

Preparation

The mission itself took place over the 15 days leading up to and finishing with Pentecost, but a great deal of preparation was necessary to make sure we were ready, both for the spiritual challenge and the practical requirements involved. A mission committee was formed to plan and co-ordinate all the preparations. One aim in the planning was to include as many different people as possible, to make good use of the variety of skills within our membership. The preparation was fundamentally important for the mission to succeed. It certainly helped to create enthusiasm in our congregation and we were drawn closer together in the process.

Prayer

First and foremost came prayer. Two whole years before the mission, the PCC decided that it was a suitable time to reach out to the parish, and we prayed that we would find the best way forward. The idea of a parish mission was suggested and a visit from the Diocesan Missioner, Father (now Bishop) Lindsay Urwin OGS filled in some details. A mission would be primarily for us, to renew and deepen our faith but also we would be reaching out to the whole parish and extending a particular invitation to those people in the parish who already had loose connections with the church, such as parents of the Sunday school children and Brownies, those who had had their child baptised within the previous 3 or 4 years etc.

The Mission Committee's first task was to choose a title for the mission and to compose a mission prayer. This was used at every daily mass during the twelve months leading up to the mission, as well as in private prayer at home.

This was an area that made our house bound members feel really useful in the months before. They were also able to help with correspondence: the mission prayer was printed on cards and we sent them to Christians around the world. Communities and individuals were asked to hold us and the mission in their prayers, and also to send a note or photograph with a confirmation of their support. These replies were displayed around local and world maps with coloured yarns reaching across to indicate all the places, far and near, where prayer was being offered on our behalf. That in itself was quite amazing to contemplate.

The Mission Prayer & Logo



**St. John the Divine
West Worthing
Parish Mission 1991**

With a team led by Fr. Lindsay Urwin

God our Father,
we ask your blessing on our parish mission.
May our love for you and for one another
draw others to come and see your peace and joy.
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Publicity

It was decided to entitle the mission “Come and See” - from John.1.38-39 when two disciples asked where Jesus was staying and he replied “Come and see”.

Having chosen the name, much thought went into designing a logo for all the stationery. This had to convey the right message to the people outside our membership. The committee produced the ideas and several would-be artists tried to put them down on paper. The final result was a group of people coming together to form a circle around a central cross. The committee wanted all types of people to be represented and there had to be spaces within the circle, leaving room for more to join them. Nobody should feel shut out or unable to take part.

Our Mission Banner



In addition to our prayer cards, we printed leaflets, balloons, badges, stickers, and made 100 small flags and a large banner. As far as possible we used the black on yellow colour scheme that had been chosen for the prayer card design. Handbills, ("teaser leaflets" we called them at the time) were delivered within our parish with the copies of the local free paper during the three week period before the mission. They were designed to reveal the details gradually, and hopefully stir up some interest in advance. They were colour coded red, yellow and green in that order, like traffic lights, counting down to the start. A4 posters in the local shops followed the same pattern.

Plenty of information for our members was given in our church magazine, too, including a brief introduction to each of the mission team.-- which leads on to hospitality :this had to be organised and guaranteed well in advance of their arrival.

A team of thirteen missionaries consisting of 3 priests, 5 holy sisters from 3 different communities, a Church Army Captain and 4 lay people came for the fortnight, and we had to find hosts prepared to give bed and breakfast accommodation to each one. In addition we had to be sure that they would be fed at other meal times - invitations for lunch were needed- about 169- from church members, while teams of our ladies formed a catering committee which worked out a rota to feed the team "en masse" each evening in our church hall.

Most of the hosts actually saw very little of their guests at home - they seemed to be up with the lark, usually helped themselves to a simple breakfast if at all, and quite often did not reappear until the early hours of the following morning.

Hospitality.....



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L-R Back row.

Fr Lindsay Urwin, Capt. Andy Perry CA., John Fleck, Sister Elvina SSB.,

Fr Stephen Groves, Sister Rita-Elizabeth SSB., Sister Rosamond CSC., Fr Terry Martin.

Front row.

Sally Edwards, Lorna Stoneham, Sister Margaret-Elizabeth CSMV & Sister Elizabeth- Anne CSMV

(Kevin Agnew was the other member of the team but was not present when this photograph was taken.)



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The team were commissioned by the Bishop of Chichester, Rt Rev Eric Kemp, at our Parish Mass on May 5th 1991. The following day was the May Day bank holiday and we arranged a Parish Walk and picnic providing an opportunity to meet the mission team informally.

We started at Washington and walked across the Downs to Sullington where we stopped for a short service in the church before eating our picnics in the churchyard.



Ready for the off!



