

Women Bishop's - if so how?

Dear Parishioners,

In February each year the General Synod meet to discuss, deliberate and to hopefully decide on many of the churches issues. This used to be fully part of Parliaments business, but changed and became separate in the 1970s, and so when Synod's business is finalised it is taken back to Parliament to progress into Ecclesiastical Law. I am privileged to be one of the six clergy elected from this Diocese, currently on my second term. So I write this letter after reading Ann Knight's letter to the editor in November and as the Bishop's hopefully will present their deliberations and proposals to the February Synod for the way forward in consecrating Women Bishop's to the Church of England.

So I begin with a few words of concern written by Jonathan Petre in the Daily Telegraph on 8th July 2002 'Schism risk over Women Bishops' 'The consecration of women bishops will fracture the Church of England and block any prospects of unity with the Roman catholic and Orthodox Churches, the General Synod was told....opponents and supporters of the reform admitted that the Church was entering a "profoundly painful" period while it wrestled with whether women, already ordained as priests, should be allowed on to the next rung of the hierarchy'.... 'The Bishop of Europe, Dr. Geoffrey Rowell, said that to admit women to the episcopate was "a Church dividing issue" and would have to be firmly rooted in scripture and tradition. He said that he had been told by Cardinal Ratzinger, the head of the Roman Catholic Doctrine, that to consecrate women bishops was a more serious step than ordaining women priests'. I personally present four options that will hopefully prevent schism. To some this will wet your appetites and to some I am sure that I will put you to sleep. This issue and topic will undoubtedly heat up over the next few months so I would be interested in your comments.

OPTION ONE A radical restructure providing complete alternative Episcopal jurisdiction, with legislative force. In brief under this option parish churches and their priests would be allowed by negotiation to join a bishop and synod other than that of the geographical diocese they are presently located in.

Within Anglicanism we see at least two traditions - evangelical and catholic, which hold quite fundamentally different understandings about the nature of how Jesus Christ relates himself to his church in the world. The two traditions differ on the possibility of further revelation to the church, extra than the biblical revelation and particular to the nature and role of the episcopacy. It is important that as far as possible any solution offered to the problems caused by ordaining women bishops minimises the harm felt by the two traditions. The option of complete alternate Episcopal jurisdiction seeks to maintain an inclusive and broad Anglican Church where consciences and integrates are safeguarded. This way it meets both the need for those who want women bishops and those who do not.

OPTION TWO - The appointment of one or more women bishops by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, to serve the whole country, providing liturgical and pastoral ministries to parishes; other church bodies and individual clergy; and administering confirmation and ordination where appropriate. The bishop appointed would act at the

invitation of individual diocesan bishops, in turn acting on the request of parishes under specific regulations.

OPTION THREE – To have specially-appointed assistant bishops within the Diocese, licensed by the Diocesan Bishop to offer ongoing and continuing liturgical and pastoral ministry to parishes; other church bodies and individual clergy, and to administer confirmation and ordination where appropriate.

OPTION FOUR – is to have no alternative Episcopal oversight with any provision for dissenting views.

With Best Wishes, and time to wake up if my article has sent you to sleep!

Jeremy Crocker



Children's Workshop
Christmas Party



Wednesday Soup Christmas Lunch



Mums and Toddlers
Christmas Party

**CHRISTMAS
GIVING 2006**

Thank you to all who generously contributed to the Christmas BECHAR Appeal by donating food and clothing.

Four of our church family had a very rewarding morning cooking lunch for the lonely, vulnerable and homeless people on December 27th.

It was very humbling to realise how many people, especially young people, gave their time to provide Christmas Cheer for the homeless of Bedford.

ARCHBISHOP THOMAS CRANMER

The year 2006 marked the 450th anniversary of the martyrdom of Thomas Cranmer, leader of the Protestant Reformation in England, a brilliant liturgist and our greatest Archbishop of Canterbury. It is fitting that we acknowledge his legacy, won at the highest cost - his life.

Cranmer was born in 1489 at Aslockton in Nottinghamshire. His education followed the pattern for a prospective clergyman and by 1514 he had become a Fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge. Strict University celibacy rules forced him to resign his Fellowship on marriage, but tragically his wife Joan died one year later, in childbirth, and the baby also. The University, indicating the high esteem in which he was held, reinstated his Fellowship, and Cranmer was ordained priest within three years.

Erasmus' Greek New Testament and Martin Luther's writings were circulating within the University, and Cambridge became a centre for those seeking reform of the Church. Cranmer, being a reserved man held back, deciding to make his own academic study of the issues involved. He later wrote: "*Little by little I put away my former ignorance. As God in His mercy gave me light, so through grace, I opened my eyes to see it.*"

On the suggestion of Cranmer, Henry VIII consulted the Western Universities about his marriage difficulties and Cranmer, a Doctor of Divinity, was appointed to argue the King's case. In 1534, Henry broke from Rome and declared himself to be Supreme Head of the Church of England; he remained a Roman Catholic however. Cranmer, now Archbishop, found it difficult to make reforms, but did have success in persuading Henry to issue a proclamation that a Bible in English be provided in every Parish Church. Hundreds flocked to hear God's Word read for the first time.

