



St HELEN'S WINDOW

Chapel in the life of the Boarding School

The Revd Dr Simon Thorn

A school chapel is a special place, a holy place: the generations of past pupils who return and visit to pray and reminisce in silence or at services are a testimony to its power. It forms and confirms Christians in their discipleship journey. For some it begins as a routine chore, for some it seems irrelevant at first, but it soon becomes a spiritual refuge and refectory.

Having had the privilege of preparing school pupils for Confirmation, I am acutely aware of how embarrassing they find it to talk openly in groups about their spiritual journeys as opposed to their favourite team's performance, or which film actress they fancy most. However, individually, they all relate different, but no less real experiences of fear, inadequacy, joy, and hope which are healed and nurtured in the school chapel, where they are reminded that they are not just pupils, but the living Body of Christ.

I will never forget the sight of hundreds and hundreds of candles being lit on the altar at the evening service our school Chaplain and I led in response to the 2004 Boxing Day Tsunami. In those precious minutes boys were not too embarrassed to cry, to pray fervently, to thank God and to struggle with the tragedy of natural disasters. It was perhaps the most overt expression of a school's corporate Christian faith I had experienced for many years: quiet, candlelit, prayerful and dignified liturgy followed by the most rousing hymn-singing.

Pupils in a boarding school are like sailors away at sea, prisoners in gaol, or novices in a monastery. They are removed from their own families and are vulnerable. They are thus ready and need to meet God. While those around them become their surrogate family, with all the tensions and strains that family life brings, they need to have a deeper sense of belonging and being loved. The Church as Christ's Body provides these for them.

We all bemoan the loss of the centrality of the family meal that once defined and bound together the family unit. Perhaps Christmas Day lunch is the last bastion of the traditional family meal, now that teenagers graze on TV suppers, parents snatch sandwiches where they can, and our canteen culture reduces mealtimes to little more than battery-farm trough feeding. It is for this very reason that the Eucharist has become the essential service in the Christian Church at large, and should be celebrated within a boarding school every Sunday and Feast Day: we are one body, because we all share in one bread.

In addition to serving as a curate in the Abingdon team, Simon Thorn teaches biology at Radley College. In the Autumn, he will take up a post as Chaplain at Downe House School near Newbury.

The Editors

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in Times New Roman

Bishop Chad of Harare visits St Helen's

Alexandra Green

As the Rector said in the Mothering Sunday newsletter (3 April 2011), it was 'a huge privilege and pleasure' to welcome the Bishop of Harare, The Rt Revd Chad Gandiya, to preach at the 10 am Eucharist on Mothering Sunday at St Helen's. Bishop Chad is the brother of Padre Lee Gandiya from Dalton Barracks, and has been Bishop of Harare in Zimbabwe since 2009.

Taking as his text for the sermon a verse from the epistle for the day (2 Corinthians 1: 3-7), Bishop Chad spoke powerfully and eloquently (without notes!) on the love of Christ for His people. But first we were reminded that in the Shona tradition, all women are revered as mothers, whether or not they have given birth to children. And so, we all gave thanks for our mothers, without whom we would not exist, in a typically English way with a round of applause.

Bishop Chad soon moved onto the principal topic of his sermon: the on-going political unrest in Zimbabwe, and the particular challenges that brought to Christian witness and especially for him, as a bishop, for the Anglican Church. He recounted vividly and powerfully the way in which congregations are restricted and maligned in their life and witness in Zimbabwe because of and through the political regime. I, for one, and surely for many others in the congregation, found it impossible to imagine how difficult Christian life must be in such circumstances, and thought how much we in Abingdon, and in the UK in general, take for granted freedom of expression without fear of persecution.



One example that particularly brought the contrast home was Bishop Chad's account of how congregations had been prevented from using their church buildings. In the Church of England there is often much consternation about the cost and difficulty of maintaining our undoubtedly beautiful and historic church buildings. But how fortunate we are to have ready and frequent access to them, on our doorstep.

