

Report of the Chairman of the Parish Pastoral Council for 2002 – 2003

It seems incredible that a year has passed since the last AGM when this poor parishioner found himself catapulted onto the top table. The fact that time goes so quickly might indicate that this is not our real home and a more lasting destiny awaits us. And that is where the Parish comes in because it is the means by which that destiny can be secured. The Council is a Pastoral one and although we have to see that as many of the material needs that help us are in place (here we need to mention all the wonderful work done unobtrusively by so many, they are not enumerated here but listed among the reports that follow) the most important aspects of Parish life are spiritual. It is the spiritual dimension that should occupy us. It would be good to see more attending things like, Penitential Services, Adoration in front of the Blessed Sacrament, Lenten Lectures, Prayer Groups, Scripture Groups, Café, RCIA, Days of Reflection for Eucharistic Ministers - held at the Franciscan International Study Centre up on the hill overlooking Canterbury where a Day of Recollection for 'Life in the Spirit' are also held. The riches are there, we merely have to come in order to drink. All these things help us to enter fully into the real life of the Church, for as St Cyprian said, 'He/she cannot have God as Father who has not the Church as Mother'.

It was marvellous to go to Westminster Cathedral on March 15th, for a Mass celebrated by Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor. We clapped as he entered at the back and continued until he reached the sanctuary. We did the same after the Celebration and the feeling of the Mystical Body among the packed Cathedral was palpable. Those of our Parish were thought of at that time and all the many intentions of us all prayed for. For God in His Church was in that place. And it was so good to give the Cardinal our enthusiastic support especially after all the recent pressure he has been under.

We must give serious thought to item 7 on the agenda. It is about the setting up of a branch of S.P.U.C. (Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child) in Canterbury and more will be said about it at the Meeting. But one chilling statistic will suffice. 6 million perished in the Holocaust of the 1939-45 War and 6 million babies have perished in this country since the abortion laws came into effect 35 years ago.

It was good to see that as soon as Hugh Sullivan had stepped down as leader of the PPC the '100 Club' climbed back to full

strength and so could contribute once again fully to the fund raising activities of the Parish.

All the various programmes and activities within the Parish are taking place as usual and as we journey together they will do so again over the coming year. This report contains details from nearly all of these as well as minutes of last year's AGM so ably taken by Joan Crosland as well as the Agenda for this year's Meeting and a Financial Statement. The contents of this report so well compiled by Brenda are commended to you all.

Chris Bull – Chairman PPC

PARISH PRIEST'S REPORT

As always, this has been a very busy year. The main problem is to untangle the things that have happened so as to be able to pick out the highlights. I shall do my best.

Starting on the material level – although, like most material things, the material level has a spiritual dimension – I need to mention an Access Audit that took place in March. What is an Access Audit, you may well ask! Under the terms of the *Disabilities Act*, which comes into force next year, every church building must provide reasonable access and reasonable availability to worshippers. The implications of this Act are far-reaching. For us at St Thomas' it means looking at all those parts of the church building that prevent *everyone* from participating in the life and worship of our faith community. In our case, with a building over 125 years old, it isn't going to be easy – or cheap. An Access Audit Report has been produced – copies are now available – in which several areas need urgent attention. Access from the Canterbury Lane entrance needs to be improved, as does access to the Hall Foyer from the church's side door. This means ramps and the sacrifice of several benches in the Canterbury Chapel. Also, under the provisions of the *Nolan Report*, the Reconciliation Room needs urgent attention. Plans are already afoot for alterations to the interior. All this is going to cost money – when doesn't it? Although detailed estimates have not yet been received, a broad estimate is that the work is going to cost somewhere in the region of £10,000. I said earlier that the material has spiritual reverberations. It most certainly does with regard to the *Disabilities Act*. Everyone, able-bodied or not, must feel that they are *included* and not *excluded* from the life and worship of St Thomas'. Fortunately, thanks to the generosity of so many people, our upstairs Hall is now readily accessible on account of the lift, and our refurbished toilet facilities, including one for

the disabled, satisfy the requirements of the Act. Very obviously, on account of the scaffolding currently shrouding the Presbytery, essential work is being done on its exterior. Repairs are being made to the roof, guttering is being attended to and window frames, which have been crying out for a lick of paint these last twenty years or so, are being given what they need. Again, this is costing a great deal of money, Please be generous in your giving to the Church.

During Lent we had a series of four Lenten Lectures. Those who were there benefited enormously from what the excellent lecturers had to say. I have to admit to being a little disappointed that so few Canterbury parishioners were present. The lectures centred on Life issues; those present came away outraged at what was being done in our society. The very fabric of that society is being eaten away from the inside. No wonder there are so many other problems confronting us – anti-social behaviour, drug-abuse, crime, contempt for others' rights, and so on. I am very keen, as a top priority, to establish a pro-life group here in Canterbury. Faversham parish, which is far smaller than ours, established one earlier this year, and by all accounts it is flourishing.

I am very encouraged by the way that CaFE has been received. It was good to see the Hall crowded, and with people who are uninvolved in other areas of parish life. Keep up the effort! By the time this Report is produced, Series II will have started. All I can say is that the video evenings are a great help in building up faith and commitment, and I would urge everyone who hasn't yet tasted to taste.

There are many other areas of parish life I could mention, but these are covered in this year's Report. Please read the Reports carefully, and be encouraged by all the good things that are going on. The table is heaving with goodies. Don't let them rot, please. Taste and eat!

