approval and then we hope that several new groups will appear over the months. There have been some applications already. In anticipation of the developments, the forums have been rearranged to make them more logical.

The council wishes to appoint a technical manager to look after aspects of the website and to help with development of what we can offer. The job description has been worked out and sent to the Trustees. We hope that in the next week or so we will be moving towards an appointment.

i-church continues to attract interest from those who are carrying out research into internet or Fresh Expression churches. In order to safeguard members we are working on a policy which will protect privacy and safeguard copyright.

The issue of copyright is ever present. We have made sure all forums carry a reminder about posting copyright materials in i-church. We are also looking into strengthening the guidelines for moderators in this area.

Procedures are being developed or refined in several areas. We have a more streamlined voting system. We have agreed on the way to elect a Lay Chairman and Deputy. We have clarified how moderators are appointed with two new moderators taking up their duties in the last few weeks.

We have been represented at the Churches Media Council conference by Tim who presented a paper on the history of online churches. Tim met a lot of people and has several contacts to follow up. He had a chance to hand out business cards which had been designed by our new publicity group. The group continues to work on materials to promote i-church.

The council is now working with myself as Lay Chairman dealing with the day to day organisation of business, ably assisted by Susanna our secretary. This is a new role and it will take a little time for us all to become familiar with the implications of it. The whole of the council is working towards more transparency and efficiency as we look towards what we hope will be a bright future for i-church.

**Poem -  
Jill Bunyan**

**Ten tiny fingers**

Ten tiny fingers, ten tiny toes,  
Nobody's fault - that's how it goes.

Babies cry loud and long,  
But no sound from your lips.

None at all.

So tiny and still.

Eyes closed as if in sleep.

Ten tiny fingers, ten tiny toes,  
Nobody's fault - that's how it goes.

Curled up safe in the warmth of my womb,  
Then out into the bright light and noise of the room,

Ten tiny fingers, ten tiny toes,  
Nobody's fault - that's how it goes.

Dumped onto a trolley wheeled out of sight.

Did i love you enough,  
Why didn't you fight.

Ten tiny fingers, ten tiny toes,  
Nobody's fault - that's how it goes.  
Nobody's fault - that's how it goes.



**Staying in Oxford?**

If you are visiting Oxford, and you need somewhere to stay then read on. i-church member Matt Clayson has fixed up a special deal at the Hotel where he works.

Double/Twin room	£90 (based on 2 sharing)
Single	£80

All prices include tax at the current rate and full English breakfast. Dinner is available for £20 extra per person in our Library Restaurant.

To book, either PM/email Matthew Clayson, check out the web site (<http://www.lintonlodge.com>), telephone +44 (0) 1865 553461 or send us a fax on +44 (0) 1865 559327.

All enquiries must be directed to Matthew Clayson or Karen in Reservations (or you won't get the special rate!). Bookings are subject to availability.

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**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](http://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.



## Scrooge writes

I received an email from Church House in Oxford last week. Alarmingly it said that the funding for our Web pastor had run out and what was I proposing to do about it? (It was written more gently than that but you get the general drift). My fingers sped to my keyboard to bring up my master spreadsheet whereupon the answer was clear; no one had thought to tell the finance department at Oxford about the most recent grant award announced in March this year. Communication seems to be a problem wherever you go. Phew, we do have some funds left after all.

It seems coincidental, or is it "God-idental", that just as Russell hangs up his i-church cassock and alb for the last time the original Cutting Edge funding awarded in 2004 has been exhausted. That looks like some good planning! "But what about the future?" I hear you ask.

We have our final Cutting Edge award of £15,000 which, when added to the funds we have raised ourselves, will see us through the next 12 months; longer if the interregnum (time without our Web pastor) is more than a month or so.

However, we need to be looking more than a year ahead. The start-up funding we have received will be behind us and from next year we have to be self-sufficient. We have to learn how to raise funds ourselves, how to win grants from other bodies, how to convince others that i-church is worth funding. And where better to start than with our own members - is i-church of value to you? Do you want i-church to be here, vibrant and exciting in 2009? If you do, we need your cash. Not all of it, just a portion. As a well know supermarket advert says "every little helps". Thank you.

### Worship in i-church

Being a 24/7 church is a constant challenge. We have had several discussions about what would be good times to meet for worship and the best we can manage is always a compromise.

The new compline service designed for members in the US is beginning to be attended regularly by some, not all of whom are in the States. We seem to have some insomniacs in the UK who are attending also. If you haven't tried it yet, do pop into chapel on Saturday and Tuesday at 10pm EDT (Sunday and Wednesday 0200GMT). You will be welcomed.



### Service Times

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:

<u>Worship</u>	GMT
Mon to Fri	08:00
Sat & Sun	09:00
Daily	20:00 & 21:00
Sun & Wed (i.e. Sat & Tue 10pm EDT)	02:00
As advertised	11:00

#### Open House - Tuesdays

Study	19:00
Chat	19:45
Worship	20:00

NB - These are GMT times. You can now get services in your local time on the member Home Page. Check it out.