During the short reign of the Protestant boy King, Edward VI, the Reformers were able to make progress and Cranmer's first Book of Common Prayer appeared in 1549, and a revised version in 1552. The sacrifice of the Mass had been totally transformed into the Lord's Supper and Communicants were now allowed to receive the cup. Out went images, indulgences, purgatory and a host of other unscriptural doctrines. Clergy were allowed to marry, and Cranmer, now married to Margaret, became the first married Archbishop. The 42 Articles of Religion, later reduced to 39, became the Church of England's 'Statement of Faith'. Clergymen were required to read Cranmer's 'Homilies' to their congregations, so that both clergy and laity could learn Scriptural truth together.

On the accession of the Catholic Mary Tudor, Cranmer was arrested. Under pressure, he made six recantations, but this did not save him, he was too dangerous to be left alive. On 21st March 1556, Cranmer stood up in Great St Mary's Church, Oxford to read out what everyone expected to be his public recantation. Beginning with a moral and spiritual exhortation, he then broke out in burning words: "*I renounce all things written with this hand contrary to the truth which I thought in my heart. As for the Pope, I reject him as Christ's enemy and antichrist, with all his false doctrine...*" A riot broke out, he was rushed to the stake and the fire kindled. He stood amidst the flames with eyes lifted to heaven, his right hand in the fire, saying "*This unworthy right hand*" then with the prayer "*Lord Jesus receive my spirit*" he continued to hold out his hand in the flames until it was burnt to a stump. He died not knowing that his reforms and liturgy would shortly be reinstated.

(Article based on talk given at Matins on October 22nd 2006) **AVK**

Tunes of Glory

The hymn 493, 'Rejoice. O land, in God thy might' is by Dr Robert Bridges 1844-1930, who later was to become Poet Laureate, an honour he received in 1913. The hymn was written earlier, in the year of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, 1897, and published in the *Yattendon Hymnal*, 1899. Bridges found his inspiration in some words of the prophet Joel 2:21, 'Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice, for the Lord will do great things'. His hymn reminds us that a nation's true 'might' lies not in its wealth, conquests or armaments, but in its obedience to the claims of God. Only then will it be 'with blessing crowned'.

William Knapp, who wrote the tune, was born in Wareham, Dorset, and became parish clerk of St. James's, Poole. He was a shoemaker in Wareham, and became a glove maker in Poole, where he set up business. He published 'A Sett of New Psalms and Anthems' in 1738 and 'New Church Melody' in 1753, naming most of his hymn tunes after Dorset towns and villages. According to some accounts he was also an organist: he was certainly a musician of no mean ability. There is a special feature about 'Wareham', which makes it one of the best congregational tunes ever written. It will be noticed that the melody proceeds on a descending or ascending scale with only one skip, which is in the first line. 'Wareham, or ' Blandford, soon became well known, and was largely used by the Church and the Congregationalists; but, strange to say, the Methodists never got hold of it. That it appeared in none of their authorized tune-books until 1876, though it is found in the C W Knapp's duties as parish clerk, which led to his being referred to in a verse contributed to the *London Magazine*, 1742, by one H Price, which runs as follows:

From pounce and paper, ink and pen,
Save me, O Lord, I pray;
From Pope and Swift and such-like men,
And Gibber's annual lay;
From doctors' bills and lawyers' fees,
From ague, gout, and trap;
And, what is ten times worse than these,
George Savage¹ and Will Knapp.

Knapp seems to have been somewhat above the average of the country parish clerk of the period. Many good stories are told of the eccentricities of these worthy people, but they were on the whole a faithful race, jealous of their position and duties, and frequently saved the situation when the parson overslept himself or failed to arrive in time. Their office is an old one, and has never been abolished to this day, though they no longer drawl out the responses, or announce with cheerful voice, 'Let us all sing to the praise and glory of God'. In fact, one could wish that this good old formula might still be heard instead of the bald 'Hymn 245' or some such announcement, which too often starts some of our services today.

JC

¹ Savage was the sexton.

Recipe

An alternative way of having pancakes on Shrove Tuesday.

Pancake Ingredients:	Filling Ingredients:
3 eggs	Jar lemon curd
150gms plain flour	375gms mascarpone
510mls milk	100ml double cream
30gms caster sugar	
30g melted butter	
Vanilla Essence	

To make pancakes:

Beat the eggs with the flour and then add the milk, sugar, melted butter and essence. Mix to the consistency of double cream.