*Canon Michael Bunce
Parish Priest*

CANTERBURY PRISON

There have been many changes in the Prison, some very drastic. The most important one has been that the prison is no longer a remand establishment. Until recently, approximately 75% to 80% of the inmates were on remand awaiting trial. This meant that, for many of them, they were having their first 'taste' of prison life. Often they were depressed and vulnerable. My Assistants and myself had a very clearly

defined role – that of providing support and encouragement. Since March, however, the prison has ceased to be a remand prison (remand prisoners are now housed in HMP Elmley on the Isle of Sheppey). Canterbury is what is called a Category C prison; *all* the inmates are reaching the end of their sentences, having served the greater part of them in other prisons. All this means that the whole thrust of the prison (and our involvement in it) is on rehabilitation. To say that this presents new and exciting challenges would, I think, be an understatement! Please watch this space in the 2004 Report for news on how my Assistants – and myself – are adapting to the new regime!

*Canon Michael Bunce
Catholic Prison Chaplain*

NOAH'S ARK TODDLERS GROUP

No Report received

FIRST COMMUNION PROGRAMME & RECONCILIATION

This year 25 children have been preparing to receive their First Holy Communion and Reconciliation. Preparation Classes take place every other Monday at St Thomas' School at 6.30pm. The children are split into three groups and are taught in the classrooms. Meanwhile, in the school hall, I have a talk with the parents, usually exploring at greater depth the topic the children are studying. This formula has been used now for a number of years and has proved very successful – why re-invent the wheel? The whole programme would, of course, fall apart were it not for the dedicated and highly committed team of catechists helping in the Programme, and I am most grateful for the care and enthusiasm they bring to their ministry.

In some ways even more important than the classes themselves are the special liturgies which take place in St Thomas' Church and St Thomas' Church Hall in Canterbury Lane – Reconciliation Services, the Children's Passover celebration in St Thomas' Church Hall, the Children's Passion liturgy and so on. These celebrations are important because the children's preparation involves not only the head but also the heart.

Much work goes into the celebrations, and, again, I am most grateful to all those who work hard to ensure their success.

*Canon Michael Bunce
Team Co-ordinator*

KENT & CANTERBURY HOSPITAL

Father Bateman, as you know, is receiving treatment for an illness and is unable to give a Report this year. However, he is anxious to express his gratitude to his team of Hospital Chaplain's Assistants whose dedication and commitment enormously enrich his ministry there. His place has recently been taken by Father Richard Whinder who will be submitting next year's Report.

*Canon Michael Bunce
Parish Priest*

ST MARTIN'S HOSPITAL

Once again we report that visiting at St Martin's Hospital by Parishioners of St Thomas' has continued much as before together with the support of our Chaplain, Fr Richard Bateman. The four wards for patients aged 60/65 are visited regularly. We are available for patients of all faiths and none, their relatives and friends and members of staff. We try to meet the spiritual and sacramental needs of any Roman Catholics we meet.

A few months ago some thought was given to holding a weekly Holy Communion service in the Hospital Chapel. (For those who don't know it the Chapel is well appointed and a pleasant place to spend a quiet time). It was thought that Ash Wednesday might be a good time to start. However... we shall be forever grateful to Fr Richard Bateman who gave so generously of his time to say Mass for the Wednesdays of Lent. This was a great privilege and joy and the first time that Holy Mass had been celebrated in the Chapel, although approval in principle was given some years ago. It was agreed that the situation would be reviewed at Easter and although Mass is not now a regular feature, the regular Communion Service is. At the time of writing (early May), we are due to change the time of the Service from am to pm, so do not know if this will be satisfactory. By the time you read this we will have some idea of how this re-arrangement is working and will be pleased to tell you all about it.

Attendance is not enormous but seems regular. Some patients may only leave their ward with a nurse – companion and a nurse is not always available, although it is noted that when a nurse is available the ward managers try to send a Catholic nurse. The co-operation of the ward staff is much appreciated.

Of late we seem to have been experiencing a touch of the 'Ten Little Injuns' again. Due to family crises, illnesses, pre-arranged holidays and such things we have had

times when we've been a bit thin on the ground. In no way is this a criticism of our team members – these things are beyond our control. But it is mentioned in case there is anyone out there who would like to explore the possibility that God is inviting them to come visiting.

N.B. If you don't try you'll never know! Interested enquirers please contact Fr Richard Whinder, Judith Roser, Sister Frances Slater or Jean Johnson.

We have been very sorry that Fr Richard Bateman has had to withdraw from St Martin's Chaplaincy and offer him our thanks for all his help and our prayers for his welfare and for Ann.

We are very pleased to welcome Fr Richard Whinder as Chaplain and look forward to us all continuing the Lord's ministry together.

Please, fellow Parishioners, keep praying for this ministry – in thanks to God and that all will be done as He wishes. Thank you.

Judith Roser, Sr Frances Slater, Jean Johnson

PRAYER GROUP

The prayer group meets for one hour every Wednesday in the Upper Room at 2.15pm. Each meeting consists of spontaneous praise and thanksgiving, reflection on a passage of Scripture, a time of silent prayer, a decade of the Rosary and general intercessions. Individual prayer for healing is also available.

The group is part of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement. Its aim is to help members become fully open to the working of the Holy Spirit in their lives, and to enter into a deeper relationship with Jesus as Lord.

Each summer, the prayer group runs a seven week course entitled 'Life in the Spirit', with guest speakers. They also assist in organising an annual Day of Renewal at the Franciscan International Study Centre. The theme of the Day held in February was 'The Mysteries of Light', the five 'new' mysteries of the Rosary, promulgated by Pope John Paul II.

The prayer group is open to anyone who wishes to come along to any of its meetings.

Deacon David Avery

SPECIAL MINISTERS OF THE EUCHARIST

There are at present 64 Special Ministers serving in the parish. They assist

with Communion at all Sunday and weekday Masses.

An important part of their Ministry is taking Communion to those who are sick at home or in hospital. In this way, parishioners who are unable to get to Mass are reminded that they are still valued members of our community.

