

# The Old Church News

O P E N T O A L L - O P E N T O G O D

## VICAR'S VOICE

In the reading group of priests and readers which I host, the book we are currently sharing is "Atheistic Delusions: The Christian Revolution and its Fashionable Enemies" by David Bentley Hart (pub by Yale University Press). It won this year's Archbishop's Literary prize and, to quote its review, "represents a blistering assault on the crass ignorance of the New Atheists when it comes to matters religious and theological." Such atheists (against belief) include Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens and Dan Brown, and Hart concentrates on mercilessly exposing their abuse of historical record. Religion, he argues, did not cause the Dark Ages, oppose the Enlightenment or actively obstruct what is so often promoted as the entirely benign and positive progress of reason and science. In reading this book we are reminded that it is not enough to debunk Dawkins, Hitchens and the like, for in the name of Religion men (and women) have (and do) killed, have been blind, have been prejudiced and created much hardship and been non-christian in the gospel terms of the God of Love. But the truths remain that a loyalty to Christ is a personal vision arising from, as Hart writes, "at a particular moment in history, something happened to Western humanity that challenged it at the deepest levels of consciousness and at the highest levels of culture."

Such a vision needs to be shared with others and we must attempt to draw others into the world that vision has. And meet and face the challenge in which new atheism might be leading our society.

## CHINA CALLING

China is large in so many ways. There is a population of 1.3 billion and rising, albeit slowly. The land mass is huge and the climate varies from the bitter winters of the north to the tropical forests of the south. Train journeys can take 36 hours and you still have not arrived. Pollution through dust from the never-ending redevelopments, from the output of the increasing numbers of power stations and from the heavy industry generally is frightening. The economic growth is beyond anything known anywhere. All that said, China. is as any country, simply those people you know and whose company you enjoy. So, it is good to return to China, year after year, ostensibly to talk to students who might wish to study in the UK but really to meet old friends and to make new ones.

## PAST MONTH'S NEWS

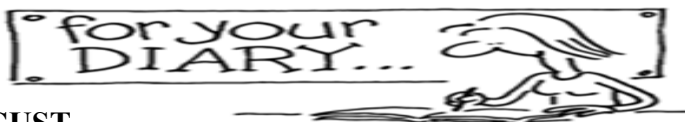
Wedding bells rang out to welcome all to witness the marriage between Rosemary Jane Eynon and Iman Azizi Gandomkari. The Old Church was packed with well-wishers who joined the happy couple afterwards in the Dorothy Parkes Centre for tea and cakes.

Later in the month The Old Church was filled to capacity as the congregation welcomed Elissa Jade Holland and Evelyn Sarah McKenzie as children of God through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism.



## Q.I.... "MARY"

- Mother of Christ.
- In the New Testament she figures prominently in the birth stories of the Gospels of Matthew (chapters 1-2) and Luke (chapters 1-2).
- Though mentioned several times during Christ's public ministry, she remains mainly in the background: she is at the foot of the Cross (John 19. 25), in the upper room she witnessed the growth of the early Church (Acts 1.14).
- Her virginity (she conceived and gave birth to Jesus without losing her virginity Matthew 1.20, Luke 1. 31 -34) was held by Athanasius (the influential Bishop of Alexandria in the third century) and was accepted by the Church from the fifth century on.
- "Theotokos" ("Mother of God") was also accepted in Christian doctrine (The Council of Ephesus in 431 for example) and Feast of her Assumption accepted from the sixth century Church.
- The Reformers, especially Martin Luther, stressed the humility of Mary but attacked her glorification, and there is strong reaction amongst some Protestants against excessive devotion to her.
- On 15th August her Assumption is a Feast Day in the Roman Catholic calendar (and in the Church of England it is declared to be a holy day - although not a public holiday as it is in the rest of Europe).
- Although with no scriptural foundation, it is important to recall Elijah and Elisha (in the Old Testament) both being taken up to heaven as a sign of special divine favour - when the Church formed its Doctrine, it may have been the attempt to bring to expression truths about the nature and destiny of the human being placed in a Christian context (into heavenly glory).
- St John's Gospel (17.22 and 24) reveals such, as Jesus spoke: "The glory which thou hast given me, I have given to them.....Father, I desire that they also, whom thou hast given to me, may be with me where I am, to behold my glory which thou hast given me in thy love for me before the foundations of the world."

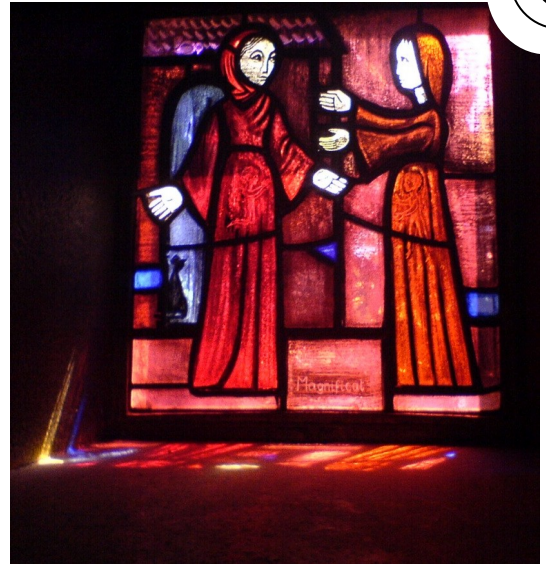


### AUGUST

6th 6.30 pm Holy Communion in the Vicarage garden (weather permitting) for the Feast of the Transfiguration, followed by barbecue.

11th Thrifties 'Caribbean Evening'

25th 2.30 pm Praying together in The Old Church - an invitation for us all. (please see Rosemary Guest for details and prayer requests)



## M A G N I F I C A T

### Sometimes

Sometimes, when the sun goes down,  
It seems it will never rise again..... but it will!

Sometimes, when you feel alone,  
It seems your heart will break in two..... but it won't.

And sometimes, it seems it's  
hardly worth carrying on...  
But it is.

For sometimes, when the sun  
goes down,  
It seems it will never rise again,  
But it does.

Frank Brown