



ANGLICAN RENEWAL MINISTRIES WALES

ADNEWYDDIAD EGLWYSWYR CYMRU

Issue 24 July/August 2001

Contents

Don't Stop at the Cross.....	2
A Letter from our Chairman Phil Rees.....	4
Revival for Wales Seen through the eyes of a stranger in Paradise by Mike Endicott	5
Beyond Revival? by Joel Edwards	6
GIFTS OF MINISTRY Part 3 - TEACHING by Brian Favell.....	9
A DAY TO STAND TOGETHER BEFORE GOD FOR THE NATION A report by Chris Faull	11
Renewal in the Rural Areas	14
SURRENDER by Pam Worsey	17



Don't Stop at the Cross.

How we love the Cross - for through the love of God that took Jesus to the Cross we can receive salvation and the gift of eternal life. As we spend time in this precious place we are assured of forgiveness of all sins. We look at Jesus' suffering and dying in our place and the pain brings us to know His love and His mercy. We are reassured and should be ready to start again but too often we linger in this place and allow it to become a comfort zone!

How many Christians keep Jesus on the cross? On Good Friday it is right to dwell on that image, but in three days Christ was no longer there for He had risen. If, as Protestants since the time of the Reformation, we look at an empty cross we see an image of both the Resurrection and of a Way forward. This Way of the Cross is walking the way of Jesus but we do not walk alone for we are now "in Christ".

So my friends as we prepare for this year's Flammau Tân / Flames of Fire Conference, I believe that the Lord is calling us to take note of a number of related images. These themes have been picked up in this year's conference banners and I hope that they will inspire you as you "Prepare the Way of the Lord".

There are three passages from Isaiah through which a thread of God's love and holiness take us to the cross and beyond into His very presence.

He calls us to come up onto the "Holy Highway" where only the redeemed of the Lord can walk, we are assured of absolute safety for nothing unclean is found there. (Isaiah 35: 8-10) But from here we can enter Zion singing, this is the Lord's way and we need to be open to hearing how we should journey on it.

Isaiah 40 is that great chapter of God comforting His people, but it is here in verse 3 that we hear, "A voice of one calling: 'In the desert prepare the way of the LORD make straight in the wilderness a highway for our GOD.....!'

There is assurance that the way can be made smooth but there is a message to proclaim, "say to the cities of Judah, 'Here is your God!' "

So can we, like John the Baptist, cry out to the world, calling for repentance and showing the way? Our actions are as important today as they have ever been, not only through the proclaimed message, but by the way we live, showing the world the way of the Lord. But it is from Isaiah 61 that I draw the image of how we are to live. Jesus himself quoted from it when he spoke in the synagogue (Luke 4:18-19). He said that he had come for this purpose; now it is the work of the Church to complete it.

All material is copyright of its creator and permission must be sought before it is reproduced. Please use the "Contact Us" page on our website www.anglicanrenewalministries-wales.org.uk in order to gain such permission.



Jesus came “to proclaim the year of the LORD’S favour”, that was the Good News, but Isaiah added that another day must be proclaimed “the day of vengeance of our God” Is this the message for today? Are we ready for Christ’s return? Are we willing to become “Oaks of Righteousness”?

Yes, this Holy Highway goes right through the Cross, God wants a Holy people and He will make a Holy people of all who are willing. I know that He is telling us not to be afraid and that he has to come first in absolutely everything. This is the point at which many Christians get scared, they can’t yet trust Him with all of their lives. I pray for this final surrender of the Church, and join the cry of “Lord have mercy on us.” We want Revival but it can only start in us.

This issue brings two views of Revival, one even calls for our leaders to show us the way! Brian Favell’s articles now reach the ministry of teaching and that causes me to cry out, questioning the Church. “So where are the teachers? Why don’t Christians really know what it means to be ‘A Normal Christian’? (Watchman Nee’s words). Why does the Church try to manage without the Holy Spirit as the Teacher and Guide?” Often I feel that I am hard on the clergy as I expect too much of them, but I do expect them to teach the churchgoers what it is all about. One failing is that we in the Anglican Church, at least, expect the clergy to do everything and to exhibit all the “gifts of ministry”. But I also ask, “Who is ready to teach? Who is really prepared?”

"Unless the Lord builds the house. its builders labour in vain " (Ps.127:1)

It is so easy to forget that we will learn nothing unless the Holy Spirit takes charge, when will all those who long for Revival start letting it happen?

