



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND

## The Parish of St Peter & St Mary New Fishbourne and the Parish of St Mary the Virgin Apuldram

[www.fishbournechurch.org.uk](http://www.fishbournechurch.org.uk) [www.apuldramchurch.co.uk](http://www.apuldramchurch.co.uk)

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### OCTOBER 2009

Dear Parishioners

Very recently Lesley and I visited London's O2 Arena for the first time. We'd seen the Millennium Dome, as it was first called, many times from afar but never had we been so close or gone inside. Our reason for going was to attend what we hoped would be a spectacular event entitled 'Ben Hur Live'. The press release said, 'the show is based on the novel, Ben Hur - a Tale of Christ, by Lew Wallace and tells the story of the life and destiny of the Jewish prince Judah Ben Hur at the beginning of the 1st century'. Well we'd not read the book, but like so many of you; we had seen the famous 1959 film adaptation starring Charlton Heston as Judah Ben Hur.

In fact the film is subtitled, "A Tale of the Christ", a fact I'd not overlooked because the detail had never actually registered.

The story tells of a the young Judah Ben Hur taken into slavery and after a being beaten by Roman soldiers, is given a cup of water by a passing stranger, an act which gives Judah hope. A soldier attempts to end the act of kindness, but he steps back, disabled by a look from the stranger. Jesus, the stranger who says nothing, appears rarely in the story but is spoken of by those who have met him. The story ends with a crucified Jesus, the sick healed and apparently irreconcilable relationships are healed too.

This story was portrayed in the largest indoor concert venue and arena in Great Britain in front of approximately 15,000 men, women and children of different nationalities, languages, cultures and faith. Much of the original story by Lew Wallace and details which were in the film have been edited out but so many important points in the old Story remain. It is soon moving to many other European cities. It's an old story, but one that many have never heard. Theatre, film and television can help us in surprising ways to see an old story afresh or convey an old story to new eyes and ears for the first time. Why not fish the old film out of your video or DVD collection and give it another viewing. If nothing else, it reminds us of how such simple and inexpensive acts of kindness can be of such great value.

In the words of one Grand 'ole Oprey singer, "Let me be a little kinder, let me be a little blinder, to the faults of those around me let me praise a little more. Let me be when I am weary, just a little bit more cheery. Think a little more of others and little less of me".

This story, although of a bygone age, is strangely contemporary and that will challenge people again if they have eyes to see and ears to hear.



Love and Best wishes to you all

Clive

*Our aim is to be a Christian faith community, which will provide a spiritual and theological family base from which Christ will be proclaimed by word and example in the wider community, now and in the future*