

September 2003

The Recorder

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*An edited version of this magazine is now available on the Church Web-site.
(Personal details are NOT included.)
Church web site: <http://www.trinity-urc.org.uk>*

Trinity - A Family Church

Worshipping together - Caring for one another - Sharing with others

‘Plans for the Future’

Rev. Michael Shrubsole

Minister of Trinity United Reformed Church

For the past 2½ years our church has been struggling to see what we can make of our old buildings. We began by producing a new Vision Statement, which in part, commented on our building needs. We received reports from Task Groups on the ways in which we should be implementing that vision. We commissioned an architect's Feasibility Study. We completed a wide variety of surveys and questionnaires. In the last 6 months church members formed a Steering Group to investigate further several other options – meeting with other churches to talk about ecumenical options, meeting with council officials, exploring the latest Synod advice, and meeting with a local developer to explore alternative building schemes. The time has now come to report back on this work, to attempt to summarise our conclusions and to decide upon ways forward.

Our September Church Meeting will be a significant one. Do please make every effort to attend. We meet on Tuesday 16th September at 8.00pm in the Schoolroom. Everyone is welcome. We would like as many people as possible to come and hear the story so far, and to try and decide on what the future holds for us.

It's not anyone's job to pre-judge what the outcome of any decisions made at that meeting will be. But I can let you into what I believe are clear enough observations, which I and the members of the Steering Group feel are likely to be agreed upon by most church members. – Firstly two negatives. 1. Big building schemes, which seek to extensively modernise our existing buildings, don't seem to be right for us at present. 2. We have discovered no compelling reason at this time to suggest that the church should move elsewhere. Secondly two positives. 3. Our church is a listed building and a community building, as an asset to the local community it will not be permitted to be lost to the wider community, therefore we could never sell the entire site for development purposes at a top price, and therefore we ought to continue to make maximum use of it ourselves. 4. We are presently in a good location. We are the nearest large church building to large areas of housing, particularly in the Bowerdean Ward, we don't draw many members from that area, but our community links to that community are important and should probably be developed and strengthened. We have also been particularly advised of the need for youth work in the Bowerdean area and should probably try to explore this further.

Therefore, I think that when we meet at the September Church Meeting, we will be meeting to agree a way forward for our church which continues, substantially, to discover how to make the best use of our existing building. That is not to say that no changes are possible. Indeed we meet to begin to discuss the kind of changes that we would like to make. But we do so in the context of a better informed and realistic understanding of the current restraints on what is possible.

This is not an occasion for the pessimists and doubters to shout out "I told you so." We always knew, throughout this exercise, that we were asking hard questions and were pushing at gates that had seemed firmly closed for a long time. But there is always the need to seek God's will, prayerfully asking God if the time is now right for change to happen. It would have been a serendipitous moment to have pushed at an (apparently) firmly closed gate and discovered that it easily swung open. If you don't push and don't test and don't seek, then you never find anything out. If God is currently saying "No" or "Wait" to big plans for our future, then he is also now saying "Yes" to small plans for our future. And small plans might turn into big plans at some point in the future. Who knows how long it will be before someone in the church feels compelled to start rattling at the gates again to see if a new way will open for the church. But that is for the future and not for the present.

Finally a word to the optimists and dreamers in our midst. So, nothing immediately productive has yet come from 2½ years work on our part. Like many I hoped and prayed that something big and new and beautiful might emerge from our explorations. I too have committed much in the way of emotional energy and time into all that we have explored together over the past years. I share your disappointment. It would be easy to have regrets, "If only ... we had tried harder, we had prayed harder, we had pushed harder ...etc." Instead, of regrets we now need to redirect our energies to the ways that do seem to remain open to us.

Many of the Psalms seem to be written by people who are survivors of tragedy in their lives. And they write not as despairing, hopeless people, but as faithful, prayerful people. Despite their setbacks they still proclaim their eternal trust in God who will continue to strengthen and save them. Among many, Psalm 118 seemed appropriate to me. "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this and it is marvellous in our eyes." (Ps 118:22,23) We may be feeling a sense of rejection of all that we have tried to accomplish over the past years, but we still hope in a God who can still take all that we have to offer and do something that is marvellous in our eyes.