I have known a lot of teachers in the secular world, in fact I taught maths and computing for some years. Two things are important, (1) a knowledge of your subject and suitable preparation, and (2) a real care for your students. Without these factors you will fail. We have to want to learn and need to cooperate with our teachers so consider how this can best be done in the Church, remembering that sermons, like lectures, are very poor teaching methods.....BUT meanwhile the Church needs teaching and that means all members, clergy as well as laity.

So I return to walking the Way of the Lord, will the Church be ready when He comes. I can only point to the way to prayer, for I see prayer as our communication with God throughout our spiritual journey on earth. It is also a road reaching from man to God, starting when we first begin to pray simple prayers perhaps as a child. There is for each of us the way of ordinary prayer, being vocal or silent but involving words. To many this way of praying fills a lifetime, and wonderful prayers are spoken or read. Some are led to forms of silent prayer, meditation or simply a resting in the Lord. Such prayer has many names, the prayer of love, of surrender, quietude or the prayer of the heart to name but a few. We can all pray in this way if we are willing, and here we get the first inkling that God calls us deeper and longs for us to let Him



take charge of our prayer. From this point He can take us into contemplative prayer and a step closer to Union with God.....May His will be done and His Name glorified.

Mary Newsom

A Letter from our Chairman Phil Rees

Dear Friends

A brief but nevertheless important word this time. We have been so grateful for God's grace in many ways over several years at the August Conference, we must never cease to give thanks for what He has done. We can only pray for the next time if we are listening to Him.

We must never dare to assume that because we have been blessed in the past, this will continue even if we do nothing. The Lord loves to hear our requests made in the Holy Spirit. I am always uneasy lest I miss getting it right as we look forward to August. So let's continue to thank Him and cry out for more of Him this time.

Please pray specifically:

For the leaders and speakers.

For the worship team and musicians.

For all the teams working on the site to make the Conference possible.

For those who are undergirding us all in prayer - that they'll hear.

For Penny Williams and her team as they take on the children's work fully for the first time.

For our long-term strategy for 2002 and beyond.

and for love for us all as we work together.

Every Blessing
Phil



Revival for Wales Seen through the eyes of a stranger in Paradise by Mike Endicott

Our prophets prophecy it – our Intercessors pray for it – our spiritual warriors do warfare for it – so where is it? Revival is breaking out in countless places around the world – why can't we have it back in Wales?

One prophesies that revival will sweep down on Aber-*here*, another that it will come on Aber-*there*. Yet more prophecies tell of the coming of a sweeping force around Aber-*all-over-the-place*. One leader tells us "Not yet!" because we have too many denominations per head of population and another hauls us all into forgiving each other, all over again, for the past. Yet another says that the spirit of Revival never left Wales – we are just sitting on it somehow. Then again it may just be all our fault anyway as we have the greatest number of these-sort-of-people and the most of that-sort-of-thing, a wide range that varies from violent crime to teenage suicide and pregnancy, from Freemasonry to dysfunctional families. Wait a minute – perhaps it's all the fault of the national flag!

Now wait a moment, you leaders of the church, you're confusing us! The Welsh blood is very precious. They are easily short-changed by leadership with no vision of their spiritual beauty or the depths of their souls.

The people have their emotions very near their skins - it is precisely their history as a downtrodden nation that makes it so. The nearness of their emotions to the surface is a blessing to God – it allows them to be a spiritual people. They, above all European nations, are the swelling fruit of grace. Sometimes it is not too difficult to catch the sound of an extra heartbeat in the heart of God when the Welsh are lifted in prayer. The pierced heart of the nation has been gently held in the pierced hands of God's Son for almost a thousand years and who says:

"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you." (Isaiah 60:1).

Both Biblically and in modern times we find that names are so important – they hang over us and label us for life. No one today would call their son Judas or Adolf or Barabbas. There is a name of great beauty that hangs over this nation of Wales – David.

Isaiah 9:6-7 speaks about the GOVERNMENT resting upon his shoulders and Isaiah 16:5 speaks of the THRONE being established in the Davidic Tabernacle.

God is continually looking for a Davidic people on which he can bestow Davidic authority - a people in whose ear he can whisper strategy to advance the Kingdom, to enforce the putting of all enemies under his feet.

All material is copyright of its creator and permission must be sought before it is reproduced. Please use the "Contact Us" page on our website www.anglicanrenewalministries-wales.org.uk in order to gain such permission.