Bishop Chad also highlighted, and rejoiced in, the growth of the Church in his diocese. Despite political oppression, an increasing number of people are turning to Christ and wanting to witness to His saving love – and for that the Bishop was immensely grateful. Perhaps above all, and a practical point we could all take home with

us, is what Bishop Chad said about prayer. He and all the congregations in his diocese were greatly encouraged by the knowledge that many people were praying for them on a regular basis. This, above all, was sustaining them in an immensely difficult situation.

Some members of the congregation joined Bishop Chad in the church centre after the service for questions and answers about his sermon and the wider political situation in Zimbabwe. I am sure that everyone at St Helen's is extremely grateful to him for coming to preach to us and giving us an insight into a very different way of 'doing church' from what we in Abingdon normally experience.

Documentation of the current situation of Zimbabwean Anglicans, as well as a pastoral letter from Bishop Chad (January 2011), can be found on the Anglican Communion website at:
<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/acns/news.cfm/Central-Africa>.

St Helen's Baby and Toddler Group

Rachel Shearer

Filling the Church Centre Hall on a Monday morning, the group caters to local families who have pre-school children and the morning free. There are about fifty members split over the two sessions, so the noise level is sometimes quite high as the children and the adults catch up with their friends and chat.

Occasionally we run special events in St Helen's Church. By the time you read this we should have had our Easter Celebration on 17 April. The last time we did this there we were inundated with families enjoying Easter crafts and music and learning a little about the Easter story. We are having an Easter Egg Hunt so I do apologise if you are still finding the odd paper egg hidden down the side of the pews. I am hoping to hold more special events this year, tied in with the major festivals, so if you would like to help with either a one-off event or on a Monday morning, please let me know.

The Experience of Easter at Trinity

Rachel Shearer

How do you explain the mysteries of Easter to nine-year olds, let alone sixty of them in the church at one time? The easy answer is, of course, that you don't – don't explain – that is, don't tell them how it is, don't just read the words. Instead you help them to experience the Easter story in a way that they can relate to.

This was the wonderful format of the Easter Experience at Trinity Church in early April of this year. In a series of six sectioned-off areas within the church, simple props had been arranged to help the storytellers explore the Easter Story with the school children. While the props set the scene, the storytellers told their part of the story and then explored some of the issues around the story.

This way, as well as listening, the children took an active part in the story. They washed and dried one another's hands, they shared bread, they rolled up feelings of loneliness into plasticine and then made something beautiful for the garden of Gethsemane.

They were given a time to think of people who are suffering now, and to sense something of the bewilderment and joy of the women who found the

empty tomb. In all, they were enabled to see how the hopes and dreams of Palm Sunday were realised in such an unexpected way. As a storyteller, it is a privilege to hear the children's questions and comments. I came away as spiritually refreshed as I hope the children did!