Missioners, Lorna, Sally and Fr. Stephen



Crossing the A24

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As we approached Sullington the paths were very muddy, and poor Lorna, who had thought a "Parish Walk" entailed walking around the streets of the parish had only worn her dainty high heeled shoes and had to be carried through the worst of it.

However there was at least ONE person who had come prepared for all eventualities.....

Momentarily we thought we were witnessing a miracle.... But Father Lindsay was standing on a brick in the middle of this puddle...!



More photos from the parish walk



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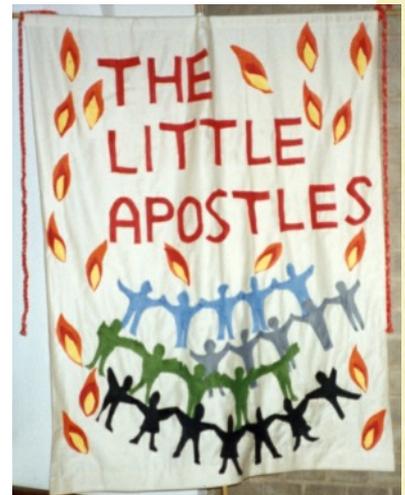
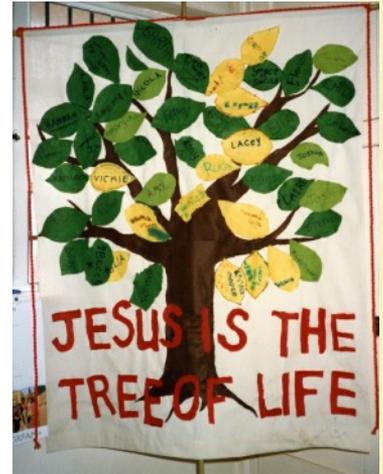
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During the first week the mission team spent the mornings visiting, and in the evenings we had home groups to consider our own church and how we felt about various aspects of it. The missionaries helped us to look more deeply into all that it meant to us.

For the children we organised a club from 4pm to 6pm each afternoon of the first week, This was run jointly by the mission team and our own children's leaders, and incorporated bible stories, singing songs (with all the movements), games, crafts, banner making..... this was a huge success as many children from the parish attended (over 100) and we estimated that two thirds of them were new contacts. It was really moving when many came in to the Songs of Praise service on the middle Sunday to sing the songs they had learnt, with expressions of real joy on their faces.



Banners made by the children at Kingfisher Club.



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With help, the children had constructed a Noah's Ark and made animal masks, and they displayed their work on one of two floats with which we paraded around the parish boundary on the morning of the middle Saturday, in a carnival Procession of Witness, stopping the traffic (how they loved us!) as we walked along to the sound of the Sussex Stompers Jazz Band and Father Lindsay's running commentary inviting everyone to "Come & See". He was never lost for words during the whole procession. It was great fun, and we had all been so apprehensive.....! Meanwhile the children on their float were enthusiastically singing....

"Allelu.allelu, allelu, alleluia, praise ye the Lord" & "Open our eyes, Lord" among others,



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Procession of Witness in George V Avenue, Goring Road and Grand Avenue



On the middle Sunday we had the Songs of Praise event in the evening, using the well tried format of hymns interspersed with personal testimonies given by members of the church and the mission team,. The Kingfisher Club children came in wearing their animal masks and carrying their banners, and sang some of the new songs they had learned during the week before. . We were ably led in the music for this service by the Hangleton Band.



Father Lindsay sent us out to draw attention to the evening events. The generally warm reception thus far encouraged some of us to gather in a small group on two afternoons to sing some Mission Praise hymns for the shoppers in the nearby parade. Thereafter, for about 20 years, it was a tradition that St. John's people would do a spot of street singing at Christmas at Easter to promote our services.



St John's has always had a daily mass and this was continued, together with Morning and Evening Prayer. In addition there was a mid day time of worship, which was varied, usually involving readings , prayer and singing in a quiet informal way. During the second week we had a Mission service each night, beginning with worship songs and hymns followed by lively preaching by Father Lindsay, covering a different aspect of our faith each evening.

On two mornings we had a 6.30 a.m. "Early Birds" Bible Study to which 40 or more came, and shared in breakfast afterwards.

ARE YOU AN EARLY BIRD?

There will be two early morning Bible Study meetings:
Tues. 14th & Thurs. 16th at 6.30am!!!

Half an hour exploring the Scriptures, followed by breakfast in the Hall for those who can stay.



The Tuesday night was dedicated to Mary and her saying "Yes" to God.