But for now the church begins to get anxious. Numbers and financial resources dwindle and the leadership is confused. The conservative establishment invokes structural changes to design even more structural changes while the 'free-thinkers' bring in more and more missionaries from overseas to keep enthusiasm at a peak. Well, a thousand years of history just goes to show that if it's foreign then it must be better than us.

They have all promised us so much and yet so little has come of it.

When the Shunammite woman whose longed-for son had died reached Elisha on the holy mountain, she took hold of his feet. His servant tried to push her away, but the man of God said, "Leave her alone! She is in bitter distress, but the LORD has hidden it from me and has not told me why."

"Did I ask you for a son, my lord?" she said and did we not long for revival? "Didn't I tell you, 'Don't raise my hopes'?"

Little changes – God is still the most under-rated resource in the Church today and we have to hang onto the ankles of our leaders until they reveal His grace and power to us in full flood. Elisha's first plan to revive the woman's son didn't work – he had to be persuaded by her demands to solve the problem.

They have given us missions and outreach programmes, new forms of worship and taken away our pews. They have organised conferences and meetings for us, lay training courses and a variety of semi-secular activities, but they have not revealed one great truth – that there is only one vehicle fit for the display of God's divine splendour and it's us. The Welsh human being is perfect for the job.

Thirty years of living in Wales has brought me to a place of deep love and respect for this battered tribe and a deep realisation of God's healing call to them to stand up. How I wish they would take their spiritual leaders by the ankles and not let go until they have been set free into the holy people they are called to be. It is through their holiness that everyone will see the Lord – it is through their boldness of joy that the sheep will be gathered.

Come on, Leaders, stop confusing us and show us the way!

Beyond Revival? by Joel Edwards

Something dramatic is going on in the life of the Christian Church. At the very moment in our history when the headlines and statistics are pointing towards falling numbers and discredited Christianity a growing number of churches are sounding more gung ho than ever before. And it's not all reckless triumphalism.

All material is copyright of its creator and permission must be sought before it is reproduced. Please use the "Contact Us" page on our website www.anglicanrenewalministries-wales.org.uk in order to gain such permission.



It seems that the only way we can square this circle is to recognise that two things are taking place simultaneously. If Christian Research is correct, their report *The Tide is Running Out* offers us a very dismal view of the future. The figures tell us that our historic churches - such as the Roman Catholics, Church of England, Methodists and URC - are closing down. But it also indicates that over the past 20 years the numbers attending the "new churches" have levelled off. Far fewer people attend churches now than ever before - in fact just over 11.5% of the population. And the really depressing news is that only something like 5% of children in the UK now have any live link with the Church.

Those of us who have been holding out for revival are being creative about our definition of the phenomenon. And many of us have been, and remain hungry for revival - a move of God which touches our churches and spills over into our society so powerfully that it sweeps thousands or millions into the kingdom. This longing for something more has been inspired by what God did in the early moments of the 20th Century and the Charismatic renewal in the latter part of this century.

Along the way many people have fanned the flames of hope for revival. In 1954, for example, Billy Graham forecast "a spiritual awakening such as you have not seen since the days of Wesley." It was due to take place within five years. Whether the Charismatic renewal was the fulfilment of this hope remains a moot point.

Having said that, there is no denying the amazing developments going on in recent years. Personally, I have never heard so many Christians talking about prayer as I have over the past decade. I have some astute friends who raise questions as to whether we are just talking about it rather than doing it, but even so we are at least discussing it. There are more "big ideas" in the Christian world than we can cope with and more optimism about engaging than we could have imagined in the come-ye-out-from-among-them days of the 1960's and 70's. When the Home Secretary addressed the Churches Main Committee on the issue in June, there was a silent awareness that it was welcome - but old hat.

Today churches are thinking in big mega-church terms and creatively about cell church discipleship. Within a decade, Alpha has become a household name for creative evangelism touching millions of lives across the world.

All of this is a sort of reviving - if not revival itself. It's not quite what any of us had in mind when we started talking about God "moving in the nation". And it's also true that most of these things happen to be the preoccupation of our evangelical subculture rather than a shared awareness of God in our culture. While we have become busier and more optimistic our culture continues to paint over us as a haze in the background. Many of us have moved on from an individualistic piety which cuts us off from the real world. We have embraced the need to "get our hands dirty", but the world has not yet noticed our growing passion.

