



CHRIST CHURCH
CROUCH END HILL
LONDON N8 8AX
CROSSLINKS

THE FEROCIOUS EVENING WOLF

A MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCH ON THE HILL



SEPTEMBER 2008 ISSUE 9.99

Vicar's three minute reflection IN CONTEST WITH THE HUNGRY EVENING WOLF



In the past few months, I have had the privilege of walking alongside some Christians whose experiences of faith are going through earthly crucibles of trial. Some are in different stages of depression. This experience has informed my reflection and most of the articles in this edition of our monthly parish magazine.

While watching a documentary film on wolves, I could not help but notice how fierce, ferocious and ravenous was the evening wolf who had been infuriated by a day of hunger. I was able to draw a comparison between the hungry evening wolf and our doubts and fears, often after a period of distraction of mind, losses in business, ill health, and disappointments of all sorts.

Our thoughts howl in our ears, "Where is now your God?" They swallow up all suggestions of comfort and like the evil of hell attack the flock of Christ when they are in a cloudy and dark day and their sun seems to be going down. They hasten to tear and devour. Spurgeon rightly observes that "they will scarcely attack the Christian in the daylight of faith but in the gloom of soul conflict, they fall upon him"

We can only cry out to Jesus Christ who laid down His life for the sheep to preserve His flock from the fangs of the wolf. The battle is the Lord's and we would be wise not to take our eyes off Jesus at any stage of our life's journey. We must never presume that we would be ready for battle if confronted with a great crisis as if it is the crisis that builds something within us. It simply reveals what we are made of already.

A private and consistent relationship of trusting and worshipping God is the greatest essential element of spiritual fitness. Are you saying, "I have no time for prayer or Bible study right now but when my opportunity for battle comes, of course, I will be ready." No! you will not. If you have not been worshipping and living for God in everyday occasions, in ordinary circumstances and on God's training ground, you will be unfit for battle. The believer's relationship to God should be one that sees



God as being active in the believer's life. The sovereign God is always at work and the best you can do in times of trouble and tragedy is to look upward in trustful silence. You may not understand or know the reasons why certain things happen to you or your loved ones. Your life may be like a little ship that is tossed and driven by the winds of life but I am sure of one thing, "As a child of God through faith in Christ Jesus, your life is hidden with Christ in God. And as Selwyn Hughes comments, "You are not just a statistic in the divorce rate, a victim of depression, an 'uneducated misfit' or a 'square peg in a round hole'; your life is a drama for which, perhaps, some of the best action and speeches are yet to be written." Many times, God will use your challenging situations to deepen your character and bring you to a closer relationship with Himself.

Selwyn Hughes says, "Certain dark problems have occurred in my own life that I have never been able fully to understand. Some light shines upon those problems, but no complete solution is to hand. However, whatever God's intention, I am told in Scripture that it is good. And I hold on to that...but for the final explanation we must wait until we get home, and then our heavenly Father will explain it to us Himself."

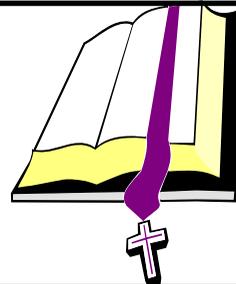
Prayer: My Father and my God, help me in those moments when I can find no answers to develop the upward look and the trustful silence; to trust You even when I cannot trace You. Help me to trust the transforming power of your grace even when darkness hides it from my sight. Teach me to accept the things I cannot change and change the things I can. In Jesus name. Amen.

Dele Agbelusi

Memory Verse

But now, this is what the Lord says – he who created you... "Fear not, for I have redeemed you... When you pass through the waters, I will be with you..."

(Isaiah 43: 1-2)



THE INTENTIONAL MARRIAGE: GOING BEYOND COMMITMENT



The hard, cold truth of marriage is that staying together can be tough at times for almost any couple. Most of us probably know wonderful, intelligent, thoughtful people who—despite all the evidence of the harmful effects of divorce... are divorced anyway. Even if you have an unbending commitment to your mate, most of us are blind to how we lose our marriages by slow erosion if we don't keep replenishing the soil. Why is it so hard for couples to stay together?

William Doherty a professor and director of the marriage and family therapy program and author of numerous books, including *Take Back Your Marriage: Sticking Together in a World that Pulls Us Apart* and *Soul Searching* believes part of the problem is that the consumer culture in which we live has affected our attitudes about marriage. We expect our mates to fill needs for us, and to bring us happiness and fulfillment.

