

Bishop Frank writes

The time of renewal

While the Easter snowfall brought a blast of winter, the mid April school holidays remind ed us that spring is really in the air. All of this points us to an important truth : we all benefit from renewal.

Our children and teachers need some time to recharge their batteries before the summer term with all the challenges and changes it brings. The winter chill has passed and now we see the sticky buds, the courting birds and the blooming spring flowers and we feel hat a corner has been turned.



Renewal is at the heart of this Easter to Pentecost season. The body raised by the power of God is the same Jesus and yet there is something different about him. The apostles and those who gather at Pentecost are the familiar characters with whom we have journeyed, yet they too are different. The Spirit has taken hold of them and given them a new confidence, a fresh authority and undoubtedly a greater courage.

The garden is the same plot of land as it was in the depths of winter but now it is very beautifully clothed and charmingly refreshed. Renewal is the enlivening of the familiar with a power which makes it evidently different. When God's Spirit is welcomed into our hearts and churches, when his enlivening power is freed into our society then what happens is real change. Yet this is change which has enough of the familiar to enable us to have confidence that something better is being offered to us.

The elders who questioned Peter after the healing of the lame man at the Beautiful Gate recognised him as one who had been a companion of Jesus. But this was no longer the scared, friend-denying figure who had slid into the shadows and wept over his own weakness. This was a renewed and refreshed disciple who would pave the way of faith with courage and conviction.

It's wonderful what the renewing work of the Holy Spirit can do!

A handwritten signature in black ink, starting with a cross symbol and the name 'Frank' in a cursive script.

Bishop of Brixworth

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News from around the diocese

Family Care's pioneering work continues

Family Care, the diocesan charity established 160 years ago to work with vulnerable families, held its annual commissioning service at Peterborough Cathedral last month. The organisation has a long history but has very much moved with the times and its services are in demand beyond diocesan boundaries. Julie Hession of Family Care explains more.

Family Care has strong roots both within the Christian faith and the Peterborough Diocese. Its initial purpose was stated as being "to reclaim fallen females". This included sending "the morally weak or incapable who desire to live upright and honest lives" to St Mary's Laundry and Home at Narborough, near Leicester.

Today, Family Care's mission is still to protect children and prevent family breakdown. Much of its work is based within the diocese. It has a head office in Peterborough, as well as a residential centre and day assessment centre. It also runs a residential centre in Northampton. Families come to the residential centres from neighbouring local authorities and beyond, as well as from the local area. Family Care is part of some pioneering projects and Government initiatives. For example, at Lucas House in Peterborough, we are working at the forefront of assessing attachments between children and their carers.

Using its holistic approach to supporting families, Family Care manages three Sure Start Children's Centres in Peterborough. Health Secretary, Alan Johnson, recently visited to look at a new programme to tackle child obesity.

The residential centres offer assessment opportunities to an ever-widening range of families, including dads as lone carers and parents with learning disabilities.

Family Care has always centred its work on helping families to develop their own resources and find their own solutions – although it no longer sends women to a laundry to achieve this! The support of the diocese is as valued as ever.

Snowfall does not deter Easter's early risers

The Easter Sunday snowfall did not deter worshippers at the ecumenical Hope 08 Sunrise Service in a Peterborough park. Around 120 hardy souls made it for the 6.30am start, despite sub-zero temperatures! The photo shows Sharon Walker, Priest in charge of Peterborough St Mary, preaching.



News from around the diocese

Church grows and Mawsley gets messy for Easter

The oldest houses in Mawsley, a new village 10 minutes drive from Kettering, are just seven years old. The developers continue to build more houses every year. The primary school opened in Autumn 2004 and the village shop last month.

"Mawsley is a village without a church building," says Paul Seator-Burn, Curate of the Four Spires benefice which includes Mawsley. "We have to negotiate our place alongside other interest groups". The first public worship of Mawsley Church was held at Christmas 2006 in the Village Centre (a sports hall) and a pattern of fortnightly services is now established alongside two cell groups, with a third in the pipeline.

The ecumenical church has around 45 worshippers, half of whom are children. "Being such a new church, people quickly become part of the team and are given responsibility," says Paul. "It's exciting to see those who are new in their faith getting stuck in!"