We are all looking for something which has not yet arrived. With hindsight it was not the visit of the Kansas City Prophets in the 1980's. It was not the "Toronto Blessing", Pensacola or the



vogue in gold fillings. In their own peculiar way each has added to our encouragement or despair. We are still looking out for something else and we all tend to call it revival.

When it comes it may well surprise us. In the first place, it may not be a carbon copy of our expectations. And like the baby in the manger it may come from some unexpected part of the Church: an eccentric youth culture or the Iranian Church perhaps? When it comes we should brace ourselves for that great "in-gathering" we have been singing about for so long. But we should also prepare ourselves for an awful lot of hassle. For any revival instigated by the Holy Spirit is likely to have Jesus at its centre and in a culture which increasingly worships at the twin shrines of pluralism and tolerance this is likely to be welcomed by the few and rejected by the many. In the absence of a Christian consensus, no one should be in any doubt that revival will be very hard work.

Revival has never been the hallmark of a perfect society. The testimonies of Scripture and Church history makes it abundantly clear that it seldom lasts for more than a generation. Indeed it tends to instigate difficulties both within and outside the Church. Nehemiah's great reforms and renewal barely lasted to the end of his own account (Neh. 13:15-20); within days of overthrowing the prophets of Baal, Elijah was suicidal, Jezebel was more arrogant than ever and it was business as usual (I Kings 19). Neither the 19th Century Welsh revival nor the global impact of the Azusa Street revival in the early 20th Century stopped the steady march of secular humanism.

But they were genuine moves of God. We desperately need revival, but revival is little more than a kind of periodical restraining order on evil which God carries out in the Church and society.

Some years ago whilst preaching at a Christian conference a man leapt out at me from the crowd.

Do you remember me? " he asked. I didn't. "No. I'm sorry." I answered nervously for fear that I really should!

"I'm that man you met while you were on tour. I was sick and you prayed for me and..." (I had racing scenes of a story of healing emerging) "...and I had to go to the hospital!" he concluded.

That was bad enough for my ego. But it got worse when a few days later he saw me again – this time with a small group from his local church. He introduced me to them.

"This is Joel." He waved in my direction. "I was sick and he prayed for me and I ended up in the hospital!" They all giggled. It was beyond endurance.

"Look, Pal," I rejoined, "you were sick, I prayed for you and you ended up in the hospital. Can you think what would have happened if I didn't pray for you? You would be a dead man!" We all laughed and parted company.

All material is copyright of its creator and permission must be sought before it is reproduced. Please use the "Contact Us" page on our website www.anglicanrenewalministries-wales.org.uk in order to gain such permission.



More often than not revival stops a bad situation from getting worse, but it is seldom the long term answer to society's ailments.

Revivals are probably God's pump priming for more long-term work which needs our strategic involvement. The real agenda must be a movement which transforms people and society. When we pray for revival, we should hold in mind much more than full churches and people leaving the pubs early. We should envisage a more profoundly durable work than the healing of the sick. It must be for a work of God so thorough that it starts with the transformation of people lives, touched by forgiveness and made new in the life of Christ. It should be a vision for multitudes who will forsake lifestyles which damage them and hurt our communities. It should definitely be about changed churches set free from our moribund institutional shackles and open to the fresh impetus of the Spirit. It should mean church leadership with Biblical integrity.

But it should be more. More people should know about Jesus - even if it costs more from Christians. The Church should be loved and ridiculed more often. Fewer youngsters should die of drug overdoses and abuse. Our programmes for prison expansion should slow down. Communities should be nicer places and we should all feel safer. Our homes should be safer places for our children. People in education should keep glancing across to see how Christians do it. Amongst the clatter of sounds, a Christian view of things should be heard more often. They will even have things to say about some of the awkward questions, such as bio-engineering. Politicians and TV personalities. Then those who shape society will pay more attention to these curious, troublesome Christians who back up their words with good deeds.

It won't be a perfect society, but when revival comes we will know it because 'outsiders' will tell us.

GIFTS OF MINISTRY Part 3 - TEACHING by Brian Favell

This is the time to re-emphasise what I said earlier on - that we are all likely to have within us more than one of these motivational gifts, and that our business is to discern in each other and ourselves just which is our primary one. If we forget that warning we can become very confused about the gift of teaching, because it can be held and used in conjunction with all the others. A prophet is very likely to teach and will do so like a prophet, not like a teacher. A servant will have things to teach others, particularly if he is that highly specialised form of servant we call a Minister.

