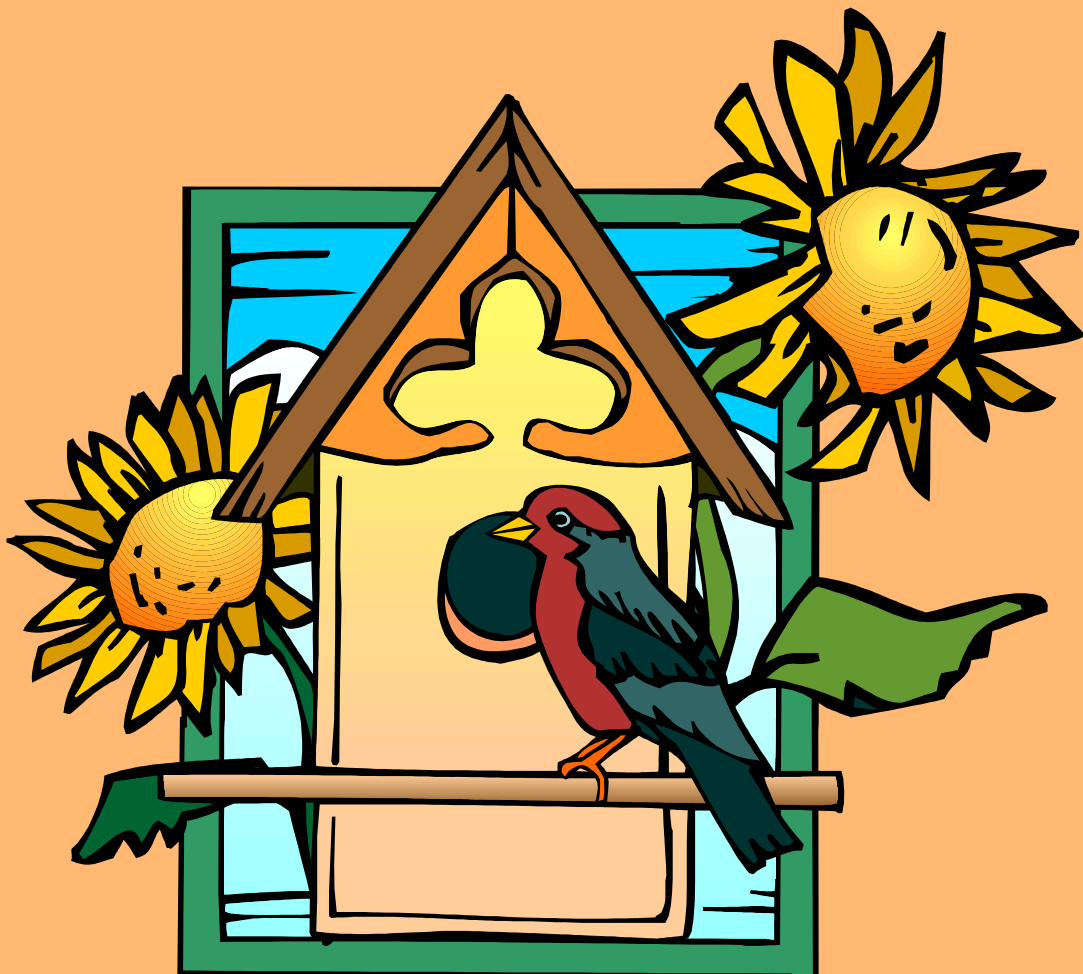


April 2005

Gridiron

The Magazine of Saint Laurence's Church, Upton.



From the Editor:

Dear Friends,

This month sees the Global Week of Action for Trade Justice, starting on Sunday 10th April. Free trade doesn't necessarily free the peoples of poorer and developing countries from poverty and the governments of the world need to understand this and act. I hope we'll be able to support this initiative with prayer at least.

I've included an item on Mary Magdalene in this issue, as she's an important player in the dream of Easter that we have just celebrated and has featured in the lay press recently as a character in the best-selling novel *The Da Vinci Code*. This has proved a boon to conspiracy theorists and has such an impact that the Vatican has appointed a senior cleric to debunk it.

Thanks to those who have provided me with "bits and pieces" for the magazine. I still think there is more going on in our church family that we should communicate to the outside community and the *Gridiron* is an important channel for this, even more so now it is posted on our website. I can't write the whole thing myself and I need your help! This is now the only magazine in the Parish.

Yours in Christ,

Dave



SERVICES AT ST LAURENCE'S

1st Sunday: 8.00am Holy Communion (BCP)
 11.00am Family Service

2nd Sunday: 11.00am Sung Communion

3rd Sunday: 9.45am Children's Service
 11.00am Sung Communion

4th Sunday: 11.00am Sung Communion

Thursdays: 10.00am Holy Communion



Wanted: Stamps

Mons is collecting used postage stamps which can be sold to raise money for good causes. If you can collect some, Barbara or I would be pleased to receive them on Mons' behalf.

Dave Kill

Taking Action Together

‘Many people are ridden with guilt and feel responsible for not being able to save or protect their young children or elderly dependants.’
(Revd Ebenezer Joseph, Sri Lanka).