Mike

Minister :
Rev Michael Shrubsole,

e-mail : minister@trinity-urc.org.uk

Church Secretary:

e-mail: secretary@trinity-urc.org.uk

September Services

Morning Worship at 10.30 a.m.

Children of all ages meet for part of morning worship using the SALT material from Scripture Union. Adult worship usually follows the texts of the Revised Common Lectionary.

7th September - Morning Worship with Communion. Worship leader: Rev Mike Shrubsole with guest Rev Pamela Wilding from Kabare, Kenya.

14th September - Morning Worship. Worship leader: Rev Mike Shrubsole

21st September - Morning All-age Worship. Harvest Celebrations. (*Followed by a shared lunch for all in Crendon Hall.*)

28th September - Morning Worship. Worship leader: Rev Mike Shrubsole

Evening Worship at 6.30 p.m.

We usually hold a monthly quieter evening communion service.

[Please see the item on page 5 regarding these services]

21st September - Evening Communion Worship leader: Rev Mike Shrubsole

Month by month we are experimenting by using words from different traditions. This month we use a service of 'Bible Prayers', all the words come directly from Bible verses

28th September **at 6.00pm** - Evening Worship at **Cores End URC** - Guest Speaker: Rev Pamela Wilding.

A District service to celebrate and commission the new team of volunteers who are going to Kenya this year from our District. All welcome.

Rotas for September

Not included in this edition

What's on in September



Monday 8th Sept - Welcome Back
(8pm. Hostess - Norma Garden)

Monday 22nd Sept - Pricing for Autumn Fayre
(8pm in the Lower Schoolroom)

WOMEN'S MEETING

Tuesday 2nd Sept

Welcome Back

Tuesday 9th Sept

Rev Mike Shrubsole

Tuesday 16th Sept

Harvest Hymns and Readings

Tuesday 23rd Sept

Mull & Iona

Tuesday 30th Sept

Songs of Praise. Bring & Buy



All meetings start at 2.30 in the Lower Schoolroom

Scrabble

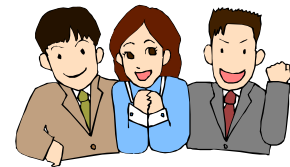
Summer is over. Autumn approaches.
Time to approach the Scrabble board again

12th and 26th Sept

at 2pm

Young People's Group

7th September Planning- Sunnybank



CHURCH WALK

Saturday 27th September at 10:30am

Meet at the Memorial Hall, Booker Common (grid ref 834914) for a 2½ - 3 mile walk, probably going round part of the airfield. More details from Olive Shepherd (01494 531943)



Not included in this edition

Evening Communion Services

Note that due to very low attendance figures over the lighter summer evenings we took a decision to temporarily cease to arrange evening worship. We restart evening communion services for the winter months this month. If you would like to share in evening worship do make sure you plan to be there on third Sunday evenings. If this restart reveals that there is genuinely very little demand for evening worship then Church Meeting will be asked to agree to the permanent cancellation of evening communion services. (Your Minister writes: *"I am more than happy to arrange a service for any small group of people who faithfully value gathering to share together in worship. Numbers don't matter at all. But a service cannot continue if there is not a small core group of individuals committed to that act of worship. Do let me know if for any reason you cannot be there in September, but you faithfully expect to be there in the following months."*)

The Historic Churches Trust Sponsored Cycle Ride



This takes place this year on Saturday 13th September. We have joined in this event in some past years, but we have not registered as an open church in 2003 and we have no cyclists taking place to my knowledge - but it's not too late! Some people even walk from church to church! Contact me if you are interested in hosting our open church on the day, or cycling to raise sponsorship money for our church and the Buckinghamshire Trust and we will see if we can still register. (M.S.)