An exhorter, a giver, a leader and a mercy person will have things to teach, but their teaching will be secondary to their other calling, and what I said here does not necessarily apply to them. This chapter is for and about those who are teachers first and foremost. And again, it's about both men and women even though I may seem to be writing about men.

All material is copyright of its creator and permission must be sought before it is reproduced. Please use the "Contact Us" page on our website www.anglicanrenewalministries-wales.org.uk in order to gain such permission.



So what makes a Teacher.....?

First comes the conviction that his ministry is absolutely basic: he KNOWS that if a Christian is not rooted in unassailable truth, then whatever other gifts he may have will not amount to very much in the long term. So he is more than impatient with any who use Bible texts carelessly: he will not stand for misquotations or texts used loosely out of context; he uses words carefully and expects everyone else to do the same.

It's not wise to be too free with mere opinions in front of a Teacher. He will stop you in your tracks, cross-examine you to find whether you used any actual facts and reasoning in the formation of your opinions. He will unpack what you have said, turn it inside out to find its ingredients which he will dissect and analyse; then briskly reassemble it, package it and hand it back to you, tidy, clean and garnished - and leave you wondering whether you want to claim it as your child any more! If you can endure this process you may learn much: if not he may find it hard to endure you.

He delights in digging - in research among books and papers and old records. And his delight is not to do with the satisfaction of curiosity - that's not the Spirit's business. His aim is always to uncover truth; to test it and prove it, then to use it to test and prove other truths. And there is nothing haphazard about this: his second name is Order: he is methodical; he looks for pattern, system, design - the workman- ship of the Spirit. For him more than most it is unthinkable for God to be other than the God of Order. He has a hunger for truth, for in it he finds the incarnate Lord.

But there are problems. A Teacher is apt to find greater joy in uncovering truth and setting it in order than in communicating it to others. Teaching truth is his work perhaps, but finding it is his constant pleasure. Not that he is slipshod in his teaching - quite the reverse. He is much more likely to drive others round the bend by what they see as fussiness, pedantry, unnecessary nit-picking. But what they call nit-picking he sees as a meticulous and absolutely necessary regard for accuracy.

The Holy Spirit speaks TO him in his research and THROUGH him in his teaching, and lack of care and accuracy in either would seem to the Teacher to be unfaithfulness to God. A prophet or exhorter or even a leader may speak and preach and teach off the cuff, extempore; relying on the Holy Spirit to provide the right words..... not so a Teacher. For him exactness of words matters too much, and the Spirit has already provided the right words in the quietness of his study.

Nevertheless this passion for exactness may lead others to think he lacks warmth and feeling. The meticulously detailed picture which he paints in his teaching may seem too fussy and crowded: all they want to see are broad, bold outlines. This in turn will hurt and perturb the Teacher. A Teacher's concern to draw from others the standard of accuracy that he himself uses will make them suspect him of pride - of deliberately 'taking them down a peg'. Indeed this could be a temptation to him if he is not filled through and through with God's love. He

All material is copyright of its creator and permission must be sought before it is reproduced. Please use the "Contact Us" page on our website www.anglicanrenewalministries-wales.org.uk in order to gain such permission.



may be thought super-critical - and he may think others careless and slipshod - because he will not allow truth to be blurred or tampered with.

A teacher may seem too much concerned with truth and principles, and not enough with practicalities. But this is at the heart of his calling. The prophets, servants, leaders and exhorters will look after the practical side of things in the teaching that they do: it is the Teacher's job to help them keep their feet firmly on the solid rock of truth while they are about it. For this reason we are not likely to find a great number of Teachers in any one part of Christ's Body, though there will always be plenty of people who teach as part of their ministry.

Another thing: all these characteristics as I have described them (like those of prophets and servants) are fully developed, strongly flavoured. You are not likely to meet them in this strength unless you run into someone who is already recognised and well known - perhaps famous - in his ministry. Usually you will only encounter hints - subtle whiffs of the flavour. These hints are to be recognised by the people around him, and probably only somewhat later by the person himself. Given that recognition, he can be encouraged to step out and use his gift, while others are encouraged to listen and receive instead of just thinking "Who on earth does he think he is?"

And again: these gifts are not restricted to those who have been spiritually 'turned on' in one way or another. They will be found in any and every Christian - man or woman - who is willing to be used by God. They are likely to be stronger and clearer in someone who has been baptised in the Holy Spirit, nevertheless they are there for the finding in everyone. And when found and used, the whole Body is enriched. Lastly: there is no divine law which says that an ordained minister MUST be a Teacher or vice versa. A minister undoubtedly has to teach, but that is a different matter!.