We've internalized the notion that it's okay—and even psychologically healthy—to be looking out for number one even within the context of marriage. We ask ourselves during stressful times, or boring times, or just from time to time whether we're getting what we should from our marriage. As Doherty puts it, "Our culture teaches us that we're all entitled to an exciting marriage and great sex life; if we don't get both, we're apt to feel deprived. Steadfastness and self-sacrifice aren't in this picture of therapeutic consumption. When the marriage relationship becomes psychologically painful or stunts our growth, there are plenty of therapists around to serve as midwives for a divorce."

Doherty believes that the two key ingredients for a successful marriage are commitment and intentionality. Commitment may sound obvious and clear-cut. But in his years of therapy, Doherty has come to recognize two distinct kinds of commitment couples make. One is what he calls "commitment-as-long-as." It means staying together, "not as long as we both shall live, but as long as things are working out for me."

The Intentional Marriage: Going Beyond Commitment

The other kind is what Doherty calls “commitment-no-matter-what.” He describes it as “the long view of marriage in which you don’t balance the ledgers every month to see if you are getting an adequate return on your investment... You’re here to stay.” This long-term kind of commitment is essential, according to Doherty, but can lead to stale marriages if not accompanied by intentionality.

By intentionality, Doherty means making one’s marriage a high priority. During courtship, a couple’s relationship is front and center, as he puts it. After marriage, other things often take priority: careers and children, to name the most common. Having an intentional marriage means being conscious about maintaining a connection through, among other things, “a reservoir of marital rituals of connection and intimacy.”

The main way to resist the forces that pull us apart—the natural drift of marriage over time and the insidious pull of the consumer culture—is to be a couple who carefully cultivates commitment and ways to connect over the years. Simply stated, the intentional couple thinks about their relationship, plans for their relationship, and acts for their relationship, mostly in simple, everyday ways and occasionally in big, splashy ways.

Doherty gives an example of a simple ritual that he and his wife developed during their child-rearing years. Every evening after dinner, they’d have coffee together—without children present. Their children knew they had to leave their parents alone for these few minutes. Years later Doherty asked his grown daughter what she had thought of that ritual as a child. She told him that it had made her feel safe because she knew it meant that her parents liked each other.

(concluded on page 8)

HYMNS INSPIRED BY TRIALS

God Moves in a Mysterious Way

William Cowper (1731 - 1800)

William Cowper, the author of this hymn came from a distinguished literary and ecclesiastical family. He went to Westminster School, where he showed great interest in both Latin and English and then read for the Bar. However, from the age of 21 he began to suffer from severe bouts of depression. These continued with increasing severity and his family rejected him. Cowper was committed to a private lunatic asylum in the early 1760s and never managed to hold down a steady job.

Cowper came to know and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as a result of his conversion while he was a patient in a private lunatic asylum. This experience resulted in the only anchor in his stormy and unhappy life. John Newton, who was the vicar of a church in Olney, Buckinghamshire invited Cowper for a chat and arrangement was made for his upkeep. Cowper and Newton wrote hymns together. Cowper's repertoire includes 'O for a closer walk with God', 'Hark my soul! It is the Lord' and 'Jesus, where're thy people meet'.

'God moves in a mysterious way' was written in the early 1770s when Cowper was in an almost permanent state of depression alleviated only by occasional periods of calm. The Biblical text that informed the song was Jesus' words to Simon Peter in John 13:7— 'What I do thou knowest not how; but thou shalt know hereafter.' There is a story that he wrote the hymn after being saved from a suicide attempt.

His plan was to go to the top of Olney bridge, jump into the water below and drown. He set out on a journey to the bridge on his horse, but instead of getting to the bridge, he discovered that he had returned to the point from which he started out. He made several attempts but ended up with the same result.

Hymns Inspired by Trials

The overall theme of the hymn is that of resounding Christian hope, and it has given encouragement to generations of Christians. It is reported that during the 1840s, a Lancashire mill-owner told his workers that the depression in trade would cause the closure of the mill. They encouraged themselves by singing 'Ye fearful Saints fresh courage take' led by a young girl. The last verse has a particularly strong message of assurance for those who are perplexed, as we surely all are at times.

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sovereign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan his work in vain;
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.

