

# The Blessing of the Bicycles



**Whitsun Eve**  
**Saturday May 22, 2010**  
**Red Wing, Minnesota**

## **The Blessing of the Bicycles** **By the Quicker Vicar, Matthew Cole**

### **Collect & Blessing**

Vicar: Remember Lord, that many of our bicycles have risen from the dead, much like yourself. Bless these our bikes, let not our hubs spew forth their gears, protect and shield our tyres from flats, let our cotter pins remain without blemish, save our thighs from unquenchable fire on the Maiden Rock Hill, and though we are not worthy, in thy mercy protect us from undue headwinds.

Congregation: Amen

### **In Memoriam** *(one serious moment)*

**Phil Wood** died aged 86 in Roseville, California. Wood was born in Indiana in 1926, served in the U.S. Navy as a radio operator in World War II and worked as a mechanical engineer where he helped develop equipment for freeze drying food. Frustrated with having to continually adjust his track bike hubs, he produced sealed bearing hubs and started Phil Wood & Co. on April Fool's Day 1971. Although he sold the company in 1991 and retired to a farm near Baxter, Iowa, Phil components remain among the finest made. I expect that the fleets of the assembled Nutters contain many Phil bottom brackets and hubs, and that some of the hubs here today contain Phil's Tenacious Oil. Phil's motto was Build it strong. Keep it simple. Make it work. May he rest in peace.

## The Reading & the Ten Speed Commandments

This is the book of the generations. The first bicycle was a single speed, Godspeed, but after that it got complicated. Sprockets begat sprockets and cables begat kinks. Celerifere begat Draisienne begat Macmillan begat Michaux begat Ariel begat Bayliss Thomas begat Lawson begat Rover begat Boneshaker begat Ordinary begat Raleigh.

And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth in a critical mass, God saw that the wickedness of man was great and he did not like to yield unto anyone on the road not even his mother, so He directed Noah to build an ark made of gopher wood and he said unto Noah, of every riding thing of all types, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark; they shall be regular and mixte. There went in unto Noah into the ark two by two every type of bicycle: one to ride and one for spare parts. And Noah gathered two touring bikes and two mountain bikes; two recumbents and two tandems; two road racing bikes and two cross bikes; two BMX bikes and two three speeds; also four unicycles, just in case there was a misunderstanding, and a brace of Bromptons, as their folded countenance didst pleaseth Him. And God said there might be some strong winds in the Southeast. And it rained for forty days and forty nights, then drizzled for another fortnight, and the ark went upon the face of the waters.

And God remembered Noah, and every cycling thing, and assuaged the waters; the fountains also of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained. And it came to pass that Noah opened a door on the ark and set loose Japheth on a unicycle, and God said, Behold, this is a solemn covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature: that a man on a unicycle is a hilarious sight. Also, the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh

and I will not again curse the ground for man's sake; man himself can curse it as he creepeth upon the face of the Bay City Hill.

A bit later, God spake unto Moses, saying, Here are a few ground rules, I hath numbered them for thy convenience:

- I. Thou shalt hold no other races above the Tour de France.
- II. Thou shalt not make unto thee helmets which cost more than \$150.
- III. Thou shalt not take My name in vain everytime thou gettest a flat tyre.
- IV. Remember to anoint thy chain with oil, to keep it rolling.
- V. Honour the crosswalk and those walking upon the face of it.
- VI. Thou shalt not ignore other road users, nor cycle recklessly upon the sidewalk.
- VII. Thou shalt not stealeth bicycles.
- VIII. Thou shalt not kill, except bicycle thieves.
- IX. Thou shalt not runneth red lights, nor Stop signs, unless nobody is around.
- X. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor his Rudge, nor his Higgins, nor his Dunelt, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

And finally, forgetteth not the Titanium Rule: Signal unto others as thou wouldst have others signal unto thou.

**All:** Amen

## The Hymn "I Sing a Song of the Chaps on Bikes"

Please join in singing:



I sing a song of the chaps on bikes; \_\_\_\_\_ pa - tient and brave and  
 They loved their three speed tour so well, and \_\_\_\_\_ this love \_\_\_\_\_ made them  
 They lived not on - ly in a - ges past, there are gen - tle - men cy - clists



true, who ate and drank and \_\_\_\_\_ rode real slow on the  
 strong. They stayed well right for \_\_\_\_\_ safe - ty's sake for the  
 still. The world is bright with the cy - cling chaps who \_\_\_\_\_



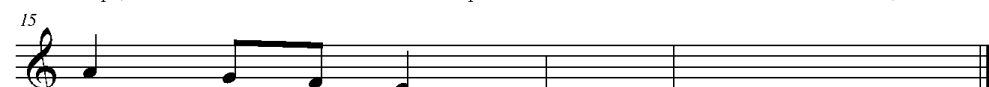
ride they \_\_\_\_\_ loved and knew. \_\_\_\_\_ One's name was Noel and an -  
 whole of the two days long. And \_\_\_\_\_ one was a sai - lor and  
 love to ride Bri - tish steel. You can meet them in pubs, or in



oth - er was Jon, and \_\_\_\_\_ then there was Dave and \_\_\_\_\_  
 one was a priest and \_\_\_\_\_ one was \_\_\_\_\_ chased by a  
 lanes, or at sea, or in church, or in trains, or in



don't for - get Ron! They are all of them Gen - tle - men and I mean, chaps,  
 fierce, wild \_\_\_\_\_ beast! And there's not a - ny rea - son, no, not the least, why  
 shops, or at tea. For those chaps on \_\_\_\_\_ bikes are Nut - ters like me, and



help me to be one, too.  
 I should n't be one, too.  
 I mean to be one, too!