Make pancakes - it should make around 8. Place each one interleaved with grease proof until ready to make gateau
(or you can cheat and use ready-made ones instead)

For the filling:

Mix mascarpone, cream and lemon curd to taste - it should be tangy
Starting with a pancake spread a layer of the lemon mix on top, then add the next pancake, then more mix until all the pancakes have been used finishing with a pancake.

Dust the top with icing sugar and using a kitchen flame torch, caramelize the top.

Place in fridge and remove 30 mins before serving

SIDESMEN'S ROTA FEBRUARY 2007

February 4th	9.30am	Mrs. R. Haines.	Mrs. A. Morris.
3rd Before Lent	11.00am	Mrs. L. Burrows.	Mr. F.W. Crossen.
Stewardship Sunday	6.30pm	Mr. P. Moss.	Mrs. V. Whyatt-Routh.
February 11th	11.00am	Mrs. A Knight.	Mr. P. Batiuk.
2nd Before Lent	6.30am	Mrs. C. G. Parrish.	Miss. M. Eastwell.
February 18th	9.30am	Mrs. R. Albon.	Mrs. J. Barnicott.
Next Before Lent	11.00am	Mrs. M. Crossen.	Mr. F.W. Crossen.
	6.30pm	Mrs. B. Routledge.	Mrs. V. Whyatt-Routh
February 25th	9.30am	The Young People	
Lent 1	11.00am	Mrs. L. Burrows.	Mrs. A. Knight.
	6.30pm	Mrs. G. Annan.	Mr. P. Moss.
March 4th	9.30am	Mrs. R. Haines.	Mrs. A. Morris.
	11.00am	Mr. P. Batiuk.	Mrs. M. Crossen.
	6.30pm	Miss. M. Eastwell.	Mrs. C.G. Parrish

If any of these dates are inconvenient, please would you arrange a swap and let Colin Albon know that you have done so.

LESSON READERS - FEBRUARY 2007

February		Third before Lent		
		1 Corinthians		
4th	9.30am	Ch.15 v.1 – 11	Luke Ch.5 v.1 - 11	Colin Albon
		Jeremiah		
Green	11.00am	Ch.26 v.1 - 16	Acts Ch.3 v. 1 - 10	John Crookall
	6.30pm	Hosea Ch.1	Colossians Ch.3 v. 1 - 22	Glynis Annan
February		Second before Lent		
11th	11.00am	Revelation Ch.4	Luke Ch.8 v. 22 - 25	Ann Knight
		Genesis	Matthew	Barbara
Green	6.30pm	Ch.1 - Ch.2 v. 3	Ch.6 v.25 - end	Routledge
February		Next before Lent		
		2 Corinthians		
18th	9.30am	Ch.3 v.12 - Ch.4 v.2	Luke Ch.9 v.28 - 36	Lynn Harris
		Exodus		
Purple	11.00am	Ch.33 v.17 - end	1 John Ch.3 v. 1 - 3	Peter Batiuk
	6.30pm	Exodus Ch.3 v. 1 – 6	John Ch.12 v.27 - 36	Catherine Parrish
February		Ash Wednesday		
		2 Corinthians		
21st	7.30pm	Ch.5 v.20 - Ch.6 v.10	Matthew Ch.6 v. 1 - 6 & v's16 - 21	Barbara Routledge
Purple				
February		Lent 1		
25th	11.00am	Micah Ch.6 v. 1 – 8	Luke Ch.5 v. 27 - end	Lizabeth Burrows
	6.30pm	Jonah Ch.3	Luke Ch.18 v.9 - 14	Margaret Eastwell
Purple				
March		Lent 2		
		Philippians		
4th	9.30am	Ch.3 v.17 - Ch.4 v.1	Luke Ch.13 v. 31 - end	John Hinson
		Genesis Ch.17 v's 1- 7& v's15 & 16	Romans Ch.11 v.13 - 24	Ann Knight
Purple	11.00am	Jeremiah Ch.22 v's 1- 9&v's13-17	Luke Ch.14 v.27-33	Peter Moss
	6.30pm			