The Global Week of Action for Trade Justice (10-16 April) will bring together campaigners from around the world in a single call for action. Campaigners from the UK and Ireland will join with peasant farmers’ organisations, women’s groups and churches from countries as far apart as Argentina, Bangladesh and South Korea. This unique event will call for an end to unjust trade policies being forced on the poor.

Mamadou Diouf and Dame Sall from RADI, Christian Aid’s partner in Senegal, explained what the campaign meant to them. ‘Cheap imports mean our local producers cannot sell their products in Senegal and so we are proposing that the Senegalese government increase tariffs on some products like rice and introduce seasonal quotas on others like onions. This would allow local producers to earn a living from agriculture again. We are planning activities from February 2005 and farmers, NGOs, students, musicians and journalists are all involved.

In the UK, the highlight of the week will be a vigil in central London over the night of 15-16 April. It will end with a dawn procession past Downing Street calling on the Prime Minister to ‘Wake Up to Trade Justice’. Earlier in the week, campaigners will be organising local events, including church services, fasts and Vote for Trade Justice events.

This year the UK government will be in a uniquely influential position on the world stage. It hosts the G8 meeting of rich nations in July and holds the presidency of the European Union in the second half of the year. Campaigners are calling on the government to stop forcing poor countries to adopt free trade policies in return for debt relief and aid.

Elsewhere in the world, campaigners are targeting local governments as well as international institutions. In Ghana, campaigners are sending a chicken to each member of Parliament to highlight the need for a tax on the import of poultry from Europe. The Ghanaian government was forced to drop plans for such a tax under pressure from the International Monetary Fund.

The power of so many people joining together to take action will be phenomenal. As a campaigner from Brazil said recently: 'You are with us and we are with you. Together we can face the challenge of free trade.'

From the Christian Aid website.

What is the Global Week of Action for Trade Justice?

A Week of Action from 10-16 April 2005, where as many campaigns as possible across the world active on trade and neo-liberalism come together in united action. The idea is for all of the organisations, networks and movements to take action in their own national and regional campaigns. The aim is to challenge the free trade myth and put forward alternatives by delivering the biggest global mobilisation we have seen.

Who are the organisers?

Anyone and everyone! The Week of Action is not led or organised by any one organisation or campaign. It is a campaign idea, coming from the International Trade Campaign Conference that anyone can get involved in. It is a opportunity for all movements and campaigns active on trade or neo-liberalism to join together in united action.

What are we calling for?

There is no detailed policy demand for the week of action, rather the week of action seeks to bring together and build on the reality of existing trade campaigns across the world. We are united by the 'call of action' We call upon all social movements, mass organisations, local and national campaigns and coalitions to join together to organise a Global Week of Action from 10-16 April 2005.

Our message is

- **NO to the rich and powerful imposing unjust trade agreements, indiscriminate liberalisation and privatisation and on the poor.**
- **YES to everyone's right to food, a livelihood, water, health and education.**

What type of event could I run?

There is no one action that everyone must take together instead there is flexibility for different campaigns to participate as appropriate. Any event, big or small can make a difference, and has a part to play in the Week of Action. Some suggestions of events include;

- A grain march, where on the same day millions take a handful of grain to a symbolic location,
- A lobby of parliament
- Trade tribunal, where a panel of experts investigate the impacts of free trade and privatisation.
- A local or national vote for Trade Justice
- A religious service
- A carnival procession
- A festival with seminars, drama, music, debates etc

What is wrong with trade?

Free trade has increased poverty As the world gets richer, so should the poor. But they aren't. Over the last 20 years the rich and powerful have pushed the idea that only free trade and privatisation can solve the problems of global poverty. This has not worked. Millions remain trapped in poverty and it is the institutions, conditions and rules of international trade, more than anything else, that keep poor people poor.

Threats and bullying For years, rich countries, and the international institutions they control, such as the World Trade Organisation, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, have been quietly forcing poor countries to follow their economic 'advice'. Through a mixture of persuasion, threats and bullying and conditions attached to loans and aid poor countries are being forced to open their markets to foreign competition, to stop helping their vulnerable producers and to privatise essential services.

Double standards Rich countries often claim to support free trade. They say free trade is the way to poverty reduction. However despite this rhetoric, rich countries tend only to follow their own advice when they are certain to benefit. So whilst demanding that poor countries remove every possible trade barrier and privatise their basic services, rich countries continue to subsidise and protect their own industries and farmers.

Friday

As constant as tides that flow and ebb,
As sure as a spider when spinning its web,
As precious as gold that will never rust
Is a friend who is faithful and whom you can trust.
So if you are lucky enough to be blessed
With a friendship like that then don't let it rest.
Don't take it for granted, but make sure that you
Are equally loyal and friendly and true.

Submitted by Beryl Bond

MARY MAGDALENE

According to the scriptures, on Good Friday she was at the foot of the Cross when Jesus was crucified. On Easter Sunday, she visited His sepulchre, finding it empty. After informing the disciples, she remained while they went home. Her perseverance was rewarded when she met Jesus who told her to spread the word that He was to ascend into Heaven.