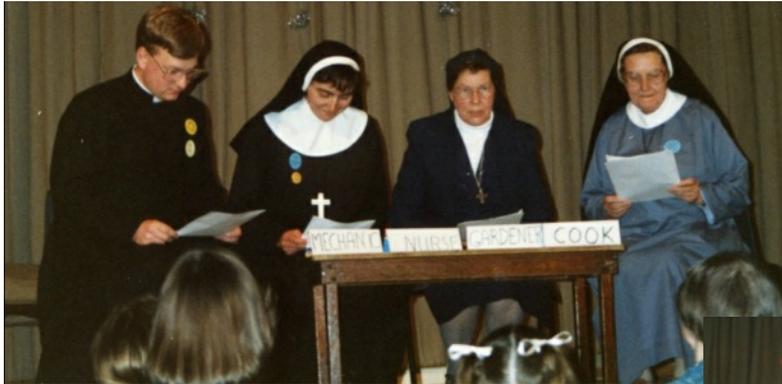
If anyone has photographs from the other Mission services, the webmaster would be pleased to hear from you!

Contact
webmaster@stjohnwestworthing.org.uk

Thank you!

The evening of the second Saturday was set aside for a party. It was time to let our hair down and relax after the busy two weeks.

Mission team members and parishioners entertained us from the hall stage, and a good time was had by all who came. Here are some of the mission team doing their party pieces.



Above, a script of 4 separate radio broadcasts by “experts”, with amusing results when the “programme wires got crossed during transmission” and snippets of each came through in a muddled way...

Fr Terry Martin, (Mechanic)

Sr Elizabeth-Anne (Nurse)

Sr Rosamond (Gardener)

Sr Margaret-Elizabeth (Cook)

Right: Kevin, the magician and illusionist, with his lovely assistant, Sally, who had just survived being “pierced” by bamboo canes through the box, much to everyone’s relief!



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Fr Lindsay gave a heartfelt rendition of the Flanders & Swann "Warthog Song" accompanied by Fr Stephen Groves on the piano, and Fr Terry treated us to "Tambourin", played so beautifully on the flute. Not a dry eye in the house....



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The Mission team had a talented line up, and had their own ad hoc music group...

Fr Stephen on organ or piano

Fr Terry on flute

Capt Andy and Kevin on acoustic guitars and

Sr Rita- Elizabeth sang the solos.

When they played modern hymns, some of them sounded so different and so good! We were introduced to many new worship songs, which became a popular part of our worship after the mission, when a five member adult music group was formed from our own members, piano, 2 guitars, flute and voice. We felt we had a good balance of hymns, both old and new, to try and please a wider age-range than previously, but again, we all know that “you can't please all the people all the time”. Generally, we thought that our services were more joyful, yet somehow more reverent and prayerful than before the mission.



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The last day of the Mission was May 19th, Pentecost Sunday. The service at 10 am was offered in thanksgiving for the Mission, and we were all anointed with oil for strength to be witnesses to the Gospel. Special prayers were said for our parish clergy and their families, and there were plenty of inspiring hymns to sing.

It was quite a wrench to say “Goodbye” to the team who had moved us during those two special weeks, and many a tear was shed. Father Lindsay consoled us with the thought that we’d meet again in heaven if not before..... And of course, just two years later he was to become our area Bishop of Horsham, so we didn’t have to wait that long!



Mission accomplished!



One final “Alleluia- Praise the Lord!”

The mission affected people in different ways, and it would be wrong to say that we *all* enjoyed it - some found it was not at all what they had expected and were disappointed; but most were uplifted by it. We were asked to record our experiences in a booklet for posterity! It was a very hectic two weeks, with ample opportunity to be involved from early morning to late evening. At the end we were left feeling renewed and strengthened in our faith.

We were brought closer together and learnt at least to try not to think of ourselves first. Some of us found new courage in our own modest attempts at evangelising, or to say "yes" to taking on certain responsibilities where before we might have said "no".

We found that although the basic structure of a mission can be planned, if one is open to the workings of the Holy Spirit and willing to be led by Him, the events are not totally predictable. Having an open approach is the way to get the most from a mission; no fixed expectations to leave you disappointed if they do not happen.

It was a momentous time for our parish. We really felt like one big happy family, and several "occasional" visitors who would come on holiday once a year, actually wrote to our parish priest to say what a difference they had noticed in the welcome and atmosphere at our services.

One layman from the mission team and one member of our congregation felt called to the ordained ministry following their experiences during the mission, and went on to be ordained in the priesthood.

As this goes on our website in 2016, 25 years after "Come and See", St John's is considering having a Fan the Flame week, and we need to pray that, once again, we shall find the right way forward for outreach.