Last November, a number of our Special Ministers attended a Day of Recollection at the Franciscan International Study Centre, led by Fr Philippe Yates OFM. A similar day is planned for November of this year.

Deacon David Avery

UNION OF CATHOLIC MOTHERS (UCM)

This year has been much as usual for the UCM; that is busy with our own activities and involved in many areas of Parish Life, while at the same time supporting each other in fun and friendship in spiritual and practical ways.

We are privileged that once a month on the second Monday of the month at 2.30pm our Chaplain Canon Bunce, or often Father Richard Bateman and occasionally Father Richard Whinder, celebrates Mass for us. We thank them for their support and interest.

We also meet on the fourth Monday of the month at 2.30pm. At these meetings we have enjoyed hearing speakers on a wide range of topics including 'Jane Austen's books', 'antique silver' 'royal Canterbury', 'language teaching to facilitate immigrants', 'job opportunities', and 'representing the Council of Christians and Jews at the Queens Reception at Kensington Palace'. Often our speakers come from the parish community or friends. If you have a subject dear to you we would be very happy to hear about it.

We have also enjoyed parties, garden parties, with thanks to Marjorie Price and Mary Reynolds, outings – particularly the trips to Dover for shopping at De Bradley Wharf and a boat ride, with a commentary about the history, around Dover Bay – and the 'New Year Cheer' luncheon at the Canterbury Golf Club.

In May we hosted an Ecumenical Service, led by Canon Bunce. The speaker was Laurie Delaney from the De Paul Trust, which is the UCM National Charity this year. A generous collection was taken to support the work helping marginalized and homeless young people countrywide. Afterwards about seventy people enjoyed afternoon tea in the hall.

Also in May, at the Diocesan Pilgrimage to Aylesford, we were privileged to help carry the statue round the Rosary Way, in procession.

In October we hosted the Kent Area Mass and Meeting. Father Nolan, the UCM Diocesan Chaplain, had recently celebrated the fortieth anniversary of his ordination and members were generous in donations to the spiritual banquet he was given.

On the first Sunday in Lent we had the Stations of the Cross, again using the beautiful and moving 'Mary's Way of the Cross'.

We have been saddened by the recent deaths of Margaret Lamb and Joyce Howe. They are very much missed.

At our meetings we have had an average attendance of about twenty members and would welcome more ladies of the parish to come along and experience the pleasures and benefits of UCM membership.

Marjery Craig – President

CHILDREN'S LITURGY

The children of our parish are excellent young people! They bring a great deal of wisdom and love to our celebrations of the Word in the Upper Room, as well as to our Children's Masses, every third Sunday at 9.30am. It is a privilege to share the Good News with them. So often one will bring an insight to her own to make the leader think again about what the Lord is telling us.

It can be gratifying for the leader too, to be told, "Glen came home from school as 'Star of the Week' for trying to be helpful after what he heard last Sunday!" It is good, too, to hear that the third Sunday Masses are appreciated. We try to present the Good News through things and images at hand – as the Lord himself did in his lifetime. The Gospel is Good News for us, today!

You may have seen some of the excellent new resources we are using from Redemptorist Publications, including the Take Home sheets. It was one of these that helped God to be helpful, as he had to colour in a picture each day to remind himself how he had helped someone. So, if your child comes down with a Take Home sheet, help him to use it!

There will be some Training Evenings in June, to be held at our Church Hall on Mondays 9th, 17th and 23rd. Please feel welcome to join us – as an established or potential leader (more are always welcome), or as an interested parent or helper. These evenings will be led by Anne Dixon, the diocesan catechist for Kent.

Finally, having begun by praising the children, may I finish by praising the leaders, young and not-so-young. You know who you are: Thank you for all your hard work, for the love and devotion you bring to your ministry. Thank you for sharing the Good News!

Maurice Billingsley – Team Leader

THE PARISH SCHOOLS

Mrs Annie Keane's departure has meant that Miss Clare Wainwright has now taken on the special responsibility of co-ordinating the Chaplains' work at St Thomas' Primary School. Fr Richard Whinder continues to visit regularly, at least once a week if possible. There are many aspects to the Chaplain's work. During the last year, for instance, there have been Masses in school, special services at Easter and Christmas, and a prayer service for peace. Fr Richard has also offered the Sacrament of Reconciliation to some of the older pupils, spoken about some of the sacraments (especially Baptism and the Eucharist) and blessed the newly improved reception classroom. Other links between school and parish include the termly Sunday Mass, the school leads at our church, and St Thomas' School's support of Fr Sylvester's School in Nigeria. Now well into its 101st year of faithful service, our 'Mission School' continues its excellent work for our parish community.

St Thomas' parish has also continued in its close links with St Anselm's, our Deanery Secondary School. Mass is offered every Friday morning, and on Holydays of Obligation, by one of the Deanery Priests. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is available to pupils at Christmas and Easter. On Education Sunday, students from St Anselm's took part in our parish Mass alongside other pupils from St Thomas'. Finally, in March 2003, the long awaited sports hall was blessed and opened by Bishop John Hine. Canon Bunce, other Deanery clergy and many supportive parishioners were there in attendance, and all were very impressed by the new facilities, and the dedication shown in getting this project off the ground.

Father Richard Whinder

CATHOLIC FAITH EXPLORATION (CaFE)

Along with hundreds of other parishes around the country, St Thomas' has begun running this new programme, produced by Catholic Evangelisation Services. Preparations took several months, but we finally launched the first 'module', called 'Knowing God Better' on 28th January, 2003.