A DAY TO STAND TOGETHER BEFORE GOD FOR THE NATION A report by **Chris Faull**

In the April edition of our magazine there was an invitation, indeed a challenge, to be in Birmingham on 13 June 2001. The call was for all Christians, especially those in leadership, to join with the organisers for the day to 'Stand together before God for the nation'. The organisers were the World Prayer Centre and Pray for Revival, both of whom operate from Birmingham and work very closely together on all aspects of prayer.

In this day and age, when we see so many things happening in our country and in the world at large; when we see people in general turning away so strongly from God - and as part of what Niall and Gerry Griffin referred to as 'Representational Repentance' (see issue 16, Summer 1999) - the need was perceived and the call went out with some 3000 people responding from

All material is copyright of its creator and permission must be sought before it is reproduced. Please use the "Contact Us" page on our website www.anglicanrenewalministries-wales.org.uk in order to gain such permission.



across the land - and further afield. My wife, Janet, and I joined with two Crosswinds colleagues and hit the M5 in good time to get ahead of the rush. The Lord was gracious in providing fine weather and the traffic was not too horrendous - as it can be up in that area!

Once inside and having found our designated seats, there was an introductory time of worship incorporating several well known and some unfamiliar songs as the rest of the people gradually filled the section of the arena we had been allocated. There was an ever-increasing sense of expectation among the gathered faithful as the worship brought us closer to the throne of God and the programme for the day was outlined from the platform. From the information afforded the organisers on the applications, we were advised that virtually every denomination known across the country was represented. God had spoken across the whole width of His church and there was a sense that this was to be a day of great significance in the Church which could signal a move of God in the nation.

The Revd Bob Dunnett, who heads up the Pray for Revival team, pointed us to the prophet Amos - reminding us that Amos found himself in a national situation very similar to our own. The nation had been through a period of post-war reconstruction, followed by a time of great prosperity which gave way to a time of growing chaos and it was in this last period that Amos grew up - how like our own with the aftermath of the second world war, the period of economic boom and high living to a time of great anxiety and concern for the future, as people have turned away from God! Amos heard what God was saying to the people and saw the situation with 'spiritual eyes' as God gave him pictures to use in teaching the people of the day. He was shown a vision of locusts being prepared to ravage the land; a vision of fire sweeping away anything the locusts left behind; a vision of a plumb line with God saying "I have had enough. I am setting firm limits on your acceptable behaviour, failing which I will spare the people no longer!"; a vision of a basket of ripe fruit to indicate that the time was ripe for Israel to receive the wrath of God; a vision of a stricken sanctuary to show how it would be when God withdraws His presence. All strong warnings to Israel which Bob Dunnett aligned with our own situation, suggesting that recent national disasters from floods to BSE, from collapses on the Stock Markets to the foot and mouth epidemic can be seen as marks and warnings of God's wrath against this nation.

Whether this was taken at face value on the day or taken away to be weighed for ourselves, his homily set a platform for the rest of the day which was split into four basic sections drawn from the talk:

1. Acknowledgement of the seriousness of the situation by proclaiming it.
2. Prayer for the Church to wake up and face such a situation.
3. Confession of the sins of the nation, repenting of them as Nehemiah did by national identification and also for ourselves.
4. Pleading for mercy and revival in the midst of the general chaos and confusion in the land today.



Some prayer was undertaken at each of the sections from the front, but we were then encouraged to get into threes or fours where we were and pray more directly from our own perspectives, dependent on local settings and circumstances. It was good to be able to share in this way with folk from different parts of the country, to pray for their situations and have them pray into ours, as well as praying for the national scene.

Lunch time was another opportunity to 'wing-tip' with a number of other people, both known and new, to renew acquaintance with some we had not seen for a number of years and enjoy the alfresco meal (packed lunch brought with us) in warm sunshine and in the freshest air available at the time!

I think perhaps, for myself, that the highlight of the day was shortly after lunch when all those in leadership rôles across the churches were invited to come out to the front, to the foot of a large cross positioned to one side of the stage. It was so moving to see what must have been several hundred clergy, ministers, pastors and other leaders - both men and women, young and more mature - making their way forward from all parts of the auditorium to receive a blessing and affirmation as the rest of us prayed for them. They were given words of reaffirmation and encouragement in their various ministries.