THE CHURCH CALENDAR FEBRUARY 2007

Thursday 1 st	11.00am	Holy Communion (JRC)
	12 noon	Monthly luncheon club meeting at the Red Lion
	7.30pm	Confirmation at St. Mary's Cardington by The Bishop of St. Albans
Sunday 4 th	3 rd Before Lent	
	Stewardship Sunday	
	9.30am	Family Communion with Children's Groups (JRC)
	11.00am	Morning Prayer (JRC)
	3.45pm	Baptism of Harmony Alleyne (JRC)
	6.30pm	Evening Prayer (JRC)
Monday 5 th	10.00am	Mums and Toddlers in the Church Hall
	7.00pm	Prayer Group meet in the Summerhouse
	7.45pm	The Friends of Elstow sub committee meet in the Church Hall
Wednesday 7 th	11.30am	Coffee morning followed by soup in the Church Hall
	7.30pm	The Deanery Synod meet at Elstow Church Hall
Thursday 8 th	11.00am	Holy Communion (JRC)
	6.30pm	Confirmation class – Young people
	7.30pm	Confirmation class – Adults
	7.30pm	Meeting of the Parochial Church Council in the Church Hall
Saturday 10 th	2.00pm	Bedfordshire Organists Association AGM at Elstow
	4.00pm	Organ Recital at Elstow Abbey (all welcome, Free entry)
Sunday 11 th	2 nd Before Lent	
	11.00am	Parish Communion (Revd Peter Littleford)
	3.00pm	Baptism of Olivia Saralli (JRC)
	6.30pm	Evening Prayer (JRC)
Monday 12 th	10.00am	Mums and Toddlers in the Church Hall
	7.00pm	Prayer Group meet in the Summerhouse

**DEADLINE FOR MATERIAL FOR MARCH MAGAZINE to Revd Jeremy Crocker or
jeremy.crocker@tesco.net**

Wednesday 14 th	11.30am	Coffee morning followed by soup in the Church Hall
Thursday 15 th	11.00am	Holy Communion (Revd Len Moore)
	6.30pm	Confirmation class – Young People
	7.30pm	Confirmation class – Adults
Sunday 18 th	Next Before Lent	
	9.30am	Family Communion with Children's Groups (Revd Mervyn Terrett)
	11.00am	Morning Prayer (Matins Group)
	6.30pm	Evening Prayer (Canon Philip McDonough)

Monday 19 th	10.00am 7.00pm	Mums and Toddlers in the Church Hall Prayer Group meet in the Summerhouse
Wednesday 21 st ASH WEDNESDAY	11.30am 7.30pm	Coffee morning followed by soup in the Church Hall Holy Communion (JRC)
Thursday 22 nd	11.00am 6.30pm 7.30pm	Holy Communion (JRC) Confirmation class – Young People Confirmation class – Adults
	Saturday 24 th	11.00am Vision for Action celebration in St. Albans Abbey - Hosted by Diane Louise Jordan. Admission by ticket (available from Colin Albon) only. 2.00pm Children's Workshop in the Church Hall
Sunday 25 th	Lent 1 9.30am 11.00am 3.00pm 6.30pm	Young People's Service (JEH) Morning Prayer (JRC) Wedding Rehearsal @ Elstow Abbey Evening Prayer followed by Holy Communion and the Laying on of Hands for Healing (JRC)
Monday 26 th	10.00am 7.00pm 7.30pm	Mums and Toddlers in the Church Hall Prayer Group meet in the Summerhouse Lent Course (1) @ the Sally Army, Elstow Road
Wednesday 28 th	11.30am	Coffee morning followed by soup in the Church Hall
MARCH		
Thursday 1 st	11.00am Noon 6.30pm 7.30pm	Holy Communion (Revd Stephen Smith) Monthly luncheon club in the Red Lion Confirmation class – Young People Confirmation class - Adults
Saturday 3 rd	1.00pm	Wedding of Krystan Fitch and Lisa Kent
Sunday 4 th	Lent 2 9.30am 11.00am 6.30pm	Family Communion with Children's Groups (Mrs Jackie Potton) Morning Prayer (Mrs Jackie Potton) Evening Prayer (Mr Robert Heley)

BEDFORDSHIRE ORGANISTS' ASSOCIATION
Concert in Elstow Abbey
Saturday 10th February 2007 at 4 p.m.
All Welcome, Free Entry

COMMUNICANTS, ATTENDANCE AND COLLECTIONS

October 2006

	Communicants	Attendance	Collections (£)
1 st	61	114	161.70 & 192.10 Farm Africa
5 th	7	7	1.50
8 th	31	54	231.47
12 th	8	8	2.25
15 th	30	71	288.10
19 th	8	8	4.00
22 nd	11	68	210.74
26 th	9	9	1.50
29 th	36	61	195.70
Totals	201	400	1286.06

COMMUNICANTS, ATTENDANCE AND COLLCECTIONS

November 2006

	Communicants	Attendance	Collections (£)
2 nd	9	9	5.00
5 th	26	207	535.79
12 th	-	76	72.87 Poppy fund & 182.88
16 th	8	8	4.50
19 th	30	81	249.46
23 rd	7	7	3.00
26 th	-	74	214.87
30 th	8	8	3.00
Totals	95	477	1276.37

COMMUNICANTS, ATTENDANCE AND COLLCECTIONS

December 2006

	Communicants	Attendance	Collections (£)
3 rd	29	84	385.36
7 th	5	5	3.00
10 th	35	52	159.90
	-	105	Children's Society
14 th	8	8	4.00
17 th	38	87	228.20
21 st	7	7	3.50
24 th	-	22	131.48 (Morning Prayer)
	-	271	125.83 (Crib Service)
	-	98	224.83 (Carol Service)
	53	118	209.43 (Midnight)
25 th	40	47	84.99
28 th	14	14	3.00
31 st	25	32	151.40
Totals	254	950	1714.92

