

NEWSLETTER FOR APRIL 2012

Holy Week and Easter

The week begins with the commemoration of Christ's entry into Jerusalem, with a palm procession around church and the congregational reading of one of the Passion gospels (this year, Mark). We then focus on energies on the 'three days' - the sequence of services from Maundy Thursday night to Easter night and morning. This is best understood as a single extended celebration of our Lord's passion, death and resurrection, for each service flows into the next.

Earlier on Maundy Thursday we have our school's Easter service at 9.30am - unlike other schools which broke up earlier, this is their last day of term, and a good opportunity for us to share the Easter story; and also the service at St Paul's at 10.30am [all welcome] where all clergy and lay ministers renew their vows with our bishops, and the oils are consecrated.

Maundy Thursday: at 7pm we gather around the table in the panelled room to remember the supper Jesus shared with his disciples, with all its Passover overtones, moving into church to share the sacrament of holy communion. At the end, the altar is stripped and left bare, and consecrated bread and wine from the service, for communion the next day, is taken to the side chapel, where we keep a watch of prayer for as long as we are able (compare the disciples in Gethsemane).

Good Friday: we join with Churches Together in Stepney and Wapping in a Walk of Witness, with readings, hymns and prayers along the way - outside, not inside! The route and approximate timings are

- 11am:* Methodist Mission, Whitechapel Road
- 11.15am:* Stepney Meeting House, Stepney Way
- 11.30am:* St Dunstan's Stepney
- 11.45am:* Departure Café, Commercial Road
- 12.00am:* Royal Foundation of St. Katherine (if time permits)
- 12.15pm:* St. Mary & St. Michael, Commercial Road
- 12.30pm:* Watney Street Market (hot cross buns at Percy Ingle's)

and at 2pm we have our own Liturgy of the day: readings (including St John's Passion), proclamation of the cross, intercessions, and communion from the elements consecrated the previous night (because Christ's offering of himself at the Supper and on the cross are one and the same).

Easter Eve: a day of preparation for the festival, in our homes and at church - so all are invited to come for coffee and cakes at 10am and to give a couple of hours to cleaning the church and getting it ready for Easter. We gather again at 8pm to light the Easter fire in the courtyard, taking light into the darkened church for the vigil readings; we renew our baptismal vows and share in the first communion of Easter.

Easter Day: a joyful celebration of Christ's resurrection, with some of the elements of the previous night's service for those who could not be present then, followed by a celebration lunch to mark not only our Easter joy but Michael Page's birthday! (All welcome, but notice needed.)

Marathon Sunday, and Patronal Festival (22 & 23 April)

All hands to the pump, please, for Marathon Sunday, when we have our service at 9am and then set to work providing refreshments for those who will be lining the streets for the Marathon - a dry run for what it will be like, for several weeks, during the Olympic and Paralympic period! Offers of help to Allan Ramanoop.

The next day we keep our patronal festival, and will be inviting churches in the deanery to join us. The preacher will be the Revd Rod Green, Associate Rector of St Paul Shadwell (who lives over

the wall from church, in Mulberry Court). It will be followed by a bring and share meal.

Orthodox London Mission

The Mission's first Saturday morning liturgy here on the eve of Palm Sunday was very special, as it also included, during the preliminary rites in church (the 'raising of incense' and morning prayers) the baptism of Athanasios, the infant son of Father Yonas Tesheme, one of the priests of the Eritrean Orthodox diocese of Europe, in the panelled room (appropriately, since until the 1870s this was the church's principal baptistery). An image of him, held by Abba Seraphim their bishop, is above - a potent symbol for Easter. For the baptism, a large plastic tank was brought in, and the naked infant immersed three times (back, left and right), chrismated (anointed), and then dressed in miniature priestly robes. The family then joined the main liturgy and in due course Athanasios received his first communion, along with over 30 others who attended. The Orthodox tradition has always been clear that baptism and chrismation is a full sacramental initiation into the church, and is therefore consistent in giving communion to babes in arms (a few grains of bread, and a smear of wine on the lips). There is something very appropriate about this, in comparison with the Church of England's struggle to make sense of confirmation, and the age at which children should become communicants. Something for us to reflect on!

We want to encourage all members of our congregation to attend one of the Saturday liturgies - future dates are 5 May, 9 June and 7 July, at 9.30am, but in Orthodox fashion you can turn up at any time - the main liturgy starts at about 10.30am and finishes about an hour later. Unlike the baptism, which was in Ge'ez or Ethiopic, the main liturgy is all in English, and includes some well-known hymns based on the Liturgy of St James (e.g. *Let all mortal flesh keep silence*, and *From glory to glory advancing*), so there is plenty in which we can join. Watch out in the Creed, where they say that the Holy Spirit 'proceeds from the Father' but omit the words 'and the Son'. This reflects an ancient debate between eastern and western Christians, which the Rector can explain to anyone who's interested! Anglicans may not receive holy communion at Orthodox services, but are invited to share in the *antidoron* - that part of the loaf that is not consecrated, but blessed and offered to all as a sign of charity.

