

## Fr. Peter's September Message

### Isn't it all a Waste?

September can be a mellow month. The leaves begin to turn. The weather gets cooler. We say goodbye to hot sunny days and begin to prepare for the coming winter. For the people of the Parish of Grimethorpe with Brierley it is also a time when we must say goodbye.

For the past seven years I have been helped by several Pastoral Assistants. Graham Fieldhouse, who was the first, was followed by Tom Reece, Paul Cunningham, Nicholas Sutton and Royston Evans. They all came to do their year; a year given to God; a year given to help the Parish and to discover what God might be saying to them with regard to the rest of their lives.

Graham went into the Army as a lay Chaplain, and hopes to go on to train to be a Priest, starting in October. Tom, Paul and Royston are all deeply involved in the life of the Church in various ways, and all I'm sure, would say that their year as Pastoral Assistant developed and deepened their Faith. This last year we have had Jenny Clarke as the Pastoral Assistant. She came with many varied skills and contributed so much through the school's music, her deep spirituality and gentle but firm presence.

September calls and Jenny is moving on to work at the Shrine of Our Lady at Walsingham in Norfolk. Giving her year to God. At the end of that year, she may decide under God to enter the religious life as a Nun. And I hear people say....."Isn't it all a waste?" Is it a waste to give your life to God? To become a beautiful person. To show other human beings **WHAT WE CAN BE: TO HAVE A LIFE GIVEN TO ACTIVE GOODNESS.** Isn't the world a better place with people who do that rather than fitting into the dull boring norms of the daily life we see around us.

Autumn is a time of change; of letting go. It is also the time of great change, change for growth and deepening of spirit. Our thanks go out to all our Pastoral Assistants, especially to Jenny. Thank you for all you have given and all we have learned from you. Go with God. All will be well. You have wasted nothing so long as *we* have all learned to be and do what God has called us to be. So long as *we* put into practise what *we* have learned from you. Go with God, Jenny, and go with our Blessing.

Your Friend and Parish Priest,

Fr Peter Needham  
September 2010

## Fr. Peter's August Message

The end is Heaven... 'til then, carry on!

In 2005, the first phase was completed on St. Luke's Parish Church, in our efforts to both save the building and use it to its full potential. Phase 1 was the securing of the outside of the building. Phases 2 and 3 should have followed – the re-ordering of the inside; creating a good hall space with usable toilets and kitchen, which will allow the whole community to benefit from the space. The high church ceiling would be painted after over 100 years.

'St. Luke's,' in the words of our architect 'looks shabby.' *And it does.*

All is not lost; we have a new architect and new plans are being drawn up. It may be that by simply adding that quality will bring the glory to the building that it so badly needs. We will have a new financial estimate to aim for and we will pursue this to the end.

Life for the Christian is a journey, for our true homeland is heaven. But heaven is not a place, heaven is God. The Psalmist tells us that *'He is within you.'*

The Christian life is the constant looking for that kingdom, here on earth. The sacraments and our regular Christian life, helps us keep on the heaven road. The Mass provides food for the journey. The saints in heaven (and the month of August is a month of saints), inspire us to reach that goal they enjoy. Until we actually join them through sister death, we have their spiritual companionship, their prayers to support us and their example to guide us.

Our beautiful churches of St. Luke's and St. Paul's are pointers to heaven. We need to cherish them and use them on our journey. God willing and with the help of the saints, we can (through our church buildings) open the curtain a little wider on that heavenly kingdom to which we, with Our Lady, St. Luke and St. Paul will enjoy for eternity, as we together look on our Saviour God in Peace, Love and rest for ever.

Your Friend and parish priest,

Fr Peter Needham  
August 2010

## Fr. Peter's July Message

### Brierley – robbing Peter and...robbing Paul.

The month of June is a month of great Feasts: Corpus Christi, The Sacred Heart of Jesus, St John The Baptist; and for Brierley and Grimethorpe, the great feast of St Peter and St Paul – the two great apostles who were martyred in Rome, then the centre of the world.

St Peter recognised Jesus as the Divine Son of God; Paul is known as the teacher of the world. St Peter met his death for Christ by being crucified upside down, he was not worthy to die like his Lord and Paul, as a Roman citizen, was allowed to be beheaded by the sword.

Brierley was put under the patronage of St Paul to match up with the then Parish Church of St Peter, Felkirk. Since 2005, St Paul has become once again the companion of St Luke. You can read their stories in the Book of Acts, which was written by St Luke.