Meetings took place on Tuesday evenings, from approximately 7.30pm – 9.15pm. Numbers ranged from 50 – 80, a very good response. Those who attended were very impressed by the video presentations (by David Payne), and by the welcoming and friendly atmosphere our meetings took place in. For this, we must especially thank our dedicated 'core team' of lay helpers, who have met regularly for months in order to prepare for CaFE, and have given up a lot of time on Tuesday evenings in order to prepare and to make our parish hall as welcoming an environment as possible. Many commented that the table clothes, candles and coloured lights helped to create a really 'café – like' atmosphere! This core-team deserves a huge vote of thanks for all that it has done.

The next 'module', '*Exploring the Catholic Church*' starts on 29th April, 2003. All those involved in organising CaFE really hope to see lots of old friends and new faces! CaFE has proved popular in parishes all over the country, and we hope it will bear fruit here as well, in providing a friendly environment for people to explore their faith, deepen their personal relationship with God, and help to build up our parish community.

Father Richard Whinder

ST THOMAS' LIBRARY

There have been some changes recently and the library is now installed in the Quiet Room at the back of the church. Instead of being open only monthly, the library is now open every weekend before and after all Sunday Masses (including Saturday 6.00pm). We have introduced a new method for people to sign books in and out for themselves so that a librarian does not always have to be present. The posters and curtains have been removed from the windows of the Quiet Room and the lighting improved in the hope that the clear view of the library will encourage more people to read some of the interesting books available.

The stock has been checked and we have asked parishioners to return any overdue books and posted a list of loaned and missing books in the porch. Inevitably quite a few books have gone missing over the six years since the library opened and we shall take stock again in the summer to see if books are disappearing faster under the new system and make changes if necessary.

The library is self-financing and we rely on donations to purchase new books. We suggest a contribution of 50p per month for each book borrowed to be placed in the new collection box fixed to the wall in the Quiet Room. We thank all those who have donated

books over the past year and welcome further contributions of suitable Catholic books.

Francis Gerth

MARRIAGE PREPARATION 2002/2003

Looking at our marriage registers over the past two or three years for marriages celebrated in St Thomas' is quite surprising. 2001 was a bumper year, 2002 slightly less so, and 2003 even less so. That doesn't mean to say that there have been fewer couples to prepare for marriage, only that more couples are getting married in other parts of the country or abroad. Because one or both of these couples have a residence in St Thomas' parish, it falls to us to arrange for all the paperwork and the preparation.

Since my report last year, Mr & Mrs Howell, the Marriage and Family Life co-ordinators for Kent, have retired from their ministry. The Archbishop has appointed Deacon Raymond Partridge and his wife Elizabeth from Hythe parish as their successors. They are both full of enthusiasm and zeal, and already have arranged several Marriage Preparation Days in East Kent. They are also very keen to go into Catholic Secondary Schools to talk to the students about their work.

I would ask everyone, please to keep in their prayers those couples whose names are published regularly in the weekly *Newsletter*. In our secular society those preparing for the Sacrament need all the support and help they can get.

Canon Michael Bunce
Parish Priest

SCRIPTURE GROUPS

Scripture Group meetings are held weekly in various areas of the parish so that parishioners can meet in small local groups to share reflections on the coming Sunday's Old and New Testament Readings.

Each meeting lasts about an hour and a half; each Group has a leader, and notes are provided at each meeting for those attending. The notes which are prepared in advance by the Scripture Group Co-ordinators, suggest a Focus for the meeting, and give some background on each of the three Readings.

Thus the meetings lead to a new understanding of the Scriptures with new insights into the link between Old and New Testaments, and the shared reflections help in responding to the challenges encountered in today's world. Those attending a Group have found it an enriching and supporting experience.

The Groups are always pleased to welcome new members. Times and places of meetings are in each week's Newsletter, or a Co-ordinator may be contacted, *Jean Pegg 01227-453856 or Fran Connellan 01227-760994.*

CHURCH CARERS

I write here for all our church carers – only 6 of us at the moment. These dedicated six are Joan Crosland, Jean Pegg, Jean Baillie, Marjery Craig, myself and Katherine Mezzacappa, a recent recruit to the team. I have not included Mary Sutton and Tina Hamilton as I feel that sacristy work is in a class of its own and is worthy of a separate report. I have therefore deliberately divorced church caring from the duties of Sacristan, which is a very important ministry in its own right.

As I have never given a report to the AGM before, I thought I would cheat a little and take a peek at what has been mentioned in past reports on this ministry. In the past there was a veritable army of Church carers; now we are down to a mere handful. As we all grow older and are forced to retire from the scene, new blood is not forthcoming to replace us, with the result that we are now a team of six as against the twenty-seven workers we had about twelve years ago. We are all very much aware that what we do for the church keeps the wheels oiled and running. As our numbers are so pathetically low we cannot possibly tackle all that needs to be done and so some areas of the church remain dirty and are never cleaned. Speaking for myself, I have had to give up scrubbing down the stairs because of a painful back. I feel sad about this as I know that the stairs will now degenerate back to their original state before I took them over. And there is nothing I can do about it. I have also noticed that 90% of the work consists of cleaning the brass candle sticks so that there is little attention given to general cleaning in the church. This is unavoidable because of the increase in the days we have Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.

At the beginning of this report I referred to church caring as a ministry. I did this deliberately as in my opinion this is exactly what it is. If nobody cleaned the church, laundered the linen and did odd repair jobs, the whole system would collapse. The meaning of our work was dramatically brought home to me recently when I undertook to clean the statues. When I came to the Pieta, it needed several washes with soapy water and then a few treatments with oil. Our Lord's crown of thorns was broken and in pieces,

much of it completely missing. I took the crown home to repair it. It has taken me many weeks but the restored crown is now back in its place. I might mention here that working on this crown was the best meditation I had experienced for years.

Other items worth mentioning are the new carpet in Our Lady's chapel and several more new items of church linen which include two altar cloths and a special amice for Fr Richard Bateman with extra-long strings!