FROM THE REGISTERS

Baptisms

November 19th Elizabeth Emily Aitchison
November 19th Tiffany Olivia Gilbert

Burials

October 23rd Thomas William Underwood
November 25th William Cecil Mottram
December 8th Ian Terrance Deane
December 14th James Smith

THE BEDFORDSHIRE ASSOCIATION OF BELLRINGERS

ELSTOW, Beds, Abbey Church of Ss Mary and Helena

On Sunday December 31 2006 in 2hrs and 34 minutes (Tenor 9cwt)

A peal of 5040 Minor in 6 methods: being 1 extent each of Ipswich Surprise, St Clements Bob, Kent Treble Bob, Oxford Treble Bob, Cambridge Surprise, and 2 of Plain Bob)

- 1 Sarah-Louise Ward
- 2 Anthony H Smith
- 3 Susan J Spencer
- 4 Michael R Spencer
- 5 Richard A Horne
- 6 Stephen H Stanford

Conducted by Stephen H Stanford

Rung half-muffled for the passing of 2006, especially remembering Eddie Jeffries, Henry Stanford, Ann Greenley, John Fordham, Barry Thompson, and Jim Fletcher, who left us this year.

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A Crusty old bachelor I know many years ago was of the opinion that there would be no women in Heaven. He would gleefully quote Revelation, chapter 8, verse 1; 'And there was silence in heaven for half an hour.'

2007

Jokes, Jokes, Jokes

Three sons left home, went out on their own and prospered. Getting back together, they discussed the gifts they were able to give their elderly mother.

The first said, "I built a big house for our mother."

The second said, "I sent her a Mercedes with a driver."

The third smiled and said, "I've got you both beat. You remember how Mom enjoyed reading the Bible? And you know she can't see very well. So I sent her a remarkable parrot that recites the entire Bible. It took elders in the church 12 years to teach him. He's one of a kind. Mama just has to name the chapter and verse, and the parrot recites it."

Soon thereafter, mom sent out her letters of thanks:

"Milton," she wrote one son, "The house you built is so huge. I live in only one room, but I have to clean the whole house."

"Gerald," she wrote to another, "I am too old to travel. I stay most of the time at home, so I rarely use the Mercedes. And the driver is so rude!"

"Dearest Donald," she wrote to her third son, "You have the good sense to know what your mother likes. The chicken was delicious."

A lawyer dies and goes to Heaven. "There must be some mistake," the lawyer argues. "I'm too young to die. I'm only fifty five." "Fifty five?" says Saint Peter. "No, according to our calculations, you're eighty two." "How's you get that?" the lawyer asks. Answers St. Peter: "We added up your time sheets."

Su-Doku

					1			
				6		8	9	5
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5		2		4	8		1	
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	6		5	9		2		8
	1				4	9		
9	8	6		7				
			9					

Visitors to Elstow Abbey

Part 2 - The International John Bunyan Society, USA and Hymnologists

Continuing our series, a highlight for us was a visit by the delegates of the 4th International Conference of the John Bunyan Society in September 2004. Under its President, Professor Bob Owens of the Open University, the conference saw Bunyan as a literary, religious and historical figure of international significance, and this provided an opportunity discuss his life, texts and contexts within which his works were produced and received. The theme was the international impact of Bunyan's works, especially how *The Pilgrims Progress* had been



*Elstow Abbey and its Bell Tower
from the north*

translated, adapted, illustrated, and read within very different cultures, since the late 17th century. It was run jointly by the Open University and the De Montfort University in Bedford.

At the Conference reception Terry Waite, as guest of honour, spoke of his own experiences. These included the famous postcard of John Bunyan in prison, which was the only communication Terry had received when he was in gaol in Beirut, and he gave many details, which we had not heard before.

It will be useful to describe a few of the sessions and papers presented, to give some indication of the range of coverage and expertise. One session involved issues of Bunyan in translation, and covered for example Bunyan among the Eskimos, two Cree translations, and a contribution on *The Pilgrims Progress* in the Third World. Another was devoted to questions of the text and images, emphasising the changing reception, including the poetry, and its use among non-dissenters and the Hagiographers² (no less!). Sessions considered Bunyan's publishers, and the uses of his work from the 14th c. to the present day, on matters of allegory and topography, psychology, religion and theology.

Three papers were given on *The Holy War*, and proved most interesting, as a stained glass window at Elstow is dedicated to this lesser-known book. The conference finished with three discourses on the reception of Bunyan for example by Calvinists, Ranters, Marxists, the Oxford Movement, and examination of his position as a Literary Canon. This was a coverage of some width; some seeming to be so far removed from Bunyan's own concepts and writing, that had his name not been mentioned from time to time I thought it could have been difficult to decipher who was the real author.