Despite her brief, albeit important, role in the Christian religion, Mary Magdalene is one of the Bible's most enigmatic figures. Throughout the ages, her image has changed with the times. Over the centuries, she has been depicted as a prostitute, a femme fatale, a muse, a teacher and a preacher. The word "maudlin" derives from her reputation as a tearful penitent. She used to be referred to as Mary Magdalene: the Sinner. According to a homily by Pope Saint Gregory from the 6th Century, Mary was filled with sorrow over her sin (of being either an adulteress or prostitute or both), anointed Christ, washed His feet with her hair and was exorcised by Him. Mary Magdalene became the patron saint of reformed prostitutes, perfumers and hairdressers, among others. But Pope Gregory is thought to have misrepresented the real version of events. Historians suggest that with a largely illiterate population, he had decided that there were too many important figures called Mary in the Bible. There was Jesus's mother Mary, Mary of Bethany, sister of Lazarus and Martha, and Mary of Magdala (a city near Galilee). Things were too complicated. So he created a mythical figure comprising the last two and adding to the mix an unnamed adulteress whom Luke mentions as having been saved from stoning by Jesus after repenting her sins.

In so doing, Gregory created an example of the power of Christ's love to save even those who have fallen. She became the role model for those who have erred but who can be saved. The Protestant and Orthodox Churches never bought this version of Mary Magdalene and, in 1969, the Catholic Church adjusted the record and claimed Gregory's version had been an error and that Mary Magdalene was not and never had been a prostitute. The Catholic revision repositioned Mary Magdalene as a faithful follower and first witness.

Nevertheless, her fallen woman image has stuck. The Contemporary English Version Youth Bible, published last year, describes Mary Magdalene as having had "something of a dodgy past". Then there are the artistic depictions of her over the centuries. Her most important role, as the penitent saint, is perhaps best expressed by Carlo Dolci's 17th-century oil painting, *The Penitent Magdalen*, in which she is

portrayed as tearful and haunted. Among 19th-century paintings of her as the femme fatale is Beraud's Mary Magdalen at the House of the Pharisee, where she kneels dramatically at the foot of Jesus while businessmen eat their evening meal.

Modern feminist literature sees Mary as a potent female role model; a possible argument in favour of female priests. Recently, Mary Magdalene has been a central figure in novelist Dan Brown's worldwide bestseller, *The Da Vinci Code*. Brown has combined the interpretation of the Gnostic Gospel of Philip that suggests Mary Magdalene and Jesus had a sexual relationship, with a medieval French notion. What he ends up with is the Holy Grail as the bloodline descended from Jesus and Mary Magdalene which the Church is supposed to have covered up, along with the female role in Christianity. The hero of the book, an expert in art symbolism, believes that the figure seated next to Jesus in Leonardo Da Vinci's *Last Supper* is actually Mary Magdalene.

In reality, Mary Magdalene is mentioned only 12 times in the New Testament and the only suggestion that she might have been a sinner comes from Luke. He describes her as being among a group of women "out of whom seven devils were gone forth". But Luke doesn't say whether she is to be identified with the "sinner" of the previous chapter.

It would be easy to say that Mary Magdalene has been much maligned over the years. But her image, nevertheless, has remained a positive one, that of a brave woman of substance whom Jesus entrusted to play an important part in the defining moment of the faith.

From the BBC website

**MOTHERS' UNION – UPTON-CUM-CHALVEY SLOUGH BRANCH
PROGRAMME FOR 2005**

All are open meetings

Morning meetings: 3rd Wednesday of the month at St Laurence's.

Doors open 10.30am, Service at 10.40am, Talk at 11pm, Coffee 12noon approx., followed by a light lunch.

Afternoon meetings: 2nd Wednesday of the month at St Peter's 3pm.

Meeting followed by tea.

Evening meetings: 1st Tuesday of every month at St Laurence's,

7.30pm, followed by supper, beginning on 6th January.

Prayer Group: Last Wednesday of the month at 8pm; Winter months at St Laurence's, Summer months at St Mary's.

Tue 1 Mar Neil Mullins: Feed the Children

Wed 16 Mar Bert Leonard: Talk of Lent

Wed 20 Apr Holy Communion & AGM

Tue 3 May Joan Jenks: Medical Bygones

Wed 18 May Fishermen's Mission

NEXT MONTH'S GRIDIRON

Please let me have any articles for the May issue by **Sunday 17th April** at the latest!

Dave

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Revd Derek West	(Team Vicar – St Peter's)	01753 520725
Revd Henriët Oostra	(Associate Minister)	01753 531267
Revd Allen Walker	(Community Chaplain)	01753 770149
District Churchwarden:	Marie Bryant	01753 551717
District Churchwarden:	David Kill	01628 776856
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St Laurence's Church is part of the Anglican parish of upton-cum-Chalvey, which also includes St Mary's and St Peter's.

Web-site: saint-laurence.org