Have a look at the pictures and video clips on their website <http://www.britishorthodox.org/> to see the ingenuity with which they create Orthodox liturgical space in our church (about which they are very complimentary) - for instance, using roll-up blinds to create the *iconostasis* or icon-screen separating the chancel and sanctuary.

Highway Neighbours

By now you may have seen the banners on our railings, and all who live in the St Katharine's & Wapping, and Shadwell, wards should be receiving a flyer through your door about this project, described last month, bringing together the Highway churches, mosques and other partners in a project (funded by Near Neighbours) to develop community links in preparation for the Olympic period, so that we can respond effectively to some of the difficulties that we know will arise then, and build relationships for the future as well. Our church is one of the sponsors of this, and we intend to play an appropriate part, as resources allow, as things develop. More information on the website <http://www.highwayneighbours.org/> - watch this space.

Although not specifically a Highway Neighbours project, a Fun Day 'We love Shadwell', was held on 31 March on Watney Market Piazza, with many of the Highway Neighbours partners involved. [Did you know that it now has a 'piazza'? It is the small space created above the Overground line at the southern end of the street, and has stone slabs with some telling reminders of its past - *do you remember...?* - such as one of the original branches of Sainsbury's, and its Jewish legacy: for more details, see the page on our website <http://www.stgite.org.uk/media/watneymarket.html>. So (as the Rector pointed out when called to the microphone on the day) this was an entirely appropriate

location for an event which invited local people to say what they valued about our area, looking not only to the past but to the future, and our hopes for community-building.] There were many 'post-its' saying why people value this as a place to live - 'a beehive', 'I met my future wife/husband here'. but most telling, simply 'it's the place where we live.'

Concerts

March saw three very different concerts in church. On 17th, two Trinity students, Aled Start and Liam Mattison, presented with their friends *Axes of Symmetry*, comparing written-down and improvised music; so we had everything from Jacobean consort music (with theorbo and baroque strings) to contemporary sounds and instruments with 'mixed notation' and 'semi-structured improvisation'. On 24th, Michael Keyte brought together two groups: some of his piano students to play pieces of their choice (some of them playing in public for the first time) and the London Transport choir, which sang several sacred pieces appropriate for Passiontide. And the following day the London Young Soloists Ensemble (also students from Trinity) presented a most accomplished programme (hastily re-arranged because of unexpected college commitments) of music by Vivaldi, Beethoven, Marcello and Bach, with some fine soloists.

Hymns and tunes

It's always good to sing hymns and tunes which have local or personal significance. In my previous parish, we had particular reason to sing Ken Naylor's great tune 'Coe Fen' to the even greater words of John Mason *How shall I sing that majesty?* because our assistant organist had been one of its composer's students at Oxford; and our PCC secretary was always delighted when we sang John Barnard's tune 'Guiting Power' to *Christ triumphant, ever reigning* because that was the Gloucestershire village where he was born. Our reason for singing it here, of course, is that the words are by Michael Saward, a member of our congregation (until the end of May - see next month's newsletter for more details); of course, we sing other hymns of his as well.

But there are older associations - even if sometimes they are tenuous. A few weeks ago we sang the tune 'Abridge' to *Be thou my guardian and my guide*. This was written by Isaac Smith, the clerk of the chapel in Great Alie Street (probably Presbyterian at the time, before Baptists took it over). The next week we sang a hymn by the late George Timms, whom Edith and Olive remembered visiting when he was Archdeacon of Hackney, to sort out problems at St Paul Dock Street (they recall his extra-long cigarette holder), and Susan Crocker recalls from his retirement years in her Kent village. And the following week we had a hymn by Bishop Walsham How, who before he became the first bishop of Wakefield was Bishop of Bedford, and (before the creation of the bishopric of Stepney) had responsibility for East London; he was an honorary member of the Fathers' Guild of Christ Church Watney Street, who sent him a pair of red slippers in 1888.

Annual Vestry and Parochial Meetings

Please make sure you are with us on Sunday 29 April, when the Sunday service will be followed by the annual meetings to elect our churchwardens and church council for the following year, and to receive the annual report and accounts for our church. More than just a formality: it's a chance to have your say, and to show your support for those who have served us faithfully in the past year, and will be committing themselves to do so for the coming year. The revised Electoral Roll will be displayed for checking from 15 April; all who are on the roll have a vote.

Congregational news

Lil Mountain's brother Ernest Askins died on 24 March at St Christopher's Hospice, and the Rector will officiate at his funeral in Hither Green on 3 April; we extend our sympathy to a family. St Paul Dock Street was their family church, in the days when three generations lived at Royal Albert Buildings on Cartwright Street; Ernie worked on the river, and was proud to be a Freeman of the Company of Watermen and Lightermen of the River Thames - some good stories to tell!