St Paul's Church, Brierley, carried on the teaching work of St Paul, and this can be seen by the building of St Paul's School, Brierley, early in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The present Brierley Church of England voluntary controlled school is owned by the Church, as are the school grounds – the school is NOT owned by the local education authority. To function as a church school, there must be a designated number of Christian Foundation Governors. If the local authority wished to own the school, it would have to buy the school and its grounds from the church.

For many people, the school may appear to be just another secular school set in the small village of Brierley, but this is not the case. The church, under trust deeds over one hundred years ago, wanted to ensure that the young in Brierley had a particular and purposeful Christian education. Because the school title has C of E (VC) in brackets, people can easily forget that it is a church school. There is greater choice in our society for parents these days particularly with regard to education. One of the sad things that I hear from parents when it comes to faith, and the practise of it, is them saying "We'll let the kids decide, it's their choice." The reality is somewhat different in that the children are NOT given the choice – in that a choice can only be made out of experience. And, of course, if a child does choose to experience the Christian faith and grow in it, they must have support.

In the past five years, I have sought to strengthen the links between school and church; it is now much healthier and robust. And I hope that once again, the school in the community's mind may see Brierley as 'The Church School'. On the remaining wall, where Church Court is now built, you will see the 1916 inscription, 'St Paul's Church School, Brierley.' It is my hope for the future that you do not rob Brierley, or the school, of their rightful Christian heritage and identity. What was true for St Paul two thousand years ago, must be true today or it was not true in the first place. St Peter and St Paul both died a martyr's death, they would not have died for a lie, but only the truth, and the whole truth we see in the person of Jesus Christ.

Your Friend and parish priest,

Fr Peter Needham

July 2010

## Fr. Peter's June Message

### Responsibility? Not my responsibility!

One of the things that we, in this generation, are having to get used to, is that these days **No one** wants to take responsibility for anything. The Government will do it. The Council will do it. The School will do it. The neighbour will do it! Maybe it's because, if someone takes responsibility for something, and it goes wrong, YOU are responsible. You may have to pay a fine; go to prison!

Very few these days are prepared to take on the care of children in clubs or Sunday Schools, not for fear of abuse, but because if a child falls, becomes sick, loses their phone, misbehaves and is duly reprimanded; there may be consequences. The responsibilities are **NOT** worth it.

What a very sad society our government, and those who influence society, have created. The story of the Good Samaritan has no place in our modern British Society. The Christian faith is sidelined. Who would be a Good Samaritan today? We have created "a walk by on the other side" world.

Saint Paul's Church in Brierley held a public meeting about whether it should close. Very few people from Brierley were there. The worshipping congregation turned out in force; the P.C.C. did their duty and were present, but very few of those who say "you're not going to shut St. Paul's, are you?" were there. In fact, many of those who do say that, are those who are not prepared to take on the responsibility of their words: Apathy rules, if it can be bothered.

A small group of very committed people are trying to keep St. Paul's open for the *Many*. Is that fair? Those, who are bold enough to say they are Christians, take on the responsibilities of trying to be Christ to others, to our community, to their fellow church members; to the person of Christ Himself.

Practising what you preach is hard, and for some Christians in our world it costs them their lives; in such places as Baghdad, Zimbabwe, in Pakistan and a host of other countries. In Britain, our luxurious liberal freedom chokes us from practising what we preach. The Governments of these past 20 years, for the sake of being politically correct, have stunted the living of life, faith and attitudes.

Christians, people who bother to read this letter, in God's name, take up your responsibilities like Jesus and the Saints, who inspire us to change the world to be a better more caring place.

Your friend and parish priest,

Fr Peter Needham  
June 2010

## Fr. Peter's May Message

### Broken Britain?

We are fast approaching a General Election and the Christian Church in our land seems very quiet on the subject.

Let us get one bit of the devil's sayings out of the way 'Religion and Politics don't mix.' Obviously, those who maintain this silly saying have never read the Bible! The whole of the Bible is about God's involvement in the world, from creation and whether we humans are good stewards of his creation; to the involvement of slavery in Egypt; to the creation of States; to the dealing with Kings occupying forces, be they Persian, Greek, Roman.