As in any report, there are the pluses and the minuses. I think I have well-presented the minuses and some of the pluses but the biggest plus of all must be the loyal workers themselves who give so generously of their time and talents, not to mention their love and good humour. Being a church carer is a happy job and I only wish I had more people of the same calibre.

Barbara Markham

THE ECUMENICAL SOCIETY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Members and friends of the ESBVM continue to meet for prayer as usual. We welcome new members who want to promote devotion to Our Lady the Mother of Jesus. The following include some of our activities for 2002. Saturday, 8th June, 2.30pm – Pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady in Broadstairs, where we recited the Office of Our Lady and the Rev Mark Hayton gave a homily on devotion to Our Lady of Bradstowe, in the Middle Ages. Monday, 30th September, 7.30pm – in the Upper Room, the Rev Keans Meier told the ESBVM how the Bruderhof community developed; where its members work and the importance of prayer in their life. Monday, 7th October, 7.30pm, in the Upper Room, Mrs Caroline Clappenton gave an interesting talk on St Francis of Assisi. Monday, 2nd December, 7.30pm, in the Upper Room, Mrs Joanne Waller spoke about 'The Motherhood of Mary the Mother of Jesus. 2003. Saturday, 22nd March, 11.45am – 1.00pm, in Our Lady Undercroft of the Cathedral, members met to celebrate the feast of the Annunciation. A talented group of Mrs Dean's pupils, from St Thomas' School, acted the story of the Annunciation and provided the choir. The Rev Canon Norman Woods gave the homily. Monday, 2nd June at 7.30pm, in the Upper Room, Father Richard Whinder will talk about Mary the Mother of Jesus from selected works of artists. Saturday, 7th June, at 2.30pm, in the Church of St Lawrence, Ramsgate. An ecumenical service will include the recitation of the Office of Mary,

the Mother of Jesus and a homily from Father Abbot OSB from Ramsgate.

Sister Margaret Mary O'Grady, L.S.U.

KENT COUNCIL OF CHRISTIANS & JEWS

We welcome members and friends who are interested in our Society. So if you have not yet tasted any of our talks, do think about coming along to one of our events.

2002-2003 – Thursday, 10th October, 7.30pm, in Longport Hall, talk: Reflections on the Quest for the Historical Jesus relevant to the Jewish – Christian dialogue. Speaker, Rev Joseph O'Hanlon. Saturday, 16th November, a visit to the Holocaust Exhibition in the Imperial War Museum London, by Coach. Thursday, 9th December, 7.30pm, in the Old Synagogue: A musical evening conducted by the Rev Rabbi Mark Solomon. Thursday, 13th March, 7.30pm in Longport Hall. Christians and Jews, in a panel, explained their faith, practice and daily living, in a question and answer session. Wednesday, 25th June, 7.30pm. Venue to be arranged. The Rev Michael Walling and Mr Arthur Weinberg will speak about interfaith and diversity of religions.

Sister Margaret Mary O'Grady, L.S.U.

TRAIDCRAFT

This year the Traidcraft Organisation has gone from strength to strength, and we are pleased to say that St Thomas' Traidcraft stall has kept pace. Excellent reminders issued by the priests during Mass have undoubtedly helped, as has recent media interest in Fair Trade. Our little group of loyal regular customers has increased, more people just 'pop in' for a look and there has been greater interest in the Traidcraft organisation and its work. Nevertheless, the majority of parishioners still pass us by – perhaps they buy their fairly traded goods at the supermarket.

We are planning a modest expansion! The parishioners who serve tea and coffee after the 9.30am Masses have offered to sell a small selection of goods each week. We are very grateful, and hope it will be a successful venture. We are also helping the nearby St Paul's Church to set up a Traidcraft stall. On a less cheerful note, we have to report that another of our helpers recently left the parish and we are in urgent need of a replacement (or two).

Our final profits, including some donations, amount to £700, (up from £450 last year). The money will be sent as usual to CAFOD so everyone associated with Traidcraft – everyone at the presbytery, the

caretaker, St Thomas' shop staff, our regular helpers and, of course our customers, should feel very pleased. But we would welcome more customers in the coming year.

Gay and Tony O'Sullivan

16th CANTERBURY (ST THOMAS') SCOUT GROUP

This last year has seen us retain and slightly increase the numbers of young people involved with the Group. The Scouting Association has undergone a period of change with the age ranges in the Sections being altered slightly and the uniform updated. Whilst we are now mostly clad in a slightly different uniform, the other changes are still being introduced but the net effect on the Group has been primarily a different emphasis on the programme. The Venture Unit ceases this year and is replaced by the Explorer Scouts to take the young people through to 18 at which point they can become involved in a District group or are encouraged to stay and help with our own members. A few of the older children are following this second route and should help us to rejuvenate our band of dedicated Leaders. We still suffer from having only just enough uniformed Leaders to be able to function properly and are currently very dependent on the help offered by our older Scouts and Explorers. If you have fond memories of Scouting and would like to get involved, why not come along and see how it all works?

With last year being the 'Golden Jubilee' year, we were all set tasks to achieve. The Beavers managed a 50 minute silence (with a loud roar permitted every 10 minutes!) and planted 50 bedding plants in troughs outside the presbytery back door. The Cubs were set a target to achieve 50 badges (helped by a District 'Athletes' badge day!) and everyone was encouraged to collect postcards, old specs for recycling, stamps, partake in games, etc. The list seemed endless but it all worked out well. Even the Dads and Mums were involved as they had to find 50 different beer mats and bottle tops!

In the Spring and early Summer, the Group had a cycle ride along with sea wall from Reculver to Minnis Bay, the Beavers went to Gilwell for an excellent 'fun day' and the Scouts enjoyed themselves at Chessington.

