

THE MESSENGER

CAN YOU BELIEVE IT?

By Sandy Christie



DHARA'S DOUBTS

Dhara Gupta lived all her life in a village near Jaisalmer in the desert of Rajasthan. One day in 1822, as she was cooking dinner, she became aware of a commotion. She looked up to discover her cousin, Mahavir, had returned from a trip he had begun two years before. He looked in good health, and over dinner he told them of his adventures.

He talked of robbers, wild animals, great mountains and other incredible sights. But what really stunned Dhara was his claim to have seen something called "ice." 'I went to regions where it was so cold the water stopped flowing, and formed a solid, translucent block' said Mahavir. 'What is more amazing is that there is no state in between where the liquid thickens. The water that flows freely is only slightly warmer than that which has solidified.'

Dhara did not want to challenge her cousin in public, but she did not believe him. What he said contradicted all her experience. She did not believe it when travellers told her of fire-breathing dragons. Nor would she believe this nonsense about ice. She rightly thought she was too intelligent for that.

IT COULDN'T HAPPEN?

I sympathise with people who feel that the resurrection just couldn't happen. But it was just the same for the first Christians. They found it inconceivable. 'Unless I put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it.' said Thomas.

The only way anyone came to believe it was by letting the evidence challenge and then change their worldview. In the end, despite their doubts and incredulity, the evidence was overwhelming.

To everyone who is sceptical about faith claims (and there are a lot to be sceptical about) I would say even if you can't believe in the resurrection, you should want it to be true. If the world was caused by accident, and

everything will eventually simply burn up in the death of the sun, then why should we make sacrifices for others? In the end nothing will make any difference.

If you care about justice for the poor, reducing hunger and disease, and caring for the environment, then you need a worldview that motivates people to do something about them.

THIS WORLD MATTERS

The message of the resurrection is that this world matters. In a world where injustice, violence and degradation are deeply entrenched, Easter means that God will not let them have the last word. Healing, justice and love will win in the end, and so we work with all the energy God gives us to implement the victory of Jesus and restore the world to the way it should be. A Christian called George McDonald was once challenged by someone who found the resurrection unbelievable. 'It's just too good to be true' he said. 'No,' replied McDonald 'it's so good, it must be true.'

Sandy Christie is the vicar at St Michael's Church

Story of Dhara from 'The pig that wants to be eaten' by Julian Baggini.

An Easter Hymn

*Thine be the glory,
risen, conquering Son,
endless is the victory
Thou o'er death hast won.*

Lo! Jesus meets us,
risen from the tomb;
lovingly He greets us,
scatters fear and gloom;
let the Church with gladness
hymns of triumph sing,
for her Lord now liveth;
death hath lost thy sting.

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ON THE GRAPEVINE



Here are two familiar SE3 faces in not such familiar surroundings. None other than Adam & Oona Scott in the grounds of Buckingham Palace!

Congratulations to Adam, a holding Trustee for the Charity 'The House of St Barnabas', who has been appointed an Officer in the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for public and voluntary service. He told me:

"I am happy to receive the honour and to acknowledge all those who have encouraged and enabled my contribution with their own contributions. I am grateful to those who have worked with me over the past forty years - I do believe that this honour recognises the value of work that we have done together."

BOOK REVIEW



How to be a Better Parent
by Cassandra Jardine

ISBN 009188972-3

Reviewed by Jonathan Croucher

No admirer of 'self help' books, my eyes were drawn to one that appealed to an immediate need - 'How to be a Better Parent'. Why choose this one? Certainly not for the dreadful cover - but perhaps because the author has five young children herself and must have shared something of the pressures we feel with four.

Its the sort of book you can dip into. Its usefulness comes from being a "conversation" between three people - the author and two specialists in the area of child behaviour - so there is no A,B,C to stopping this or that miscreant behaviour or "golden rules" for happy, polite, well balanced children. Instead the author provides insights into situations her own family experienced and reflects on the views expressed by the experts.

The book covers a range of different issues which affect children (or their parents) at different life stages - from daily routines through sibling squabbles to school and homework. There's plenty of practical advice, and lots of shared experiences which encourage other exasperated would-be "better parents" that they are not alone. The book is not about trying to be the perfect parent - rather looking at different ways of doing things that might just make a positive difference.

St Michael & ALL ANGELS

CHRISTIAN AID WEEK

House to House collection
in Blackheath Park: 10-16 May



This year's Christian Aid Week focuses on the Democratic Republic of Congo. Nadia Kabula's story is one of many such stories from this region. Her mother, struggling to bring up her family alone after the death of her husband, tells us: 'It's really hard to bring up six children on my wages. You can't buy them half a sack of rice with that money. It's nowhere near enough.' Through Christian Aid partners, 18-year-old Nadia has been taught tailoring skills, giving her the chance to continue to earn a living in the future.

St Michael's collected £3328 from the parish for Christian Aid last year and will be raising money again this May, particularly through House to House envelopes. The generosity of local residents is much appreciated and this year will be no exception. Please do look out for the envelope and when making a donation, tick the Gift Aid box as that adds an extra 28p to every £1 donated.

The essential purpose of Christian Aid is to expose the scandal of poverty, to help in practical ways to root it out from the world, and to challenge and change the systems which favour the rich and powerful over the poor and marginalised. We contribute our passion and experience to the broad movement of people who use their faith, talents and energies to fight for a better life for all.

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CROSSING CULTURES

By Stephen Hingston

Pim was a dancer in Bangkok. By dancing and sleeping with customers she made enough money to support her mother who lived in a village outside the city. Inevitably Pim contracted HIV. When she became ill she went to the Aids temple for treatment, but there was little that could be done. When her mother realised there was no hope left, she took Pim back home.