LESSON FROM A DONKEY

One day a farmer's donkey fell down into a well. The animal cried piteously for hours as the farmer tried to figure out what to do. Finally, he decided the animal was old, and the well needed to be covered up anyway; it just wasn't worth it to retrieve the donkey.

He invited all his neighbours to come over and help him. They each grabbed a shovel and began to shovel dirt into the well. At first, the donkey realized what was happening and cried horribly. Then, to everyone's amazement he quieted down.

A few shovel loads later, the farmer finally looked down the well. He was astonished at what he saw. With each shovel of dirt that hit his back, the donkey was doing something amazing. He would shake it off and take a step up. As the farmer's neighbours continued to shovel dirt on top of the animal, he would shake it off and take a step up. Pretty soon, everyone was amazed as the donkey stepped up over the edge of the well and happily trotted off!

Life is going to shovel dirt on you, all kinds of dirt. The trick to getting out of the well is to shake it off and take a step up. Each of our troubles is a steppingstone. We can get out of the deepest wells just by not stopping, never giving up! Shake it off and take a step up.

Anon.

The Intentional Marriage: Going Beyond Commitment

(continued from page 5)

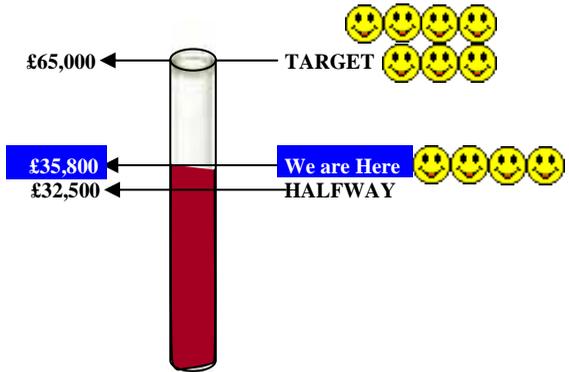
Doherty believes there's a tendency for parents to think that it's okay to sacrifice their relationship for the children. There's no question that having children involves sacrifices, but, as Doherty says, "Sacrificing your marriage for the sake of your children doesn't help anybody."

The above article "The Intentional Marriage: Going Beyond Commitment" was written by Marcia Segelstein. It originally ran in Connecticut Family Matters — June 16, 2003.

NOTICE BOARD

Update on Church Renovation Appeal

We have raised £35,800 in cash and kind thus far, out of a target of £65,000. We have already completed works on the flooring and part of the internal redecoration has commenced. As soon as we receive advice from our architect works on the nave and chancel will commence. Thank you very much for your generous donations and prayers. We will continue to count on your goodwill and support as we strive to make Christ Church a befitting place of worship.



Church "Away Day" - 4th October 2008

The Church Council and other Church members will be having a time of reflection and prayer at the Oakhill Theological College from 10.00am till 4pm. The theme is "Mission and Ministry in and out of our comfort zones" Please pray along with us.

Congratulations

We rejoice with the Agbelusis and especially Tolu Agbelusi (our vicar's daughter) who was called to the Bar of England and Wales on 24th July. We give thanks to the Lord for His faithfulness and for His goodness on Tolu during her years of study.

Healing and Anointing Service: 30th November 10.30am

This will be the last of its kind for 2008! How time flies. Let us come together in God's name and strength and pray our "walls of Jericho" down. Please pray for God's outpouring of His power on us at the service.

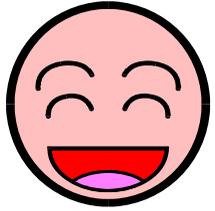
God is calling you as a Youth worker to Christ Church

Do you love the Lord Jesus and are interested in working with Young people; can spare Sundays and possibly one week-day? Let us meet and discuss the terms. Please contact the vicar on 02083401566 for a brief chat.

LAUGHTER LINES

Powerless Cape

A three-year-old boy received a Superman cape as a present. He excitedly put on his new costume and ran outside as fast as he could. After a few minutes of running and jumping in the backyard, the boy returned to the house and angrily tore the costume off and threw it on the floor. With disgust the boy complained, "It doesn't matter how hard I try; I can't get this stupid thing to work!"



"1002 Humorous Illustration for Public Speaking" by M. Hodgins

Standing Room Only

When Mark Twain was on one of his lecture tours, he was getting a haircut in a small town, and the barber asked him if he planned to attend the lecture that evening by "Mr Mark Twain."