Mixed in with these activities, a number of short camps took place with the older Cubs attending the sixers and seconders camp in June and the Scouts having a PL and APL camp in April followed by the traditional Whitsun camp in early June. Camps are often considered the highlight of the year and do

give our young children the opportunity to develop useful skills and become better independent individuals.

Mid summer saw the Group camping at the Woodchurch with the Cubs coming first, a day's break for the Leaders to recover, then the Scouts arriving for their week under canvas. The Cub summer camp was themed on Royalty culminating with a visit to Windsor and an excellent trip on the Thames river launch. The Scouts undertook a large range of activities finishing with a traditional day at Dover to go sailing out in Dover harbour. The site at Woodchurch is a very large set of fields but we seem to occupy quite a big area and the set-up looks most impressive. Investment in good camping gear over the last few years means that we are able to set up a very large mess tent area with the capability of having all the children under cover if the weather is wet and have traditional 'patrol camping' when the Scouts are on site. Each Patrol has a conventional patrol tent, a large dining shelter, table and benches, together with a cooking area, wet pit and wood store. What more could anyone ask for!

In the Autumn, the Group took part in the BMX competition and the Fun Swimming Gala. We were successful at both events winning the Scouts section at the BMX and achieving first and second place at the Gala. It obviously helps that we are a large Group, but this shows good support from all our members and encouragement from the parents to participate. Half term saw us up at Ross Wood for an evening based on the 'Harry Potter' theme and then Christmas approached. This last month of the year was very hectic with a host of activities. It started with the Explorer Scouts entertaining us with an unusual Christmas pantomime. I'm sure we will always remember the 'widow twanky' and the 'three wise guys', let alone 'rover' the dog! A fantastic effort by them all and our very grateful thanks for all their hard work to make the evening so successful. The Christmas Draw produced a mass of winners. During the three weeks leading up to Christmas, the Scout Post was very active with about 5500 cards being sorted and delivered. The Scouts, and especially the parents who helped with the deliveries, make the system work but the effort by Tony and Pam in sorting, handling up blocks of post and ensuring all the odd cards in the way out areas get delivered is key to the efficient running of the whole exercise. The week before Christmas involved the Group going to the Pantomime (front five rows at the Marlowe), a Party night on the Thursday with entertainment for the Beavers and Cubs, the

Scouts' annual visit to the dry ski slope at Chartham (including a go on the 'cresta run') and finished with bag packing at Sainsburys on the Saturday. All in all, a very hectic time for the children, the parents and the Leaders.

The annual Aylesford hike took place in late February with more than 50 members of the Group walking the 34 miles from Canterbury to the Priory. Good weather made the event most enjoyable and, being a sponsored event, both the Group and a charity benefited.

At Easter, the Group went bag-packing at Asda as our main activity towards the traditional 'Job Week' (Bob-a-Job to those of us who are a little older!). St George's Day parade took place on the weekend after Easter with our Group being well presented and occupying a large section nearly at the front of the parade. We also had the honour of providing the flag bearer and escort for the Union Jack.

Our continuing success is totally dependent on the quality and dedication of our Section Leaders coupled with good parent support. Our links with both St Thomas' Church and School ensures that we provide an excellent facility for our Catholic children. The two annual Church Parades at St Thomas' are well supported and show our appreciation for the support and guidance given by the Church. Scouting exists to develop young people as good citizens for the future and we all endeavour to achieve that aim.

Alan Ross – Group Scout Leader

THE YOUTH GROUP

A parish youth group was set up shortly after Christmas 2002. It is run by Br Anthony Cho, Br Antony Jukes and Sr Claire Knowles, with Fr Richard Whinder acting as Chaplain. Several lay volunteers have also come along to help on a regular basis, and we are very grateful indeed to them for giving up their time in this way.

The youth group has of course been very careful to follow all the guidelines laid down by the church and by other authorities, in order to safeguard every aspect of the young peoples' safety. We have all come to realise that establishing, and running, a church youth group is not as easy as perhaps it was in decades past! Partly because of this, the group is still very much in its infancy, and there is much room for growth. We meet once a fortnight, usually in St Thomas' Hall on Friday evenings, and our numbers have ranged from 2 to 20! Our best attended event was a 'Chinese New Year' party, at which Br Anthony excelled himself in cooking!

We hope to establish a wider programme of events as the year progresses. We would also like to hear from any adults who would be interested in helping at our meetings. Please contact Fr Richard Whinder for details.

Father Richard Whinder

ALTAR SERVERS

We continue to have regular servers at the 9.30, 11.00 and 6.00pm vigil Masses. There are also occasional servers at the 6.00pm Sunday Mass. All provide a very good service, for which the parish clergy are very grateful. Over the last year we have lost one or two of our established servers, and gained some new faces as well. Special thanks to Tom Campion, who has 'retired' from the 9.30am Mass, after many years serving and helping the less experienced servers in their tasks. Andrew Gallagher, a student of Christ Church College, returned to London after three years of assisting as a very capable senior server and Master of Ceremonies. Another student of Christ Church, Shaun Trevithick, has now taken on the role of MC, and we are very grateful to him for his dedicated service.

New servers continue to be welcome, and we shall be recruiting again after Easter.

Father Richard Whinder

THE RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS (R.C.I.A.)

In mid October we kicked off the usual programme with a tour of the church and followed thereafter each Wednesday evening at 7.45pm with the usual scheme; The Church, Faith and Conversion, The Saints, Images of God, Jesus is Lord, The Scriptures, The Liturgical Year, Prayer, and Our Lady. This took us up to Christmas and no new Catechumen had presented themselves for this process of Catholic Initiation by then, so it was therefore decided not to continue in the New Year (2003), especially as Café was to start then anyway. Perhaps we needed more publicity at the outset. We have transferred our allegiance to CaFE in the meantime, but hope to start the RCIA programme again this autumn if we have any candidates. RCIA is very important in the scheme of things and the life of the Parish. *Alpha* has as its basic premise knowledge of Jesus Christ and this it does well, but we need to take it further and the role of the Church is crucial. Café is designed for Catholics who wish to know their faith better and perhaps even commit themselves to spreading the word to a wider world (or it must be said trying to bring back those who have taken a holiday from Church!).