The Japanese author Katsuhiro Engetsu from Doshisha University, Japan, noted that *The Holy War* appeared the more confident text, and even ambitious. There followed Richard Runion (interesting name) from Spring Arbor University, USA, completing his PhD on Bunyan, being concerned particularly to discover the Biblical texts Bunyan had relied upon in various places. Runion's was a serious and detailed study, finding many allegorical

² Hagiographer: writer of lives & legends of saints, and the Hebrew Scriptures.

parallels which Bunyan had used, and aspects such as unbelief as an on-going problem in the world subsequently, including of course today. Finally, David Gay, University of Alberta, Canada, spoke about "The nameless instrument", being Bunyan's representation of the power of prayer. War, he noted, is a metaphor widely used, the contemporary use of petitions being a form somewhat equivalent to prayer (e.g. 1 Kings 1,15), and the nature of over-contrition and self-examination (c.f. George Herbert), which generated quite a lively discussion. This single session on *The Holy War* serves to show the depth of some of the presentations, and of course they would be visiting Elstow Abbey to see and hear about John Bunyan later. The Conference was interplay of these international John Bunyan scholars, and I enjoyed the presentations.

Two issues in particular occur:

The quest for Bunyan's influences, their origins and testimony, which underlay his convictions and publications, on deep life experiences and selfless aspirations.

The evidence and testimony from the region of Elstow, understanding his journeys and experiences throughout Bedfordshire and beyond. These were illuminated and fixed within the allegory of a pilgrimage, critical yet supplicative, his life dedicated in service to others and to his Lord.

Elstow Abbey, now in its thousandth year, has always stood for just such ambitions and dedication, and over these years has provided fulfilment for people of different persuasions, though always with a single purpose.



*Seal of Surrender of
the Dissolution of 1539, over the West Door
(a facsimile)*

One consequence of Bunyan's success is the extraordinary range of publication, re-publication, translation, re-presentation of the writing, and illustration of *The Pilgrims Progress* in particular. Also, publishers and their agents continually exercised modification and other means, to enhance their commercial success with an established and famous book. *The Pilgrims Progress* also became mired in religious denominationalism, including atheism, social politics, military motivation and the notion of political power. Oh dear, this is the very stuff of mankind's unending aspirations, and the antithesis of a selfless drive towards a nobler end-state. Personally I think the original Bunyan writing is clear, believable, and revealing of divine truth. He does not have to be reduced to a multiplicity of easy-read, often irrelevant and misrepresentational exercises ("He who has an ear, let him hear", Revelation 2,7).

These then were the people who came round the Abbey in four groups. The interesting factor was not that they "knew everything", and therefore nothing would come as a surprise, but rather the reverse. The font where John Bunyan and his daughters were baptised, and *The Holy War* and *Pilgrims Progress* windows were examined in detail. Particularly the concepts, which Bunyan wrote in his books, and which showed clearly in the windows, were emphasised, the battle of good against evil, and Pilgrim's journey to ultimately find his salvation after many trials and tribulations along the way. Concepts included the Eye, Ear and Nose gate of the City of Mansoul, the absence of armour on Christian's back when he

was fighting Apolyon, and so on. Some knew these allegories, but some were silent on certain issues.

Also seen was the Bell Tower were Bunyan rang the bells. This shows the rope marks, undoubtedly made by John Bunyan, but they can only be seen inside the Tower and therefore could only be described. The participants all sang the Bunyan hymn, many of the visitors not needing the words, as they knew them! All in all a fascinating visit and opportunity.

Another group came from Holy Trinity Church, Stevenage on 26 May 2005, being Jeremy Crocker's former church. They were an ebullient and enthusiastic group, who enjoyed looking round Elstow and learning about its history and associations. That day I had brought with me a small portable vacuum cleaner to pick up the dust of ages from around the organ console and pedals. I was leaving the church with this cleaner as they were getting back on the coach. A gentleman said to me, "Good heavens, you are the History Guide and Organist: don't tell me you clean the church as well". I said, "No, I'm only picking up a few cigarette ends left by John Bunyan"; he nearly fell off the coach steps laughing!

We had a visit of a group (31/8/05) led by their lecturer Myrtle Ellis, who from the outset described them as already being "very keen". This was a group of special interest members drawn from widely spread locations across English counties, interested in the history of English country houses and sites of special interest. Another excellent visit to the Abbey (5/10/05) was a group of "Hymnologists", studying what they called the "English Experience". About half of the group were Americans, and they greatly appreciated the opportunities to investigate the contribution that English hymn writing and its music has made to our National and on-going heritage. They sang the Bunyan hymn lustily, and showed great enthusiasm for everything. Their ideas about hymn and tune writers were interesting, but there was little time to explore this. They had been to Olney and visited John Newton's tomb in the churchyard, but apparently no one in Olney had told them that Dr Henry John Gauntlet had been organist there, and that this was commemorated in the glass panels of the organ console! One member of the group was a Professor of Music. It was clear that Bunyan's hymn represented a highlight of their experience at Elstow.