With all the crying out to God in confession, repentance and for mercy one might just have felt a weight of negativity bearing down on one's shoulders and spirit, but the day was effectively and helpfully brought to a close with a final look at the scriptures where Jeremiah relays what God was saying to the Israelites of his day - that He was prepared and preparing to bring them back to Himself, if they would equally prepare themselves. They had been allowed to be taken into captivity but He says He will bring them back together from the four corners of the world and from their enemies - "So there is HOPE for your future", declares the Lord," (Jeremiah 31:17a).

We felt it had been quite a day - heavy in parts, but well-focussed - and everyone seemed to come away with a spirit of encouragement to keep praying for the land. God has not given up on us yet! We cannot, however be complacent but must stick to the task of proclamation, repentance and pleading on behalf of a people who have lost their way - and we are part of it!

"We have a Hope that is steadfast and certain, gone through the curtain and touching the throne" - we sing. That Hope is Jesus and "He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born over all creation. For by Him all things were created:..... He is before all things and in Him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the Church..... " (Colossians 1:15-18 part). Friends, as members of that body, we have a responsibility to do our part in that process, but isn't it great to know He is the One in charge. Praise Him.



Renewal in the Rural Areas

An address given by the Revd Peter Bement, Vicar of Llandeilo,

at the Extra General Meeting on 26th April, 2001.

Peter started inauspiciously by claiming that he knew least of all about renewal in rural areas. There are many problems for Christians working in rural areas, but the main one is: how do we communicate with the outside world? - how do we become Church? And what do we mean by renewal? He invited us to think about our own church. What would we like it to be like as a renewed church? We may think that this has a lot to do with style, and that renewal is to replicate the style of church that we were in previously - the style of worship and preaching and doctrinal emphasis. But it is a big mistake to think of renewal thus. God is not interested in such things - he sees the heart.

So what is renewal? You can think of it this way. What would happen if Christ turned up in this local, rural church? Think of a church in Revelation chapter 3: packed with people - preaching and worship good - suddenly there's a knock on the door - it's Jesus: "I would like to come in and share in this meal!" This church has everything except Jesus.

Consider Luke's Sermon on the Plain, (Luke 6:17ff). This happened in the countryside, but most of the people had come from towns. Jesus is the fountain of power and healing. People press in on him because the closer they get to Jesus the more likely they are to be healed. There are two groups of people: those who have come for healing, and the disciples to whom Jesus speaks the Beatitudes. This inner group are being taught by Jesus; they have submitted to him and are committed to him. There is outreach to the wider group - they are being touched and healed. Or consider the situation described in Acts 2:42ff. This is an example of outreach by the apostles, and the point is you cannot separate renewal from evangelism - this is the experience of renewal.

Welsh Christianity is institutionally rural. According to figures collected in 1995, we have a place of Christian worship for every 580 people in the Principality. Most of the buildings are in the countryside and most of the people are in towns, where they are hardly touched. In the nineteenth century there was a great wave of church building; but despite that, our parish system still reflects the state of the country in the Middle Ages. But bad as the situation in the rural areas, it is worse in the cities. In 1999, of the 583 benefices in the Church in Wales, the largest 25 served 566,000 people, and between them they mustered 8,056 Christmas communicants. At the bottom of the list you need 330 rural benefices to get anywhere near the population of the 25 urban ones. But in the smallest 330 there were 36,308 Christmas communicants. The point of all these numbers is that we have all these resources in the rural areas, where we are doing best, but we are under-resourced in the urban areas. Twenty percent of the inhabitants of St Davids diocese are Christians - the most successful mission in Great

All material is copyright of its creator and permission must be sought before it is reproduced. Please use the "Contact Us" page on our website www.anglicanrenewalministries-wales.org.uk in order to gain such permission.



Britain! So our most urgent need is for urban mission; like in the retail trade, the more outlets the more sales.

Rural congregations are diminishing and ageing; there is no potential for mission or renewal - we are on the brink of a wave of closures. What has gone wrong? The answer is that our structures commit us to maintenance and to manage decline. There was a time when the community was stable - nothing ever changed. Now the existence of clerics etc. is not certain. Mission and outreach don't stem from institutional structures but from faith. What kind of faith have we been maintaining?

