

A Diamond Ending

“I started as the ‘temporary’ organist here in 1955.”

It was a diamond ending for Mac Bennett’s long service as organist at St George’s, Semington. His final service was his 60th harvest festival.

“I first came to St George’s in 1947”, Mac explains, “when I was at Trowbridge Boys’ High School. I got

friendly with a lad from Semington, who invited a few of us over for tea one Sunday. All went well, until we met his mother, who said we could come round every Sunday as long as we went to Church afterwards.

“That’s how I came to St George’s. Soon I was roped into the choir. Although I’d never played the organ, I’d had piano lessons as a lad, and could read music. So the vicar asked me to start playing temporarily when the organist left. After 40 years, they finally decided to make me permanent in 1995!

“I still want to come to services, especially in the evenings, but for now I’m enjoying Sunday lie-ins

after 60 years of being up for a 9.15 service!

David Wildsmith, Churchwarden at St George’s, added, “Mac has provided sterling service for 60 years. He is as well known for his good humour as his musicianship, and is full of tales of life as a church musician.

“We gave him a presentation at the harvest supper, and he’s welcome to come and play the organ any time.”

After all, as the sweater Mac wore to his final service said, ‘*organists don’t retire, they merely scale down*’.



Monthly Letter

The Ven Paul Taylor
Archdeacon of Sherborne

We are just coming to the end of the season of Harvest festivals. As an Archdeacon I go to more than most people. Looking back over the past month or so has got me thinking.

As a parish priest in London my experience of Harvest tended towards the romantic. Admittedly, the gifts went to help the homeless at St. Botolph’s, Aldgate, but the engagement with agricultural life had more to do with the idyllic pastoral scenes reflected in Victorian hymnody, than with any real understanding of food production. The lives of those involved in

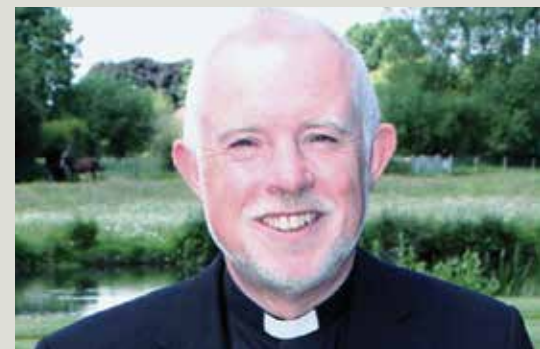
agriculture seemed a long way away and their issues didn’t really touch us.

Not surprisingly in urban areas there’s little, if any, connection between the supermarket food people buy and the story and situation that lies behind it. Even though I have lived and worked in a largely rural area for the past eleven years, I am challenged by how much I still have to learn about what’s going on around me in the world of farming.

For all of us, Harvest is a time for collective reconnection with

agricultural life. As consumers we need to know about the economic and social issues in food production, so we can make informed political and moral decisions. It is also a time

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for reconnection with the natural world. We are fortunately starting to realise that our modern day living has massively damaged the environment and that we need to live differently.

Above all, Harvest is a time for reconnection with the reality that half of the world's population lives in abject poverty, and that 20,000

Rolling Out The Red Carpet

St Katharine's Church in Holt has quite literally rolled out the red carpet for new or returning churchgoers.

The church has rebranded Back to Church Sunday as 'Red Carpet Sunday', when it also welcomes people to church with a red rose and a bacon buttie. 30 first timers joined the regular congregation of 80 at the service.

"So many people have never had any experience of Church", said Rector,

children die daily from diseases resulting from malnutrition and contaminated water. We need to strive, therefore, for a world in which all are fed.

There should be nothing romantic about Harvest. It is a time for some serious re-engagement and action.



the Revd Andrew Evans, "So we find that the idea of welcoming them back, doesn't quite hit the right spot.

"Understanding the extraordinary welcome home God offers to everyone who comes close to Him is the key to extending the kind of welcome we want to offer to all."

The Shadow of Death

"It brought us much closer together as a family and brought me closer to God."

Steve Connor has the powerful build typical of a lorry driver and former police officer. It's hard to imagine he was recently close to death.

"I was kicked by a pony and thought no more of it, but it seems the wound was infected. One day in September, I felt so ill driving my lorry, I went home sick. When I saw the GP, she did some tests and called an ambulance right away!



"The consultant told me I had septicaemia and had treatment come any later I might have died. I spent days in hospital with a temperature of 40C.

"My partner Sam brought me a book of daily Bible readings, and after that I felt like someone had their arm around me, like you might around a child.

"I'm recovering slowly and am still off work. I've realised how fragile life is and how we need to make the most of it.

Sam and Steve are relatively new to church, and that decision took even them out of the blue. "About five years ago", says Steve, "I heard a Bishop on Radio 2 talking about Back to Church Sunday. That got me thinking, so we started exploring local churches and found ourselves at home in Box

A Break From It All

22 families enjoyed a week's summer holiday in Sidmouth this year thanks to the Mothers' Union.

The *Away From It All* holidays provide a needed break to families in situations of severe stress such as relationship break-up, redundancy or serious illness. Families enjoy games, crafts, swimming and entertainment. Some youngsters had their first ever visit to a beach.

Wilma Bromilow, who helps organise the holidays said, "We get nominations from churches, refuges and social services. Our volunteers have a rewarding and fun week too!"

If you would like to nominate a family or volunteer, speak to Ian and Wilma Bromilow on **01258 880044** or **igbromilow@gmail.com**.



Church. I'd never heard God speaking until I went to a housegroup there.

"We moved to Shalbourne three years ago, and I was soon asked to be a churchwarden at St Michael and All Angels. The Church is the centre of village life, and I love giving something to the community and meeting such a diversity of people who pass through.

"We have five kids aged between 2 and 12, the two eldest from Sam's first marriage, so it's always busy at our house! I've started bell-ringing in local churches and the two eldest have got involved in that as well.

"The near death experience also made us think that after ten years together, it might be time to get married!"