A group of 72 pupils from Elstow Lower School visited us (14/10/05) being a repeat visit of last year. This time they had to be split into three groups, which in turn looked into the role of Elstow Abbey as a religious site and building, and its history over nearly 1000 years, first as a Benedictine Nunnery for 450 years, then following the Dissolution in 1539, and then to its most famous name, John Bunyan.

Some 25 Quakers from Bedford and Northampton visited on Sunday (28/11/04) to see particularly the work of John Bunyan at the Abbey, organised by my relatives, John and Grace Crookall-Greening. I knew of the disputes between John Bunyan and George Fox, the founder of Quakerism. A weaver's son, Fox was more pugnacious than Bunyan. His persistent craving for the truth and spiritual perfection brought him religious experiences very different from Bunyan's prolonged struggle with temptation. Fox evolved the doctrine of an inner light arising from the presence of Christ in the heart of the believer. However the real differences between Bunyan and Fox were less serious than either imagined, and I found no reticence, rather an intense interest in Bunyan and his achievements, and it was interesting exploring these.

There was a return in April 2006 of 70 members from the Covenant High School, Tacoma, USA, with Principal Dr Dick Hannula, divided into two groups, each of which sang the Bunyan hymn and I was asked to judge which group sang the best” The day was a great one, not least in re-affirming personal recollections, and the strength of faith from personal experience and first-hand garnering of knowledge. This October (25/10/06) has been a visit of 25 members of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Decorative and Fine Arts Society lead by Mrs Sally Grootenhuis, who were following the Bunyan Trail. When I rang her to make arrangements, I discovered that her husband was Professor Peter Grootenhuis of Imperial College, who I knew well during my own days there. He came on the trip, which was a fitting close to the series of visits so far! Later, I had an appreciative phone call from Sally Grootenhuis saying that the visit had been an ideal end to their day.

The majority of these visitors come and go without anyone else knowing they have been. Hence it is useful to have their experiences documented. Moreover I have learned that Elstow Abbey and its history is to an extent internationally known. Let us never lose sight of the fact that eternal truths, and the movers and shakers, are not always "over there", but have moved among us, and are part of our own history. True heritage and homage have taken place right where we are, over nearly a thousand years of our history. We are indeed fortunate, but also responsible, for maintaining its steadfastness, witness and growth within our nation.

John Crookall

CHRISTIAN YOUTH and COMMUNITY WORKER

FOR THE BENEFICE OF ELSTOW

- ❖ We are seeking a dynamic, outgoing and resourceful person
- ❖ We believe that the ideal candidate will be a committed Christian, possess professional youth worker qualification or relevant church based experience.
- ❖ This is an exciting new position in the Benefice with a growing youth congregation with a main focus on the age range 6-17 yrs
- ❖ Our vision is to take our Church children and young people of the Parishes into a deeper and lasting faith, or to experience Christian love.

Come and make a real difference

This is a part time position (20 hrs per week) initially for 3 years with a starting salary of £8.000 to £9.000 depending on experience

As part of the package a cottage is provided in the idyllic rural village of Cardington near Bedford. Own transport required

- ❖ Proposed starting date March/ April 2007
- ❖ Closing date for applications by email or post by 9th February 2007
- ❖ Interviews on Saturday 10th March

For details and applications contact jeremy.crocker@tesco.net

The Revd. Jeremy Crocker, Elstow Abbey Vicarage, Church End, Elstow, Bedford. MK42 9XT.
Tel/ Fax: 01234 261477.

Elstow Benefice Parish Holiday 2007

Sneaton Castle Whitby

Sunday 22nd July to Friday 27th July 2007

22nd July travel by coach departing St Michael's 11.30am, Cardington 12 noon and Elstow 12.30pm. Returning on 27th July leaving Sneaton Castle after breakfast.

Half Board in standard accommodation travelling by coach with on board facilities. The Castle was a convent that has been converted into a hotel. Daily "Quiet Time" is available if you want it. There is more information about the hotel on the web site www.sneatoncastle.co.uk

A variety of rooms have been provisionally reserved. Standard rooms with shared facilities: 6x Twin rooms, 20x Single rooms, 1x double with bunk bend, 1x Single with bunk bed, 3x twin with bunk bed, 1x double with 3 child beds.

All En-suite rooms have been allocated so **NO en-suite rooms are now available**

Please complete a booking form and indicate your room request. These will be allocated on a first come basis. Prices are per person for the five nights including evening meal.