Junior Church: Our Mission and Message

Barbara King

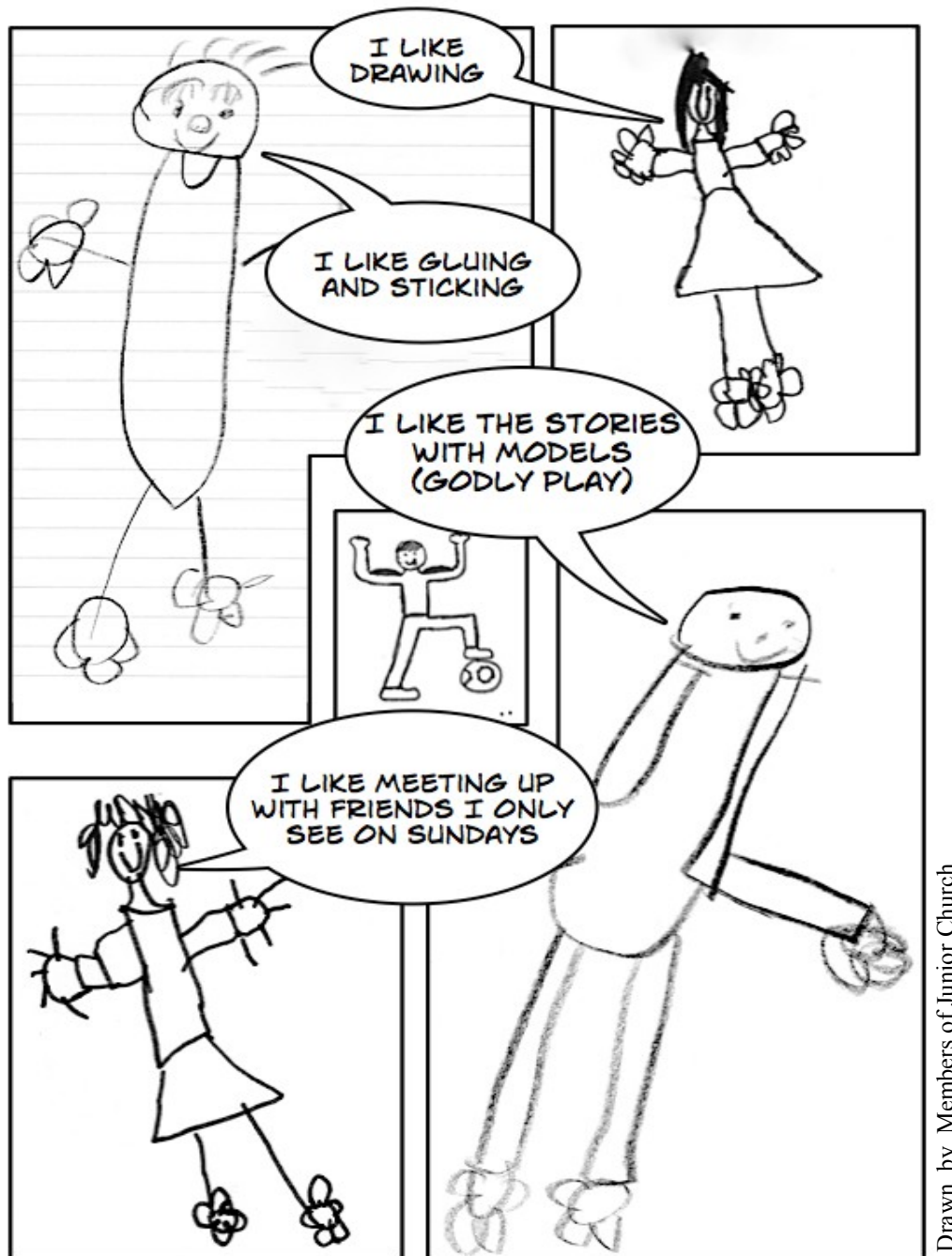
Junior Church enables the younger members of the Church family to take part in Sunday morning worship in a way that is suited to their age and experience. We also hope that the children are able to experience God's love in a warm, friendly and joyful atmosphere. We come to Church at 10 am with the rest of the congregation, sing the first hymn, and head off to the church centre for the Ministry of the Word and the prayers. We then return in time for Communion with the full congregation.

We currently base our teaching on a resource called ROOTS, 'a joint Churches' initiative supported by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland along with representatives from the Churches and church publishers throughout the UK and Ireland'. We supplement this material with worksheets from *Common Worship Step by Step* and *Footprints in Faith* by Katie Thompson.

These resources suit the purpose of Junior Church well as they follow the *Common Worship* Lectionary and take us through the Church year with the same readings as the 10 am service, while providing a variety of ideas and resources suitable for this age group. We occasionally share ROOTS material with the full congregation – it is the source of our Lent and Advent calendars.

We also incorporate regular music sessions, craft-making, nature walks and Godly Play – a form of storytelling with props that allows children to reflect on stories and respond in their own way. We are grateful to guest leaders for music and Godly Play sessions, and always open to other offers....

We currently meet as one large group, but would like to be able to split into different age groups, as we have in the past. Our older children are fluent readers and writers and quite sophisticated thinkers; consequently, they have different needs from their younger friends and siblings. To do this we need more people willing to lead a group on a regular basis, a commitment of maybe one or two Sundays a month. As with all children's work these days, a CRB check is required, which is organised and funded by the Church. If you think you would like to join us, please speak to Sue Pemberton or Barbara King after any Sunday morning service.