In Pim's hometown, a group of Christians had begun a weekly meeting. Pim and her mother watched and listened to the Christians, but for several years remained unresponsive. Then one day they finally opened their hearts to receive God's love. Pim had rarely spoken in all the years she had been coming to the group, but as she took off the superstitious amulet from around her neck, she repeated slowly, "my mother and I are children of God, Jesus is our protector now."

Nothing much has changed for Pim physically. She is still gaunt, blind and frail. But every time the Christians visit she eagerly greets them and joins the cell group for fellowship. Since neither Pim nor her mother can read, they listen to the Bible on CD together every day, praying together every evening. Both are confident of God's love for them in Jesus Christ and are reaching out with other local Christians to share the gospel with those around them.

OMF (Oversees Missionary Fellowship) works with the church in Thailand and St Michael's supports this work.

www.omf.org.uk

WORKING CAPITAL

By David Lane

I thought I'd do a little Googling, to find out what the big wide web has to say about Easter. Google Images turned up the usual suspects. Bunnies, eggs, chicks, daffodils and ducklings. And in the spirit of this Working Capital column, the search 'Easter work' produced endless references to Network Rail's nationwide engineering works, which will surely delay your journeys over the big weekend.

But then a very pleasant surprise. The BBC's website has a page dedicated to Easter. The narrative reads as follows: "Easter commemorates the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is the most important Christian festival, and the one celebrated with the greatest joy."

What really struck me was the final clause: "...and the one celebrated with the greatest joy." Isn't that wonderful? Christ's triumph over death is good news indeed. We should be especially overjoyed at Easter, as we celebrate the gift of eternal life. But in reality is Easter the Christian festival we greet most joyfully here in the UK? It is hard to escape the fact that Christmas is number 1 in most people's calendar of celebration. It has become a barnstorming festival of gift-giving and general indulgence. It seems to serve multiple purposes, not the least of which is an end-of-year national party.

Easter has an importance which needs no hype. It is simply the most important Christian festival. We would do well to remember that, to observe it and celebrate it with the greatest joy.

St Michael & ALL ANGELS

FROM THE REGISTERS

FUNERALS

March:

Thomas Potter
Rodney Cullum
Frances Taylor

WEDDINGS

May:

Victoria Walker & Craig Griffiths

June:

Suzy Brice & Phil Layfield
Joanne Rushford & Kevin Richardson

THANKSGIVINGS

March:

Thomas Rustom Kingham
Juliet Smye-Rumsby

May:

Layla Gabay

OTHER EVENTS

Sunday 26th April 11.15am
Annual Church Meeting

Wednesday 22nd April
Marriage preparation sessions begin this week

Wednesday 6th May
11 O'Clock Club - A talk by Mary Corr on "Dickens in Greenwich"

8th - 10th May
Church weekend away in Ashburnham. Call the Church Office for details on how to book your day place.

Thursday 14th May 7.30pm
"Hope for Home" in the Church Hall. Launch of this new charity, formed in response to a perceived lack of support for families and friends who are looking after their loved ones with dementia and /or Parkinson's Disease in their own home. To find out more, please call 020 8463 0128

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SERVICES IN APRIL

Sunday 5th Palm Sunday
10.30am The King comes!
6.30pm (HC) Exit the glory

Friday 10th Good Friday
10.30am Churches Together in
Blackheath service at Whitfield's
Mount
2-3pm Hour of reflection in St
Michael's Church

Saturday 11th Easter Eve
8pm Candlelit Communion service
celebrating the resurrection, starting
with a bonfire in the church garden
and followed by refreshments

Sunday 12th Easter Day
10.30am (HC) The underworld
and the world to come

Sunday 19th
10.30am New friendships
5.00pm Raise the Praise
6.30pm (HC) Then they will
know

Sunday 26th
9.00am (BCP)
10.30am (HC) New confidence
6.30pm The Apostle of the
Worldwide Church

SERVICES IN MAY

Services will follow the usual pat-
tern although there will be no
evening service on May 10th.
Details of themes will be available
on-line nearer the time.
Visit www.se3.org.uk

HC = Holy Communion
BCP = Book of Common Prayer

PRAYER CALENDAR

Prayer is an important part of
life at St Michael's Church and
as part of our care for the com-
munity during the year, residents
in each road within the Par-
ish boundary will be prayed for.

In April we focus specifically on
the following areas:

Lee Road
Meadowcourt Road
Manor Way
Quaggy Walk
Preparations for Ashburnham and
our Annual Church Meeting on
26th April

May - the SE corner of the parish
Brooklands Park
Casterbridge Road
Guy Bennett Grove
Manorbrook
Medebourne Close
Richmount Gardens
Ashburnham weekend

Our monthly, Church prayer
meeting will be held at 8.15pm in
the Church Hall on Thursday 7th
May. Please do join us - prayer
matters and makes a difference.

If you have any specific requests
for prayer or would like someone
to listen and pray with you, please
do contact Sandy Christie, our
Vicar on 020 8852 5287. All calls
will be treated in the strictest
confidence.

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COMPETITION

Congratulations to last months'
Sudoku winner, Hester Thomas -
one of only 2 competitors.
The answers were a)5 b)5 c)5
This month is rated difficult -
more entries please!

4			3	^a		9
		4		6		
	8		5		2	
8	7	1		3	4	
	9		^b			1
6	2	5		8	9	7
^c	5		7		8	
		6		4		
7			8			1

Please email answers a, b and
c, plus your contact details, to:
editor@se3.org.uk by **19th**
of the month of publication. If you
would prefer to deliver your en-
try to the Church Office marked
for the Editor's attention, a sealed
envelope will be fine.

Please be assured that your
contact details will only be used
in connection with awarding you
your £5 prize money.

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St Michael's: making time for the things that matter

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