## The Psalm

Adapted from King James Bible, 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm

Please read responsively

Vicar: The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

Congregation: He maketh me to lie down at lunchtime:  
 he leadeth me beside back waters.

Vicar: He restoreth my bike:

Congregation: he leadeth me in the bikepaths of righteousness for his  
 name's sake.

Vicar: Yea, though I ride through the valley of the Mississippi,  
 I will fear no evil: for thou art with me;

Congregation: thy rod brakes and thy Dynohub™ they comfort me.

Vicar: Thou preparest a table before me in the Eagle's Nest Cof-  
 feeshop:  
 thou anointest my chain with oil;

Congregation: now my chaincase runneth over.

Vicar: Surely goodness and Sturmeiy  
 shall follow me all the days of my life:

Congregation: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

## Dismissal

Vicar: Make straight roads for our feet,

Congregation: so that the feeble may not be turned out of the way, but  
may be made strong.  
(*Hebrews 12:13*)

Vicar: In the name of the Trinity, High Gear, Direct Drive and  
Low, go forth and ride.

All: RAmen

† † †

Service adapted by Matthew Cole, the Quicker Vicar, 2010.

Reading adapted by Matthew Cole from "The Cyclist's Apocrypha"

*What Would Jesus Ride?*

## Notes on Today's Service

Tomorrow is Pentecost, also known as Whitsunday, or White Sunday, so today is Whitsun Eve. Pentecost is 50 days after Easter and so moves around year to year. In Christian tradition, Pentecost is when the Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles and they began speaking in tongues. In northern Europe it became a popular date for Baptisms. In Britain, the newly baptized would wear white robes, hence the White Sunday, Whitsun. Also in Britain, Whitsun Ales (referring both to beer specifically and boisterous celebrations generally) were popular and involved boys and men getting drunk in the streets, young people dancing, bowling, and shooting their bows and otherwise carrying on with an enthusiasm more vigorous than the strictly religious celebration required. This was repressed by those humourless Puritans in 1603; after the Restoration, Whitsun Ales revived in more modest form but declined

with industrialization and the resulting commercial imperatives which destroyed so much social cohesion and leisure time. The remnants of the Ales eventually evolved into the village church fêtes that carry on to this day. British and Empire schools often used Christian names for their terms. Saint Andrews University had Michaelmas (September 29), Candlemas (February 2, which became Groundhog Day in the U.S. except Alaska, where it's Marmot Day) and Whitsun terms until the 1990s, when they changed to semesters; the University of Glasgow still calls its Spring term Whitsun Term. The Commandment, Reading and Psalm were adapted from the King James Version of the Bible (first issued 1611, most commonly cited edition is the 1769). This was an update of the first translations of the Bible into English using the new medium of print, a controversial political as well as religious act at the time, by William Tyndale. The Roman Catholic authorities looked upon this with disfavor and had him strangled and then burned him at the stake, presumably just to make sure, on 6 October 1536. The reading is based on Genesis chapters 6 to 9, in which God floods the world and kills everyone except Noah's family and a couple of individuals of each animal species, including mosquitoes, deer ticks and fleas, all of which we could have done without thank you very much. Noah is also mentioned as the first husbandman and the inventor of wine so I'm glad he made it! Noah gets a whole chapter in the Qur'an as well, where he is regarded as a prophet and messenger although that version says 72 others survived as well. The reading was adapted from The Cyclist's Apocrypha which appeared in Britain's Cycling Plus in January 2001 but it's a bit vague as to who the actual author is. The hymn "I Sing a Song of the Chaps on Bikes" is new this year, an adaptation of "I Sing a Song of the Saints of God" by Lesbia Scott, the wife of a Royal Navy officer who wrote the song for her own children. She published a book of her own hymns for children in 1929. This tune was written by a retired American Episcopal priest, made it into the American Armed Forces hymnal and the Episcopal 1940 hymnal and became a much beloved hymn although it is virtually unknown in the UK despite all the lanes and tea stuff. The final "RAmen" at the close of the service is our interdenominational nod to Pastafarians, those who believe in the Flying Spaghetti Monster and think they have been touched by His Noodly Appendage. The Vicar Matthew Cole was ordained by the Universal Life Church following a rigorous screening process consisting mostly of making sure he had a valid email account. In actual life, Matt's wife Karla is the Music Director at an Episcopal Church in the Twin Cities where Matt sings in the choir most Sundays from early September to, well, Whitsunday.