- Adult in standard accommodation £153.00
- Infant 0-3yrs Free
- Child 4-11yrs standard room £91.80
- Child 12-16yrs standard room £122.40
- Coach cost per seat TBC but in region of £38

Please complete and return your booking slip ASAP to Rev Jeremy Crocker, Elstow Rectory, Church End, Elstow, Beds MK42 9XT. £20 per person non-refundable deposit is needed by 14th February 07. Enquiries to Rev Jeremy Crocker - Tel 01234 261477.

Please use block letters

Name(s):

Address:

..... Postcode.....

Telephone number:

Room Type required: (Requests are on a first come basis)

Dietary or Special needs:

Travel: *Please indicate* Coach Car Making own way there

From Stephen's Study

"I look good, I feel good, I am good." Famous in the 1950's Dr. Norman Vincent Peal, an American self-help guru urged his followers to say the above in their bathroom mirror every morning. Repetition of this mantra would result in a 'self fulfilling prophecy'; your self-esteem; success and goodness would flow from this simple act. A feeling of self worth is very important, but presumably the brief celebrity of Dr. Peal and his technique waned when someone realized they didn't look so good in the morning. Also personal goodness does not result just from the use of the word, but a deeper aspiration to the task, perhaps this is what Dr. Peal intended to kick start.

After the celebrations of Shrove Tuesday, Lent begins, forty days before the climax of the Christian year, Easter Day. Lent is a time of self-examination traditionally the season of penitence, coupled with the intention to do better next time, to grow in goodness. It acts as a kind of 'spiritual pruning' when we cut back on the things which distract us from this process. Many people still 'give up' luxuries such as chocolate, which rank alongside the older customs of abstaining from butter or meat as a token of their intent. Recently the emphasis has changed to the more positive 'taking up' of a pursuit to develop our spiritual life. During the five weeks of Lent, the following dates and times have been prepared by the South Beds Council of Churches to provide joint meetings at different churches using the booklet from York Courses, "Can we build a better world?"

26 th Feb	7.30pm	Salvation Army, Elstow Road
6 th Mar	7.30pm	Elstow Abbey, Church Hall
14 th Mar	7.30pm	St Michael's Church, Barford Avenue
22 nd Mar	7.30pm	Christ the King, Corner of Harrowden Road
30 th Mar	7.30pm	London Road, Methodists

(Refreshments after each session at 9pm)

If you find this 5-week course using the booklet from the York Courses an interesting prospect to take up, please join us each evening. Details of the course booklet can be found from www.yorkcourses.co.uk. If on the other hand, you find the idea of Lent and penance all too gloomy, here are some wise words from Bernard of Clairvaux, a twelfth century monk:

"Sorrow for sin is indeed necessary, but should not involve endless self preoccupation. You should dwell also on the glad remembrance of the loving kindness of God."

-and you don't even have to look in a mirror!

Stephen

THANK YOU

I would like to thank everybody for their prayers, cards and good wishes during my stay in Addenbrooks Hospital. I am now at home and am making slow but sure progress. Please keep in touch with me and do please keep me in your prayers.

Best wishes

Judy Carpenter

Would you like to get into regular Bible reading? The Bible Reading Fellowship can help

New Daylight

Ideal for those looking for a devotional approach to reading and understanding the Bible. A regular team of contributors, representing a stimulating mix of church backgrounds, cover four months of daily Bible reading, providing helpful comment, prayer and thoughts for reflection.

Day by Day with God

With a regular team of contributors, these are Bible reading notes especially for women by women. Each four-monthly issue offers daily Bible readings, with key verses printed out, helpful comment and a prayer for the day ahead.

For more information please contact Rita Haines your Church Representative Bedford 304773.

Mums and Toddlers, (Free) meets at Elstow Church Hall every Monday from 10-11.30am for more details please contact the co-ordinator Mrs Michelle Tuck on 01234 305153 or michelleandstanleytuck@ntlworld.com

Monthly Luncheon Club

A new luncheon club will meet on the first Thursday of each month, after the 11am Holy Communion, in the Red Lion, the menu will appear on the weekly notice sheet. Next Date is Thursday 1st February. All Welcome, just turn up. There is a choice of main course, desert and coffee, for £5.99.

Re-Launch of the Youth Club, on Wednesday April 18th 6.30-8.00pm

We are looking for volunteers to help with the weekly running of the Youth Club. If you are interested please come to the Rectory on Wednesday 7th March at 6.30pm for more details.

Coffee and Soup served every Wednesday from 11.30am until 1pm in the Church Hall. (Free) For more details please contact the co-ordinator Mrs. Rosemary Albon on 01234 407084.

Energy Efficiency Surgery

Wilstead Village Hall Saturday 3rd February 9am-noon

Do you need to discuss issues that affect your quality of life; education; libraries; social services; environmental health issues; waste disposal; crime and policing; council tax and housing; social services; recycling and refuse collection; housing needs; transport; trading standards or pest control. For further information please contact Josie Blair on 01234 276123