Getting stuck in was exactly what happened at Easter when scores of children and families came to a Messy Church session held in the school hall (photo). Messy Church is an afternoon event, opening and closing with prayer and action songs, with arts and craft activities on a Christian theme. The first of these free events was held in Advert last year. "It's something that simply couldn't happen without the skills and commitment of a number of people who are just beginning to make contact with the church," said Paul



Lots of children from the school came as well as members of Little Lights, the church Mums and Tots group, and recent baptism families. Paul and benefice Priest in Charge, Brian Withington, are familiar figures in the school and take assemblies there. Some older pupils came along as junior helpers.

Messy Church is just one way of responding to the community and telling the Christian story in Mawsley. A Harvest Festival service to open the first horticultural show, and marking Remembrance Sunday in a place with so little history and no war memorial, are others. Recently over 60 villagers, many non-church-goers, collected 35 sacks of rubbish at the annual litter pick organised by the church

"Some from Mawsley attend services at St Andrew's, the 800 year old parish church at nearby Cransley," says Paul, "others prefer Mawsley's non-traditional church format. God is bringing new life to both. Whichever people choose it's so important that we offer a welcome, build community and lay foundations for the future. Like Messy Church, it's about engaging with our communities and not being afraid to get our hands dirty".

www.mawsleychurch.net

News from around the diocese

Diocesan Synod calls for greater support for armed forces

At its meeting on 5 April the Diocesan Synod has called on church members to lobby government, MPs and local authorities for greater practical support for armed forces personnel.

Speakers expressed concern at the reported lack of equipment for front line personnel and especially the apparently inadequate provision of long-term specialist medical and mental care for people who have been injured or traumatised in recent conflicts.

However, those proposing the call strongly emphasised that it was issued out of a pastoral concern and should not be interpreted as an endorsement of any particular armed conflict.

The Synod motion, carried with only one abstention, requested full moral and logistical support for personnel on active service; appropriate and adequate medical and financial support for the injured, traumatised and bereaved; and public recognition of troops returning home.

Church School admissions

The Synod also received a statement correcting some of the misleading and inaccurate media coverage of admission to church schools in Northamptonshire. A statement is on the website at www.peterborough-diocese.org.uk/downloads/press_admissions.pdf

May Events

Sun 4, Hope 08 fun afternoon and organ recital , from 2pm at St Peter & St Paul, Abington. Tony Edwards plays "wedding music". Tel: 01604 631041.

Mon 5, Hambleton Open Gardens . 10am-6pm. Country house, cottage and wild life gardens. 13th Century church. Refreshments all day. Entry £4, children free. In aid of church and village hall

Mon 5 May, Organ recital: Benjamin Horden , Peterborough Cathedral organ scholar. 11.15am at All Saints, Oakham. Lunches. Retiring collection for church.

Sat 10, Licensing of new lay ministers , 11.30am at P'boro Cathedral.

Sat 10, Fair Trade Fair , 9am – 2pm at St Peter's Church, Oundle.

Sun 11, Brockhall Concerts: Barry Palser & The Fenland Feedwarmers with Ray Smith . 7.30pm at St Peter & St Paul, Brockhall. Tickets £12.50 from 01788 892000.

Sat 17 and Sun 18, St Francis', Duston, 40th Anniversary . Flower Festival: *Music from the 60's* . Tel: 01604 753679. www.duston.org.uk

Sat 17, Music in Lyddington : Peter Silverthorne, viola; David Owen Norris, piano. 7.30pm at St Andrew's Lyddington. Tickets: £12 (£14/£2). Tel: 01572 820017.

Thurs 22, "Totally Wired". A seminar on young people and the technology revolution. 7.30pm at Christ the King, Kettering. Tickets £5. Booking essential: steve@junction7.org

Sat 24 – Mon 26, Flower Festival and Cricket Match at Launde Abbey . Festival 11am-4pm Sat, 2-5pm Sun, 11am-6pm Mon. £5 entry. Cricket match 1-6pm Mon. Tel: 01572 717254.

Mon 26, Organ recital: Philip Underwood . 11.15am at All Saints, Oakham. Ploughman's lunches. Retiring collection for church.