A Prayer for our Mothers

by Clare Horden (age 10)

Dear Lord,

Thank you for our beautiful mothers. Thank you for all that our mums do for us, caring, loving, and supporting us. Please help us to appreciate all that our mums do for us. Please help us all to be the best we can be for our mums. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Amen.

A Sunday Morning in the Life of a Junior Church Leader

Sue Pemberton

Actually, Sunday morning is rather elastic, as it starts in the middle of the week when I check the ROOTS book for the next Sunday's session. I like to read through the session well in advance, mull it over in odd moments and pray about it. Friday comes; I don't work on Fridays so I return to ROOTS, go through the suggestions, look at the extra bits on the website and firm up the plan for Sunday morning. I also think about the materials we need for the activities: are they in the cupboard or do I need to buy or prepare anything? Saturday evening: time to print off the activity page from the ROOTS website together with any templates needed. Sometimes some preparatory work or a prototype for a craft activity needs to be made.

Sunday morning: I try to be up bright and early to get to Church in good time. Hopefully Rachel will have already got the small chairs and tables out of the storage area! Barbara arrives, and I briefly go through the session with her. I'm feeling a bit uncertain about one of the activities but she reassures me and adds an idea of her own. Teamwork is very important. Now for the photocopying – I wonder how many sheets we should do this week? Will we have three children or thirteen? Finally, I get out crayons, felt tips, papers, glue, scissors, etc. for the session. Meanwhile Barbara goes over to Church to check whether anything particular is happening.

9.55 am: I'm ready and go over to Church. Several of our regulars are there, and coming running over with cries of 'Can I carry the banner?' Barbara has identified a new family and has already explained about Junior Church. Their small daughter has shyly said she would like to come, as long as she can bring Dad, which is fine.

10 am: the choir emerge from the vestry and we line up behind our banner-carrier and walk round the back of the Church to follow the procession up the nave. A few last-minuters join on the end. We go over to the church centre, gathering one or two more stragglers on the way.

Coats are taken off, and everyone chooses a carpet mat and forms a (sort of) circle on the floor. We are required to take a register of both children and adults present, so this is a good way of greeting everyone and introducing newcomers. There's much chatter, exchange of news, admira-

tion of new shoes, etc. Junior Church tend to enjoy fellowship before rather than after worship!

We move into the morning's session and a busy, happy half hour or so follows. As always, I gain from the children's insight and their questions make me think anew. Comments which may initially seem wide of the mark are actually very pertinent on reflection. It's also interesting to see the very different ways they go about an activity, reflecting their individuality. What they have in common is their pride in the finished product.

All too soon a sidesperson arrives to tell us it will soon be time to return to Church. We start tidying up, putting on coats, gathering finished activities to take back and puzzle sheets and crayons to do in Church. As we approach the Church, I am relieved to hear the Offertory hymn being sung – we can creep in without too much disturbance, although we've overshot slightly as we aim to return by the Peace. There's still the tidying up to do back in the church centre, but now that we have coffee in Church, we can do this afterwards and leave the furniture for Rachel's Babies and Toddlers on Monday.

The end of the service comes, and we patiently sit through the notices and banns, waiting for 'And now for Junior Church...' There's a quick rush to the front with everyone clutching their finished craft work. Sometimes someone is brave enough to speak into the mike, but today it is up to me to report back on what we've been up to. We get a laugh and a round of applause from the congregation, and everyone scampers back to their place. Another Sunday morning over; next week Barbara is leading and I'll be in the supporting role.

What is the cost of being a Junior Church leader? I rarely attend a full Sunday morning service at St Helen's, and Junior Church can sometimes seem like yet another thing to organise in a busy week. What are the rewards? Knowing that you have a role in nurturing the Christian faith of a young child is awesome. Receiving the trust and friendship of the children, seeing them grow and develop in faith and having lots of fun with them. Having your own faith grow and develop through looking at a Bible passage with a view to presenting it to children – it really makes you think about the essential truth behind a passage.