Why is RCIA so important? First because it is not the perverse of the Clergy and it is important for newcomers to realise they are coming into the faith that the parish has. Second it emphasises the importance of the Church. To love Christ is to love His Church. And thirdly it is a gradual process taking months and ending with an adult commitment. We have no figures, but I have been assured that the perseverance rate of those who have gone through the process is very high. I would urge, therefore everyone (including the Clergy) who may have met someone who is interested in our Faith to put them in contact with the RCIA Catechetical Group. I pray that come October one or two come forward whom we can take through the process.

Christopher Bull – R.C.I.A. Coordinator

ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY (S.V.P.)

Remembering what's happened twelve months ago can tax an increasingly overloaded mind. Thankfully the SVP's year always has two solid landmarks, separated by roughly six months, that stand out from some of the other more muddled memories: the summer outing and the Christmas party. But this year each of these two events was extra-special. The outing had an unusually ambitious scope. We planned a shared trip to Rochester, joining forces with the conference at St Finbarr's, Aylesham. In fact, this trip was a real SVP partnership, because Our Lady of Gillingham's conference very generously provided hospitality at their parish hall, a place to break our journey to the Medway and eat our sandwich lunch. We are very grateful to them. We then had fun followed by prayer. Boarding the historic paddle steamer *Kingswear Castle* at Rochester Pier we sailed around the Port of Rochester. Then we made our way to Rochester Cathedral for Evensong. The logistics of getting the troupes from the river up the banks of the castle and into the cathedral proved horrendous and, while the Rochester virgins' perhaps feared a mass invasion of 'Roman Candles', only a few intrepid souls managed to get there. Even so, as SVP trips go, I thought this one had style, conveniently forgetting the fact that it nearly worried me to death. My brothers and sisters put their feet down afterwards: no more Rochesters for a while. It's Minister Abbey this year.

The Christmas party also stood out more than normal, as the first for many years to be held 'at home', in St Thomas' Hall. The senior common room at Christ Church University College provided a wonderful

venue, but it felt lovely to be in our own place. What potential that hall has for communal celebrations! I'm told it's the largest and tallest parish hall in Canterbury. Stumpy, the juggler we hired to entertain the children, seemed determined to discover just how tall, by sending his balls to astonishing heights. He followed his act with a workshop, inviting the kids to have a go themselves and coaching them in the juggler's art. Stumpy apart, I loved all the traditional fare: the tea, the carol singing and the raffle. And I'm sure the older guests did too. But what they seem to enjoy more than anything else is watching the kids watching the entertainer!

Readers can rest assured we've endeavoured to do what we can to help people in our usual way, offering, as appropriate, material, financial or moral support. It's part of our mission to identify need, and while this can be very difficult in an increasingly complex society, we know it simply isn't true to claim Britain knows no real poverty. Individual cases are discussed at our fortnightly meeting, when we decide what we can do and who is going to do it. The meetings are not just meetings. There is a very real element of prayer. Formal prayers at the beginning and end, and a spiritual reading just before the business starts. The reader chooses a text specially to set the tone, to inspire us with the message of the Gospel. Readings reflect the depth and varied dimensions of that message: on one occasion we might be reflecting on the contemplative way of a Thomas Merton; on another the social justice of a Michel Quoist or Louis Evely.

I'd like to thank Canon Bunce for his continued support in so many ways, and the people of the parish for their unstinting support of our monthly door collection. We are really grateful to them, as we are to Brenda and John for all the help they give us.

For all the high points, the year will be remembered above all for the sad deaths of two members of this small but tight-knit conference, Michael Russell, in November and Margaret Lamb in January. May they rest in Peace.

Mark Bateson, President

11.00am Choir
No Report received

SOCIAL COMMITTEE

Over the past year the Parish has seen a variety of social and fund-raising events. Perhaps the principal one of these was the Annual Attic Fair which took place in the Hall during November and was, as ever, reasonably

well supported. Also in the autumn we ran a highly successful Line Dance. As this proved to be popular, it will become a regular feature of our social year. Two illustrated talks – ‘Mary in Italian Art’ and ‘Eccentric Female Saints’ – proved to be attractive to a discerning audience. For the first time, a Parish Christmas Dinner was held in the Hall.

For the coming year we hope to run a more upmarket Christmas Bazaar with an Art and Crafts Section. To this end we are urgently seeking parishioners who are active or who have connections in this area. In the near future, early June, we look forward to a concert to be given, in the Church, by the King’s School, Canterbury Junior Chamber Choir. On this occasion funds raised will be donated to Father Sylvester’s School, in Nigeria and the Homeless Centre, Canterbury. The Summer Barbeque is to be restored this year. It will take place at the Dominican Priory on 19th July. In addition to the customary bouncy castle, we have also hired a ball post, so please do come along in your tens of families! On 26th September, we are proposing to hold a Ceilidh!

Finally, many thanks are extended to all those who, in the past, have helped in any way and it would be encouraging to see even more members of the Parish attending and contributing to events.

Funds, since the installation of the Lift has been accomplished, are now being raised for a P.A. System for the Hall. The Social Committee is always looking for NEW members and ideas.

Sue Purbrick, Marjery Craig, Elizabeth Murphy

MINUTES OF THE AGM HELD ON MONDAY, 20th MAY, 2002.

Mass in the Church was held at 7.00pm. This was the opening prayer of the meeting.