Prayer Circle for Healing

Meets on Sunday 5th October 6.30-7.30pm in the Sanctuary. Come and pray by name for those known to us who are in need of God's healing presence in their lives at this time. New people are welcome, our prayers are simple and it is not a threatening experience to come and share in prayer, no one expects you to pray out loud if you would feel more comfortable remaining silent. (M.S.)

Wycombe Prayer – September Meeting

Calling all Intercessors

Prayers for those who wish to intercede for local issues concerning church and community. All welcome.

Venue this month: 6.00-9.00a.m.
Saturday 6th September,
Totteridge Baptist, Hillary Road.

Harvest Celebrations

Sunday 21st September

1. The church sanctuary needs to be decorated. Volunteers to help provide and set up flowers, greenery and ornamental harvest gifts are needed on Saturday 20th. Contact Nancy H to offer to help -
 2. Harvest gifts – As last year, harvest gifts will go to Open Door at Union Baptist Church. This is a free lunch venue for people who otherwise spend most of their days on the streets. (You may have heard that the project is undergoing a review and reorganisation, but the work will continue.) The guests have a preference for solid ‘meat and two veg’ style home cooking. But the voluntary staff want it to be easy to cook. Tinned vegetables, potatoes, and tins of meat and fish are easy to heat and serve. Gravy and custard powder. Also tins of fruit and cream. Coffee, tea-bags, sugar also required. Plus anything else along these lines.
 3. Harvest Celebration Church Service 10.30am – All-age family worship with British Agriculture as a theme, we celebrate all that our land provides for us and pray for the economic situation of our local farmers.
 4. Lunch will be served in Crendon Hall after morning worship. It will be a bring-and-share cold buffet lunch. Everyone will be welcome no matter what you can bring. Bring a dish of savoury and/or sweet food to share on the buffet table. Food will be received before morning worship. Volunteers are needed to help lay out tables and chairs (a job for fit men please), decorate the tables, sort out crockery and cutlery, receive and lay out the food, prepare refreshments (coffee after church will be upstairs this Sunday), plus dishwashing and clearing away afterwards. See Margaret L with your offers of help. (M.S.)
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Home Group Bible Studies

Home Groups restart in September.

Trinity Church currently has two Home Group Bible Studies. Both are open to any new people who would wish to come along. We know what diaries are like, and you don't have to promise to come every week! If you would like to meet on another occasion, speak to Mike about the possibility of starting a new Home Group.

Home Groups are gatherings of ordinary people who want to learn more about the Bible and our Christian faith in daily practice. Each meeting begins with refreshments and chat; some time is spent in prayer; we then read and discuss our material for the week. We try to use material that leads and teaches us well, but in addition to this, everyone's personal input is valued, we all have something to offer and these are not meetings for 'experts'.

Monday Mornings 10.00-12.00am. Date of First Meeting: **Monday 1st September.** Host: Daphne . Leader: Rev Mike Shrubsole.
Subject: We will be learning from Joyce Huggett's book '*Open to God – Meditating on God's Word*' a practical handbook to methods of prayer and meditation to use during the group time and also on your own. A valuable set of sessions to help deepen your own prayer life in what might be new ways for you. Come and learn, experience and practice! Contact Mike or Daphne for more information.

Wednesday Evenings 8.00-10.00pm. Date of First Meeting: **Wednesday 3rd September.** Host: at the Manse, . Leader: Rev Mike Shrubsole.
Subject: We are planning a series of Bible studies seeking to explore particular Bible passages, words and concepts in greater depth. We will be exploring some of the hard questions that Bible reading raises. What does it really mean? Come and do 'hermeneutics' – what it meant to the original writer, and 'exegesis' - what it means to us today, and are they the same thing, or not? Contact Mike for more information. (M.S.)

UK: Lose the image of Christ and get a congregation

Advertising gurus have told churches to drop the image of the crucifixion in their publicity if they want to boost Sunday church attendance, *The Scotsman* newspaper reported.