The New Testament begins with God entering our World at time of the Roman emperor Tiberius, Herod the King of Judea. Jesus Christ, this God of ours, was put to death by the political system of His day! But even the political, most powerful empire of the day could not control God. He Rose from the dead! The followers of Jesus, those who were filled with His life against all odds, proclaimed the truth of their experience of Christ in the face of politicians, courts and the religious leaders. Christ Himself, in His teaching, gave a framework of how we human-beings should live. He called all people to seek and pursue Peace, Justice, Mercy, Forgiveness, Gentleness, Truth – all aspects of God. He called his followers to live in community.

We now have a nation where courtesy, gentleness, truth, a sense of something or someone greater than ourselves is not sought! When peoples, prime ministers, governments, take on the ideals of God in terms of powerful control, we end up with a shallow throw-away society. What is thrown away is not just the waste of consumerism; it is the very lasting qualities that make life happy – the sanctity of life, the value of the elderly, the joy of childhood and the excitement of the risks of life.

Christians, remember your dignity. You were bought at great price. You are called to bring in God's Kingdom on earth. Witness to the truth of the Christian Faith, no matter who ends up in Number 10. Wear your crosses and crucifixes with pride. And most of all, mirror the saviour.

St. Paul taught that the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of man, and weakness of God is stronger than man's strength. The power that we need to see exercised in the power of the Love of God.

Christians, vote well and wisely!

Your friend and parish priest,

Fr Peter Needham  
May 2010

## Fr. Peter's April Message

Who are you going to vote for?



By the 6th of May, we will all be sick to death of election news, politicians, Prime Ministers, governments. These are the people who decide what sort of country we live in.

We are told we are a secular country – a country without God. *What sort of Country is that?*

It is a country, a society, where someone who wears a crucifix, the sign of love and sacrifice, is sacked for wearing it.

It is country where no-one knows how to celebrate Christmass or Easter or the National Saints' Day. There is time to celebrate given by Bank Holidays, but why have a national day of rest, where vast numbers of people individually spend more time in A& E because they are drunk but do not know why! There is No Community celebrating Easter, Christmass or St. Georges Day. Where Sunday, once a day for family, is now just the same as Wednesday.

The nation doesn't rest or relax.

A country where the quality of life is shallow. Quality of life is seen only in material value. The more the values and standards of God, proclaimed by the Christian Church, are sidelined, the more the deeper and more important values are sidelined – freedom, justice, mercy, compassion, courtesy and peace. In the person of the Risen Christ we see all these, and those values Christians are called to bring into the World '*...thy Kingdom come on earth, as it is in heaven.*'

And it comes by us (the people) doing God's will.

When a community gathers together around God to celebrate one of the Christian Feasts, we have a happy community.

A community that celebrates becomes less self interested. Look at the European countries where a whole village gathers to celebrate its local saint. Or where there is a village procession to celebrate Easter. All are involved.

It is the Christian's responsibility to vote. Look to the Holy Spirit to inspire you when you fulfil your right as a citizen. And let us "Do God" for our country's sake. For to choose to be a Godless nation will make us a sad, shallow and dreary place.

May the Risen Christ Bless you and may St. George our national Patron in heaven, pray for you and our Nation!

Your friend and parish priest,

Fr Peter Needham

April 2010

## Fr. Peter's March Message

### Regeneration or Stagnation?

The powers that be are celebrating the regeneration of Grimethorpe. The millions of pounds spent on roads, new housing and infrastructure is a right and proper thing to celebrate and should not be played down. Without sounding ungrateful, outward regeneration can easily lead to stagnation – when something is regenerate, it comes into a renewed existence. It has to do with a more vigorous and spiritually greater life. Regeneration, whether the secularists like it or not, is a theological word. So well done, the businessmen, the politicians and the funding agencies, for all you have done for Grimethorpe.

Stagnation is a word which means 'to be idle or languish, to decay, moulder or decompose.' My fear – as the Parish Priest whose given mission is to work for the regeneration of souls; that those souls do not live in isolation, but live in community – is that with only financial impetuosity for infrastructure, the regeneration of people's lives may be being overlooked. I am aware that the spiritual regeneration of people's lives is the mission and life of the faith communities, but those lives do not live in isolation.

It would be wonderful to see an equal amount of financial energies being put into the groups and institutions that work for a deeper regeneration in Grimethorpe. For example, those groups that make people feel important; those groups which seek to give a quality, worth and value in individual lives, which then flows into community life. The Grimethorpe and District Band, The Millennium Majorettes, St. John's Ambulance cadets, the Boxing Club, the Karate Club, the Cricket Club and the various Christian Churches all struggle hard to ensure that quality, worth and value is evident and alive in the village – yet they are the ones that are struggling.