Twain said he thought he might.

The barber said, "It's sold out, so if you don't already have a ticket, you'll have to stand."

Twain said, "Just my luck! I always have to stand when that fellow lectures!"

"1002 Humorous Illustration for Public Speaking" by M. Hodgins

Teen Sacrifice

A Sunday school teacher asked her primary school class how old they thought Isaac was when God told Abraham to sacrifice his son. One boy raised his hand and said that Isaac could not have been over twelve years old.

The teacher asked him how he knew this.

The boy explained, "I have a brother and sister who are in their teens. I'm not sure it would have been that much of a sacrifice if Isaac had been older than twelve."

"1002 Humorous Illustration for Public Speaking" by M. Hodgins

LAUGHTER LINES

Works that follow faith

A little girl had a problem. She was worried because her brother had built some traps to catch rabbits. She loved rabbits and didn't want any of them to be hurt or killed in her brother's traps. She tearfully begged her brother not to use the traps, but he refused to change his plans.

The little girl chose another course of action and was able to sleep that night with a quiet confidence that God would protect the rabbits from her evil brother. Later she explained, "I prayed that God wouldn't let those cute rabbits get caught in those cruel traps. And then I went outside and broke the traps into a million pieces!"

"1002 Humorous Illustration for Public Speaking" by M. Hodgkin

The Fatted Calf

One Sunday Tillie Shears was teaching the Prodigal Son lesson. Her aim was to emphasise the resentful attitude of the older brother.

After describing how happy the household was over the return of the wayward son, Tillie pointed out that one member of the family didn't share their joy. "Can anyone tell me who this was?"

Nine-year-old Donna Miller had been listening sympathetically to the story. She waved her hand, "I know!" she said beaming. "It was the fatted calf."

"World's Greatest collection of Church Jokes" by Paul Miller

STORY OF THE MONTH

WE ALL HAVE SCARS!

Some years ago, on a hot summer day in south Florida, a little boy decided to go for a swim in the old swimming hole behind his house. In a hurry to dive into the cool water, he ran out the back door, leaving behind shoes, socks, and shirt as he went. He flew into the water, not realizing that as he swam toward the middle of the lake, an alligator was swimming toward the shore.



His father, working in the yard, saw the two as they got closer and closer together. In utter fear, he ran toward the water, yelling to his son as loudly as he could.

Hearing his voice, the little boy became alarmed and made a U-turn to swim to his father. It was too late. Just as he reached his father, the alligator reached him.

From the dock, the father grabbed his little boy by the arms just as the alligator snatched his legs. That began an incredible tug-of-war between the two. The alligator was much stronger than the father, but the father was much too passionate to let go.

A farmer happened to drive by, heard his screams, raced from his truck, took aim and shot the alligator.

Remarkably, after weeks and weeks in the hospital, the little boy survived. His legs were extremely scarred by the vicious attack of the animal. And, on his arms, were deep scratches where his father's fingernails dug into his flesh in his effort to hang on to the son he loved.

The newspaper reporter who interviewed the boy after the trauma, asked if he would show him his scars. The boy lifted his pant legs.

We All Have Scars

And then, with obvious pride, he said to the reporter, 'But look at my arms. I have great scars on my arms, too. I have them because my Dad wouldn't let go.'

You and I can identify with that little boy. We have scars, too. No, not from an alligator, but the scars of a painful past. Some of those scars are unsightly and have caused us deep regret. But some wounds, my friend, are because God has refused to let you go. In the midst of your struggle, He's been there holding on to you.

The Scripture teaches that God loves you. You are a child of God. He wants to protect you and provide for you in every way. But sometimes we foolishly wade into dangerous situations, not knowing what lies ahead. The swimming hole of life is filled with peril - and we forget that the enemy is waiting to attack. That's when the tug-of-war begins - and if you have the scars of His love on your arms, be very, very grateful. He did not and will not ever let you go.

Never judge another person's scars, because you don't know how they got them.

THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER REQUESTS

We are thanking God for answered prayers and His presence amongst us in the last Healing and Anointing Service.

We also thank God for the safe return of everyone from their summer holidays.

This month we pray for members of our church family whose surnames begin with M, N.

Macauley Grace; Madada William; Mamas Helen; McFarlane Su, Mercer Richard & Mary; Miller Lisa; Mole Andrew, Mucha Joanna; Murphy Charles; Musolo Bright, Mutyaba Joy; Myers-Nobbs Andrew; Nabirye Rose; Nabadula Thembekile.