What's on in May

St Helen's Church

Saturday 7 May

Coffee Morning & Book Sale

10.00-12.00 Church Centre
For Friends of St Helen's

Saturday 7-Saturday 14 May
Abingdon Artists' Exhibition
10.00-17.00 in Church

Tuesday 10 May

Mothers' Union

Talk by Revd Em Coley
'Motherhood and Ministry'
20.00 Church Centre

Sunday 15 May

**Easter Readings and Carols,
preceded by tea and cakes**

16.30 in Church

Wednesday 18 May

Wednesday Club

Talk by Roy Lock, 'Driving an MG from
Abingdon to Australia'
19.00 at MG Car Club, Cemetery Rd

Thursday 26 May

Archdeacon's Visitation

Service to swear in new Wardens
19.30 in church

Church in Abingdon

Wednesday 4 May

35 Ock Street reopens after Easter Break
This CiA project is open daily 10.30-14.00
as a meeting place and café.
Volunteers needed (several hours a month);
contact Jan on 01235 530080 or
35osadmin@btconnect.com

Thursdays 5 & 19 May

Back to 35

10.30-11.30 Baptist Church Hall
Opportunity for fellowship, chat and coffee
May 5 Trading Standards with Julie Brain
May 19 Seated Exercises with Elizabeth Glover

Christian Aid Week

Saturday 14 May

Market Square Sale

10.00-13.00, stalls include cakes,
plants, books, Tombola & hand-tools

Sunday 15 May

Christian Aid United Service

18.30 at Trinity Church, led by
Revd Peter Bennett, to include
commissioning of collectors

If you could help by delivering and collecting
Christian Aid envelopes, please contact
Robert King on 01235 553715

St Ethelwold's House

Wednesday 25 May

Fresh Vision

19.30 at St Ethelwold's House

Led by Revd Laura Hodges

This group meets monthly, with a simple service
and time for discussion and reflection

Solution to last month's puzzle

1 red	21 white
2 pink	22 grey
3 brown	23 black
4 green	24 green
5 amber	25 khaki
6 black	26 blue
7 blue	27 silver
8 scarlet	28 green
9 red	29 white(r)
10 black	30 pink
11 orange	31 purple
12 white	32 yellow
13 lavender	33 tan
14 purple	34 cherry
15 yellow	35 white
16 white	36 blue
17 red	37 yellow
18 black	38 scarlet
19 green	39 green
20 rose	40 gold

Volunteers needed for Abingdon Community Hospital

Volunteers are vital to the work of Abingdon Hospital. There is a particular need for volunteers to serve food and drinks in the Coffee Shop, and to help on the wards, providing patients with their morning refreshments and assisting with their lunches. The amount of time varies: some help just once or twice a month, while others help every week. For more information, contact Revd Laura Hodges, on 01235 205705.

If you would like an event listed on this page let us know by the 5th of the previous month and we will try to include it. Contact Silvia at alanj@phoncoop.coop or tel: 01235 521247

Smile Please by Eccles

1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8
						9								
10								11						
						12	13							
			14							15	16			
		17				18				19		20	21	
22					23			24	25					
26	27		28	29		30		31		32	33			34
35						36	37			38				
			39			40								
		41				42					43			
44								45						
						46								
47								48						

Across

- 1 * Gorgeous (7)
- 5 * Static weight ? (7)
- 10 Deal in jam (7)
- 11 Go back to a place to get away from it all (7)
- 12 Period that is central to the peerage (3)
- 14 Good French clothing university lump (6)
- 15 ‘ __, __ and away’ (2)
- 17 Chat with Gilbert and Sullivan initially (3)
- 18 Margaret on the washing-line (3)
- 19 Lassie nearly got snarled up in the rope fibre (5)
- 22 The importance of being sincere perhaps (7)
- 24 Agreement that canvas should be held by three points (7)
- 26 Heavily criticised because the kiln owed money (7)
- 31 Choice shilling on the end of the line (7) [misspelt]
- 35 The season didn't start for Milan club (5)
- 36 Slippery customer back on the Solent (3)
- 38 Dance starts to play a samba (3)
- 39 Volunteers to arrive first (1,1)
- 40 Drink grain daily and you won't get ill (6)
- 42 ‘ __ de Triomphe’ (3)
- 44 Huge iceberg disaster (7)
- 45 Adorns a race is round about (7)
- 46 His wife was salty (3)
- 47 Valentine's chair is here (7)
- 48 Nearest adaptation of oriental (7)