Present: Hugh Sullivan (Chairman), Canon Bunce (Parish Priest), Fathers George Marsden, Richard Whinder, Richard Bateman, Deacon David Avery. Members of the PPC and parishioners.

1. **Apologies for Absence** were received from: Sylvia Gee, Katy Cobbett, Greta McHugh, Mary Jones, Doreen Durnan and Bridget Avery.
2. **The Minutes of the previous AGM**, were accepted as a true report. Proposer: Ann Moynihan. Seconded: Mary Reynolds.
3. **There were no matters arising** from these Minutes.
4. **Chairman’s Report.** This appeared in the printed Annual Report, but the

Chairman highlighted various points. With the Hall Lift now completed and in use, he thanked those involved in fundraising for the project. He pointed out that the Parish Pastoral Council was under represented, not all the groups had a member there. It met only four times a year. The Chairman welcomed Fr Richard Whinder to the Parish. He spoke warmly of our recently appointed Area Bishop, Bishop John Hine, who he knew personally and whose meeting with the PPC in January had shown him as a caring and listening person. The Chairman reminded us to maintain our support for the ‘100 Club’, which brought in revenue to the Parish. Finally he reminded us that he had served as Chairman of the PPC for three years and was due to step down and make way for new vitality in the post.

Discussion followed. There was much confusion as to who was actually on the PPC and how many groups were permitted to send a member. Aldwyth Garside asked if a list of members and a list of groups could be displayed. Canon Bunce replied that one member represented a cluster of groups.

5. **The Finance Committee’s Report.**

This appeared on the two last pages of the printed Annual Report. There were no questions or points raised about this. Canon Bunce thanked the Finance Advisory Committee for all its work, expertise, advice and support. He thanked Ron Arcari especially, who had served on the committee for 20 years and was now playing a lesser role.

6. **The Parish Priest’s Report**

Canon Bunce highlighted Fr Richard Whinder’s arrival. He was now well settled in, after the previous trauma. Father Sylvester’s help and presence in the Parish is much appreciated during his summer holiday from June till October.

The Lenten Lectures were very good with excellent lectures.

A Deaf Awareness Day is being held in November, which should be very interesting and instructive.

The RCIA continued under the leadership of Chris Bull. It is not at all intimidating and will be relaunched in the autumn.

The Lift is ‘up and running’. It proved to be more expensive than anticipated, but the money will be recouped from the hall lettings at £160.00 a day, the province of John Spillet. Canon Bunce expressed his gratitude to the Finance Advisory Committee, Arthur Noronha, Tim Levey, Mike Lilford and Ron

Arcari. He also thanked his fellow priests: Fr George Marsden, who heard confessions on Wednesday mornings and said Mass on several weekdays; Fr Richard Bateman, who also celebrated Mass and was very active in the hospital ministry and young Fr Richard Whinder as Chaplain Co-ordinator at St Anselms and Chaplain to St Thomas' Primary School.

Deacon David was thanked and also the team, John Spillett, Wendy the excellent housekeeper and cook and the invaluable Brenda, always patient and cheerful.

Canon Bunce then invited questions

Ann Moynihan inquired about the Child Protection Programme. This needs to be ratified and will then be presented to the PPC. Stan Crow wondered if hymn sheets were necessary at the 6.00pm Folk Mass as well as hymn books and missals. Sometimes the hymns chosen for that Mass were not in the hymn book.

Sometimes the banners on the pillars obstructed the view of the altar. Maurice Billingsley would be asked to see to that.

Canon Bunce marvelled at the wealth of talent in the parish: singers, musicians, readers and the knowledge of many. He marvelled even more at the co-operation between the groups eg the three music groups, that there were no cliques, and at the work of the SVP.

7. **Development Projects.** The Ambo and the PA system. The design for the Ambo was elegant and simple. The new PA system will be incorporated in it. The internal microphone will pick up sound at whatever height. It will be costly, probably £7000, as the wires will have to be installed under the flooring and foundations. The present PA system is unreliable and antiquated.

Presbytery. The roof of this listed building needs to be repaired, the gutter to be cleared. The exterior of the house needs painting. Scaffolding will be needed for both these operations. An appeal to cover costs will have to be launched.

Two extra questions were raised. Mike Garside asked if the Hymn Board could indicate which Sunday of Easter eg it was, with a number. Steve Hyland wondered if First Communion could be celebrated at a separate Mass apart from the usual Sunday Masses. Canon Bunce replied that the policy to involve the parish in everything and not have 'hole in the corner' events.

8. **Any Other Business** – Katy Cobbett asked if a list of members of the PPC could be published. It was asserted that

this could be displayed in the porch with photos of the members.

A new Chairman of the Parish Pastoral Council was chosen: Chris Bull, proposed by Canon Bunce; seconded by Tony Regan and others.

9. **The 100 Club.** A cheque for £1000 was presented to Canon Bunce for the Parish. The winners won £120.00 each. The winning numbers were:

51 Mary Rees (John Spillett's cousin)

53 Mary Reynolds

56 Jean Walsh

82 Elizabeth Murphy

10. **The Closing Prayer** was led by Fr Richard Whinder.

11. **Refreshments** were served.

**Agenda for the A.G.M.
on 19th May, 2003.**

1. Opening Prayer (Mass at 7.00 p.m.)
2. Apologies for Absence
3. To Receive Any Other Business
4. Minutes of the AGM held on 20th May 2002.
5. Matters Arising (not appearing on the Agenda).
6. Chairman's Report.
7. Setting up SPUC in Canterbury.
8. Finance Committee's Report.
9. Report of the Parish Priest.
10. Library Re-Location.
11. New Ambo and P.A. System.
12. Repainting and Re-Roofing of the Presbytery.
13. Any Other Business.
14. Draw for the 100 Club.
15. Closing Prayer.
16. Refreshments.