Showing Christ on the cross and bible quotations is a turn-off to non-churchgoers, according to one advertising agency. Instead, churches should highlight community life, the chance to sing, hear a good sermon and have a heart to heart chat.

"We don't think people want to be preached at, and we don't want traditional images like pictures of Jesus on a cross. The key is to get people through the door of the church and let them make up their own minds," said managing director of Khameleon Advertising.

Campaigns were commissioned with a brief to reverse declining church attendance levels and are featured in September's issue of the evangelical magazine *Christianity+Renewal*.

The campaign drawn up by the agency Link ICA, opted for the slogan "Get a life - Go to church" with a "medicine for the soul" message including pictures of ambulances.

"We decided to opt for 'Get a life - Go to church' because most people come to a point in their lives, when although you may have all luxuries, you still feel something is missing," said Link ICA joint creative director, Jonathan Wilcock.



[From the parish magazine of Currie Kirk]

A story from the Caribbean - submitted by Andrew W

A man went to a barber shop to have his hair and his beard cut as always.

He started to have a good conversation with the barber who attended him. They talked about so many things and various subjects. Suddenly, they touched the subject of God. The barber said: "Look man, I don't believe that God exists as you say."

"Why do you say that?" asked the client.

"Well, it's so easy, all you have to do is go out in the street to realise that God does not exist. Oh, tell me, if God existed, would there be so many sick people? Would there be abandoned children? If God existed, there would be no suffering nor pain. I can't think of loving a God who permits all of these things."

The client stopped for a moment thinking, but didn't want to respond so as not to cause an argument. The barber finished his job and the client left the shop.

Just after leaving the barber shop he saw a man in the street with long hair and beard (it seems that it had been a long time since he had his cut and he looked so untidy).

The client went back to the barber shop and said to the barber: "You know what? Barbers do not exist."

"How can you say they don't exist?" asked the barber.

"Well, I am here and am a barber."

"No!" the client exclaimed. "They don't exist because if they did there would be no people with long hair and beard like that man who walks in the street."

"Ah, barbers do exist, what happens is that people do not come to me."

"Exactly!"- affirmed the client. "That's the point. God does exist, what happens is people don't go to Him and do not look for Him. That's why there's so much pain and suffering in the world."

Do YOU have a story which could be shared with others? Feel free to send it to the editor. Your name can be with-held from publication if desired.

Diary

Elders Meeting - Tuesday **September 2nd** 7.30pm in the Schoolroom.

Coffee Morning on Saturday **6th September** - in the Lower Schoolroom from 10.30 am till 12 noon. Come along for a cup of tea or coffee and a chat, and why not bring a friend with you.

Sunday **7th September** - Pann Mill is open to the public on this day, so we thought it would be a good idea to have the church open after the morning service - say from 1 pm onwards and to serve tea and coffee, again in the Lower Schoolroom.

Chiltern District Council Meeting – at Trinity URC

Hosted by our church: Wednesday **10th September**. Meeting starts at 7.30pm Refreshments to be served from 7.00pm onwards. Council members are coming expecting to be shown round our church building so that they may more easily understand the problems we have been wrestling with over the past couple of years.

Volunteers needed to prepare and serve refreshments, to act as guides to the buildings, to share in leading opening devotions. Please see the sign-up list in the church or volunteer directly to our Minister.

Church Meeting - Tuesday **September 16th** 8.00pm in the Schoolroom. All welcome to share in the news and business of the church. Special item is the report and recommendations of the Property Steering Group.

Harvest Festival with a bring and share lunch on Sunday **21st September** – in Crendon Hall after the service. Lunch will be a finger buffet of sweet and savoury items and the hall will be open before the service for you to drop off your items of food (though not literally, I hope).

(The church will be decorated on Saturday **20th September** and offers of help would be very much appreciated, plus flowers and greenery of course)

Property Management Committee - Tuesday **23rd September** 8.00pm in the Schoolroom.