Millions of pounds do not come their way; every penny they raise is not for themselves but, ultimately, for the enrichment of the community in which they live. If these groups, in their struggle, cannot maintain their life, then the outward regeneration of buildings and roads will all be for nothing.

So let us celebrate the work of the millions of pounds, but let us not miss the point of it all, which is the efforts and energies of all those groups which seek – by their faith, by their skills in sport, in music, in entertainment, in prayer – to regenerate people's lives. If not, then what we face is new build stagnation.

Your friend and parish priest,

Fr Peter Needham  
March 2010

## Fr. Peter's February Message

You CAN teach an old dog new tricks!

February sees the beginning of the season of Lent, when we begin the hard road to the Cross and Passion of Christ and His mighty Resurrection, and the New Life Christ's death and resurrection brings.

One of the devil's little victories is when someone says *'I'm too old to Change.'*

Lent is an old English word for Lengthen or Grow. It's coming towards spring time and, after our severe winter, something we all look forward to. Longer days, green shoots on the plants – and my doves certainly know it's spring!

The opposite to *'you cannot teach an old dog new tricks'* is *'you are never too old to learn!'*

When you learn, you grow.

The Wisdom writing in the Old Testament speaks about how we humans do not know ourselves; we are complicated. It goes on to say that the greatest thing in life is WISDOM. Wisdom is an attribute of God. How wise are you? Can you put your hand on your heart and say with complete conviction 'I know myself?' You are wonderfully made. Who can know the mind of Man?

Lent is the season when we are honest with ourselves and try to know and, consequently, love God.

What is God like?

God is as He is in Jesus Christ! Look at Jesus and see God. Not only the Jesus in the Crib, or teaching children or healing the sick, but:-

Alone in a desert, stood breaking bread and blessing wine.

Alone in a garden, because all his followers have left him.

Alone tied to a pillar, being whipped.

Alone on a cross.

Dead and laid in the arms of his mother.

Alone in the tomb.

Risen and speaking PEACE to his ashamed, confused and frightened followers.

This is what God is like.

Lent is time to learn new tricks of love. When we learn more about God we learn more about ourselves.

Lent is a time of RE-TURNING to the God whom we have left; to find HE has never left us.

This Lent make a difference to your life, and live this wonderful life in a new way.

Or... be that 'Old Dog' who says *'you cannot teach me new tricks.'*

You are never too old to learn!

Your friend and parish priest,

Fr Peter Needham  
February 2010

## Fr. Peter's January Message

Everyday, in everyway, I'm getting better.

The pressure is on from the media from those who influence our minds through television and radio, our celebrity culture and our politicians. If you believe in God or claim to have faith, you are seen to be somehow mentally and emotionally inadequate. Recently a well-known national comedian likened belief in God to belief in magic, mocking the 34% of the population who believe in magic. Yet I would imagine that even this comedian, and all those aggressive sceptics of faith, love and long to be loved.

The truth is that human beings, no matter how clever and bright, or no matter how limited mentally or physically, we are, in some ways, inadequate. All that humans do, plan and create falls to dust. If there is no God, if the experience of billions of people over two thousand years is nothing more than belief in an unseen magic, then the human race is lost and left to the whims of chance.

The Christian faith is not about the keeping of rules, nor is the Christian faith founded on the words of a book or an idea; the Christian faith is founded upon a relationship with a person. That person is Jesus Christ. In Jesus, we see what God is like, we see God on earth, in love, in self-sacrifice, in service to others, in humility. We see what we, as human beings, can be, if we so choose. Human beings are by nature, selfish to a point; in Jesus we see what we can be, if we go beyond that point.

In forgiving others, we find freedom from resentment. In loving others, we find freedom from the emotion of hatred, which chains us to misery. In Jesus, we can see what we can be when we are not addicted to self.

We are about to celebrate the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul – a co-patron of our parish of Grimethorpe with Brierley. On Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> January at St. Paul's Church, we will be celebrating St. Paul's conversion from self to selflessness, from hatred to love. In everyway and everyday Paul ceased to be a bitter and twisted, sour and self-interested old person, to become again the youth in mind, heart and attitude that God intended him to be, because he met the Lord Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus.

What about you? Are you getting better in everyway, everyday? Are you becoming younger and wiser in heart, mind, spirit and attitudes like St. Paul? Come and See.

Thank you for all the support you give to the Parish of St. Luke with St. Paul in Grimethorpe and Brierley.

Your friend and parish priest,

Father Peter Needham  
January 2010