Down

- 1 * Get coat in a tangle (7)
- 2 * Made in Holland (4)
- 3 Spread electric cord if fused inside (7)
- 4 Voucher to recover chair we hear (7)
- 5 Unusual garnets (7)
- 6 Ruins teetotaller badly for safekeeping (2,5)
- 7 ‘And bells on her ____’ (4)
- 8 Distinguished yet cannot do it (7)
- 13 Eggs for Erica (3)
- 14 Prohibition of fruit segment (3)
- 16 Order apple to make a tart (3)
- 17 ‘ ____ balls of fire’ (5)
- 20 Wealthy person on board may be one of these (5)
- 21 Denoting position 93 (2)
- 23 Who must be obeyed sells sea-shells (3)
- 25 Endless river comes to nothing (3)
- 26 *Educating girl holds baby's bed (7)
- 27 Working leg (2)
- 28 Group found in wise teaching (3)
- 29 Footwear for the queen following coach (7)
- 30 Calamity of low grades for muddled Vince (7)
- 31 Appease a tenor in position (7)
- 32 Reports the latest high days (7)
- 33 Maggie goes after April (3)
- 34 *Rub in so violently (7)
- 37 Stray runs after the queen (3)
- 41 Amaze the backward fanatics (4)
- 43 *Short (and) concise (4)

May at St Helen's Church

Divine Services

1 May	10.00	Sung Eucharist with Baptism
8 May	19.00	Sung Eucharist
15 May	10.00	Sung Eucharist
22 May	10.00	Sung Eucharist
29 May	10.00	Sung Eucharist with Baptism
Morning Prayer	09.10	Monday to Friday
Evening Prayer	17.10	Monday to Friday
Holy Communion	08.00	Sunday (in St Nicolas' Church this month)
Sung Eucharist	10.00	1, 8, 15, 22, 29 May with Junior Church
Silent Prayer	18.10	Mondays 16 & 30 May
Wednesday Church	10.30	Holy Communion, followed by refreshments

Sunday Evening Services

18.30	Eucharist
18.30	Taizé prayer
16.30	Easter Lessons & Carols
18.30	Service for wholeness & healing
18.30	Evensong

Meetings & Gatherings (All in the Church Centre Hall unless otherwise indicated)

Baby & Toddler Group	09.30 & 11.00	Mondays, except 2 & 30 May
Baptism Preparation	20.00	Tues 3 & 17 May, in Lounge
Brownies	18.15	Tuesdays
Clergy consultation	19.00	Weds by appointment
Cubs	18.20	Wednesdays
DCC meeting	20.00	Tues 3 May
Desiring Life	14.30	Tues 10 & 22 May, in Lounge
Junior Church	10.00	every Sunday, starts in Church
Mothers' Union	20.00	Tues 10 May, <i>Motherhood & Ministry</i>
Wednesday Club	19.00	Wed 18 May meets at MG Car Club

Events (more details on page 6)

Coffee Morning	10.00-12.00	Sat 7 May	Church Centre Hall
BBC Bell ringers	14.45	Mon 9 May	Tower
Peal attempt	10.00	Wed 11 May	Tower
St Helen's at Lunch	12.00	Wed 18 May	Waterfront Café, Benson

To arrange baptisms, weddings and funerals contact the Parish Office.
Clergy are available in the Church Office between 19.00 - 20.00 on a Wednesday.
Call the office to book an appointment.

Rector:	The Revd Dr Charles Miller
Assisting Priest (NSM):	The Revd Tim Hewes
Curates (NSM):	The Revd Dr Simon Thorn, The Revd Dr Jane Baun, The Revd SokHan Yong
Director of Music:	Christopher Fletcher-Campbell
Parish Administrator:	Linda Barker

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