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A Wesley for today

John Baker writes of a memorable occasion

On Sunday 20 July, at a Parish Eucharist and Service of Healing in St Giles's, the congregation had the joy of welcoming the Revd Lokendra Abhayaratne to preside and preach. Lokki, as he prefers to be known, has recently retired from the archdeaconry of Galle in Sri Lanka, which includes the parish of Hambantota, with which St Giles's has close links. He was visiting Cambridge for a few days, accompanied by his wife Mohini and his cousin Diane.

The service was not very well supported, partly at least due to holidays, but those who were away missed a treat. Apart from the pleasure of meeting Lokki, Mohini and Diane, those of us who were present heard a splendid sermon, preached in the old "revivalist" style, which had the walls of St Giles's literally echoing (no need for a microphone!). The subject matter was challenging indeed, but it was delivered in such a style and with such humour that even I, undoubtedly afflicted by "double auricular clearance" (see below), could remember it (well, most of it). Amongst other things, Loki confronted us with the following "five common Anglican diseases", and asked us to consider carefully and prayerfully whether we were afflicted with any of them.

- **Aphonia**: Paralysis of the vocal cords, preventing the sufferer from joining in singing or responses other than in a whisper at most.

- **Chancelophobia**: A morbid fear of sitting near the front of a church.

- **Ocular convexity**: An eye disease causing the smallest coin to look large when the collection bag or plate is passed round.

- **Ocular concavity**: Another eye condition, this one rendering the sufferer unable to see a church building.

- **Double auricular clearance:** A condition whereby words pass through one ear canal into the head and directly out of the other.

I have already admitted to suffering from the last condition. I think I also show definite signs of Aponia, although there are those who regard this as a blessing as far as my singing is concerned. As for the others, well.... I leave it to readers to decide, for me and for themselves. Other delights of this very enjoyable occasion were hearing Lokki and Mohini singing the Lord's prayer in Sinhalese, to a guitar accompaniment played by Lokki himself, and being finally blessed in Tamil, Sinhalese and English.

After the service there was a chance to talk to the visitors, before and during a splendid lunch prepared by Sylvia and her team of helpers, all of whom deserve at least one Michelin star (Castle Hill division). Particularly fixed in my memory is the immense bowl of very thick cream (an addiction to which, I discovered, both Lokki and I share) which accompanied the strawberries and the other delectable puddings.