When a country church closes, the congregation doesn't transfer to another, it generally stops going to church. What have we been maintaining? A shrine? Superstition? God goes when the church goes? Or nostalgia for the rural church? Often people travel large distances to worship where their ancestors worshipped. Or is it a graveyard cult? Worshippers are often attracted to a church because people they knew are buried there; this is close to paganism.

Peter said he knew of two churches which meet for 45 minutes, twice a month, under the leadership of a flying cleric. Are such congregations functioning as Church? On the other hand, renewal does sometimes knock on the door of such a church. There are people who form renewal groups. But those in the rural church are usually in the hands of the oldest members of the congregations. It is difficult for a village church to absorb a new renewal group, especially if it is Welsh-speaking.

From early times the Church's mission strategy has been based on cities. Take for example Mark 2:21ff., Jesus goes to a town and then to the synagogue. In Mark 1:38 Jesus goes rural, launching his mission from the town of Capernaum. The Church has continued to do this down the ages. An example of the founding of a church is given in Acts 2:41ff. This takes place in Jerusalem, with the Eucharist, Bible study and healing, and with sufficient people to sustain numbers. In Acts 16 Paul goes to the chief towns where the Jews are living and starts preaching. His mission started Jewish and became trans-cultural, bringing in Greeks and others. Missions are initially cosmopolitan (from all over) and become metropolitan (urban). The Toronto Blessing, Alpha and New Wine all came from cities. In rural communities it is incomers who respond best to renewal and are disappointed at the local response.

At one time Peter and his wife Anna were in a very small village in a rural part of east Wales. The Wesleyan chapel was now a private house and the Baptist church had recently been abandoned. As for the parish church - its most recent heyday, going by the graveyard, had been the nineteenth century, when there was prosperity and activity, but not much else since. The church was grouped with three others, and it had a classic, tiny, dwindling congregation. But there was a group looking for renewal who wanted to be fed, and tried to stay with the church. They met in a house monthly. The previous incumbent warily agreed with them; the new incumbent also agreed to let the group go on, and also wanted high church worship. The village school had 36 children from young families who were never seen in church. Will the newcomers form a separate fellowship and will the priest reach out to families with school-children?

All material is copyright of its creator and permission must be sought before it is reproduced. Please use the "Contact Us" page on our website www.anglicanrenewalministries-wales.org.uk in order to gain such permission.



A bigger question is: do we need to rethink structures - drop the parish system? It is a tremendous ideal but it doesn't work. You could have 72,000 people in a town parish with two clergy. Peter's parish is a market town of 1200 people. He has to work in the town to get the critical mass necessary to sustain a properly functioning fellowship at the centre before he can think about starting mission. But are we maintaining what God has long abandoned? Maybe the lamp stands have gone. In John 15 God cuts off the withered branches. Maybe we need to change how we are Church. We may also need to change our renewal strategy, there has been too much revivalism in the Welsh language. Peter has just started a Welsh language, Bible study class. Welsh people are demoralised by competition with the English - it makes them defensive, and makes Welsh chapels more interested in keeping the Welsh language.

In John 20:19-23 we have the first resurrection moment. The disciples were locked in, inward-looking and afraid. When Jesus enters they are filled with joy and he fills them with power and gives them a mission. A community is being called into being which has a mission to go out, apostolic and evangelistic. We must believe God is going to have his Church until Jesus comes again. But is it going to be our church, or will ours be cut away?

Some members of the audience then shared their experiences:

There was a strong feeling that the parish system is dead, and that we should work at the deanery level and let the people run their own parish church. To this end, the clergy should be used to equip the saints, that is the laity, to take over. Also, we must break the insistence on keeping church buildings which are unsuitable for their present-day purpose; these were seen as a burden which the Church in Wales could well do without. If the state took over the running of the buildings then the Church could fulfill its role as a servant people, and stop worrying about the quota, which was a distraction from mission.

Finally the Chairman thanked Peter for a very entertaining and thought-provoking address.

Brian Newsom



SURRENDER by Pam Worsey

Dost thou love Me more than these -
Home and kindred, worldly ease?
Longs thy heart just Me to please?
Lord, Thou knowest.

You with life so richly blessed,
Have you yielded all your best?
Can you face My fiercest test?
Lord, - Thou knowest.

Once again I do implore
Does your love for Me grow more?
Do you worship and adore?
Lord, - Thou knowest.

You know all things, Lord Divine,
Know if I am truly Thine;
How sincere this love of mine,
Lord, - Thou knowest,

Pam Worsey