Trinity Games Evening on Friday **26th September** - in Crendon Hall 7.30 pm – 9.30 pm

A fun evening of Potted Sports or Gentle Games like Bagatelle, Shoveha'penny, Marbles, Putting, Darts and Hoop La. Anyone can take part, no special skill or agility necessary. Tea, Coffee, Squash and biscuits will be provided.

Finance Committee - Tuesday **30th September** 8.00pm in the Schoolroom.

Saturday 11th October - Autumn Fayre in Crendon Hall.

Tuesday 28th October - Quiz Evening 7.30 pm – 9.30 pm

Start organising your team of 4 members now, more details in October's Recorder

We are hoping to have a **Trinity Concert in November** – probably Saturday 15th so start practising your party piece now and bring your friends along to swell the audience. Again more details later.

*The next edition of the Recorder will be published on 28th September.
Closing date for contributions is Friday 19th September.*

Recorder Editor :

e-mail : editor@trinity-urc.org.uk

Church web site: <http://www.trinity-urc.org.uk>

More “from abroad”

A water bearer in China had two large pots, each hung on the ends of a pole which he carried across his neck. One of the pots had a crack in it, while the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water.

At the end of the long walk from the stream to the house, the cracked pot arrived only half full. For a full two years this went on daily, with the bearer delivering only one and a half pots full of water to his house.

Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments, perfect for which it was made. But the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection, and miserable that it was able to accomplish only half of what it had been made to do.

After 2 years of what it perceived to be a bitter failure, it spoke to the water bearer one day by the stream. "I am ashamed of myself, and because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your house."

The bearer said to the pot, 'Did you notice that there were flowers only on your side of the path, but not on the other pot's side? That's because I have always known about your flaw, and I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walk back, you've watered them.

For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate the table. Without you being just the way you are, there would not be this beauty to grace the house"

Moral: Each of us has our own unique flaws. We're all cracked pots. But it's the cracks and flaws we each have that make our lives together so very interesting and rewarding. You've just got to take each person for what they are, and look for the good in them.

Blessings to all my crackpot friends.

(unknown source - submitted for inclusion in the Recorder by Andrew W)

Chuckles!

Some (supposedly) genuine extracts from letters to Letting Agencies

The toilet seat is cracked: where do I stand?

I am writing on behalf of my sink, which is running away from the wall.

I request your permission to remove my drawers in the kitchen.

Will you please send someone to mend our cracked sidewalk. Yesterday my wife tripped on it and is now pregnant.

Our kitchen floor is very damp, we have two children and would like a third, so will you please send someone to do something about it.

Will you please send a man to look at my water, it is a funny colour and not fit to drink.

The toilet is blocked and we cannot bathe the children until it is cleared.

This is to let you know that there is a smell coming from the man next door.

Prayer Page

(Prepared by the Women's Meeting)

September is traditionally the month for Harvest Festivals so we begin with verses from a harvest hymn:

Praise and thanksgiving, Father, we offer,
For all things living you have made good;
Harvest of sown fields, fruits of the orchard,
Hay from the mown fields, blossom and wood.

Father, providing food for your children,
Your wisdom guiding teaches us share
One with another, so that, rejoicing,
Sister and brother may know your care.

In Genesis Chap. 8 v. 22 we read God's promise:

While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat,
and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.

The following verses remind us that we have a duty of stewardship to God's earth:

We utter our cry that peace may prevail,
That earth will survive and faith must not fail.
We pray with our life for the world in our care,
For people diminished by doubt and despair.

We lift up our hearts for children unborn:
Give wisdom, O God, that we may hand on,
Replenished and tended, the good planet earth,
Preserving the future and wonder of birth.

Since 2001 this is the month of 9/11.

We pray for all who lost friends and family on that day
and for all others who are suffering bereavement:

Almighty God, Father of all mercies and giver of all comfort: Deal
graciously, we pray, with those who mourn, that casting all their
care on you, they may know the consolation of your love;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen



We all need God's presence with us:

Walk with me, O my Lord, through the darkest
night and brightest day. Be at my side, O Lord,
hold my hand and guide me on my way.

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2003