LOVE LETTER TO MY FATHER

For so long I was in love with the idea of being in love with you.

I had acquired knowledge so I told myself I knew you.
Had always lived with you in the shadows,
So I figured I understood you.

When I was upset I cried to you.
When I was excited I thanked you.
You were always at the back of my mind,
So I forgot about you

I knew about you but I did not *know* you.
It wasn't sincerely personal;
I wasn't really in love with you.
You were always at the back of my mind,
So I couldn't see you.

Until that day when I really found you;
when love changed planes from idea to reality
and passive acquisition of knowledge transformed into a
longing for a relationship,
and continuous transgression brought me to my knees in
search of sanity,

I saw clearly as if for the first time,
Understanding birth profound realisations,
That the fact that God knows my heart doesn't permit me to
transgress even lightly,
That my words and my actions must from now fit tightly.

I was in love for the first time truly.
Finding myself in his words
Seeing myself through his eyes
Discovering my character with his guidance
Now I truly know I have found love.

Tolu Agbelusi

HEAVENLY CORRESPONDENCE

E-MAIL FROM GOD (1)

File Edit View Options Tools Help



Send



Contacts



Spell



Attach



Security



Save

From: **GOD, YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER - I AM WITH YOU**

To:

**YOU, MY BELOVED CHILD,
when you have come to the end of your
resources and life's struggles cast a
shadow on my love for you... read on.**

Subject: **PSALM 34:8**

My beloved child,

My Son Jesus hung out with broken-hearted people - two sisters who had just lost their brother, a man whose young son had died, another man who had been blind his whole life, a little shrimp of a tax collector who was hated by everybody ... the list goes on and on. He was close to the people who needed him, and so am I.

Sadness is not new to me. I have experienced the death of My Son. I know what it's like to be sad. So if you are sad you are not alone. If you feel like you just cannot go on, turn to Me. Turn to me. I am here to dry your tears and ease your pain. I care for you.

Your Lord,

God.

Motto /Text for the year
"I CAN DO EVERYTHING THROUGH HIM WHO GIVES
ME STRENGTH" *PHILIPPIANS 4:13*

FINDING OUT ABOUT ...CHRIST CHURCH?

Tel/Fax: 020 8340 1566

We are a family of men and women, boys and girls who are trying to live for God in a world that has largely chosen to ignore Him.

We believe that it is God's world and that He has given the answer to all human problems in Jesus Christ.

As a body of believers, we offer to all who come regular opportunities for worship and service that point the way to God as our strongest resources in all aspects of life.

We will be pleased to welcome you to any of our activities. You will find a warm welcome at Christ Church.

Times of worship and fellowship are shown below:

Sunday - **8.00am.** Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer)

- **10.30am.** Main service with Crèche facilities

There is family/parade service once every month— usually the third Sunday of the month unless otherwise indicated.

- **6.00pm.** Evening worship

ACTIVITIES FOR THE WEEK

Sunday - Choir practice in church (**9.30 am**)

Monday - Baby n' Toddler Group (**10.00 am to 12 noon**)

- Brownies meeting in church (**5.30 pm**)

- Next Prayer meetings in church - 22nd September, 6th & 20th October, 3rd & 17th November (**8 pm**)

Wednesday - Bible Fellowship in church - West Chapel (**7:45 pm for 8.00pm start**)

Friday - Bible Fellowship in church - West Chapel (**2.00 pm**)

- Scouts meeting in church and hall (**6.00 pm**)

- Music Team practice in choir vestry (**6.30 pm**)

Enquiry/Counselling/Prayer Lifeline - please phone 020 8340 1566

Editorial Board: Iyabo Agbelusi, Grace Macauley, Dele Agbelusi

Voice Edition: Sheila Wheeler, Peter Green, Dele Agbelusi

Vicar: Revd Canon Dele Agbelusi

Church Wardens: Peter Green, Charles Murphy

Lay Preachers: Richard Mercer, Iyabo Agbelusi

Assistant Organist: Pavla Bockova

YOUR COMMENTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS ARE WELCOME

**PLEASE WRITE TO THE EDITOR, CROSSLINKS,
THE VICARAGE, 32 CRESCENT ROAD, LONDON, N8 8AX
E-MAIL: christchurchN8@aol.com**