

The Parish of St George-in-the-East with St Paul Newsletter for APRIL 2013



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In Holy Week year 5 pupils at St Paul's School did project work on Stations of the Cross, ancient and modern - hence the image above!

New beginnings?

There's a story, probably apocryphal, of a long-serving incumbent in his 90s who when the bishop gently suggested that he might consider retiring said *My Lord, when I was appointed to this parish fifty years ago I was not given to understand that it was a temporary post.* That's how it once was in the Church of England, before set retirement ages. Most of our 'historic' incumbents died in office (indeed, in some cases if a priest retired pension arrangements were a charge on his successor's stipend). That culture has now gone.

But not, until now, in the Roman Catholic church. It was entirely sensible for Pope Benedict to lay down his responsibilities at the age of 85, convinced that he lacked the energy for its challenges, but it was received as a move that was both novel and brave, and posed various questions. *What will he be called? what will he wear? where will he live? will he still be infallible?* (Answers: 'pope emeritus'; still a white soutane but not red slippers; nearby; definitely not.) And now we have **Francis, Bishop of Rome** (his preferred title), theologically as conservative as his predecessors but promising a new style - a church for the poor, as befits his choice of name and his Latin American background (though some issues have been raised about past actions); a simpler style (including black shoes instead of red slippers, though he probably won't be allowed to ride the bus any more or do his own cooking); and reform in high places. Is this genuinely a new beginning, as some commentators have said? Can he deliver change where it is most needed, or will the system crucify him?

Archbishop Rowan (of whose visit to our parish we have fond memories) has also moved on - not into retirement, but to give further service to the academic world (apart from the chance to teach and write, he has already wowed one undergraduate, in the queue at Sainsbury's, with his knowledge of youth culture), to Christian Aid (on issues dear to his heart) and to the House of Lords. So the 'Benedict questions' above are easily answered: 'Baron Williams of Oystermouth PC FBA FRSL FLSW' (though I'm sure he's happier with 'Rowan'); the same as before; in the Master's Lodge at Magdalene College Cambridge; and he never was anyway (infallibility is not the Anglican way). And now we have **Archbishop Justin** (a martyr's name - in his installation sermon he alluded to the ongoing martyrdom of Christians around the world, as well as to the tribulations he himself will face). An evangelical (rather than a liberal Catholic like Rowan) but with wide spiritual enthusiasms, including for the Benedictine way; experienced in the workaday world as a mediator and reconciler; and coming to the massive conflicts of the Church of England and the worldwide Anglican Communion with little episcopal baggage. Is this genuinely a new beginning, as some commentators have said? Can he deliver change where it is most needed, or will the system crucify him?

Both new leaders need our prayers. Both have spoken directly about their human weakness and their reliance on the strength and grace of Christ crucified and risen. Both have recalled all believers to these fundamental truths, which alone can give hope to the Christian cause, beleaguered from within and without, with internal divisions and external scepticism. Both have reminded us of all that the church of Christ has achieved in times past, and can still achieve today if our commitment is whole-hearted and Christ-centred. And both - significantly - were installed in the 'dark days' of Passiontide that point towards the refreshing and renewal of the Easter gospel.

May this Easter bring us all - not just our church leaders - not only to the joys of spring after a hard winter, but to new beginnings and ventures of faith rooted and grounded in the love of Christ, who is risen indeed - Alleluya!

Annual Vestry and Parochial Church Meetings

First, a final reminder - it's not too late, the closing date is **7 April** - to sign up for the new Electoral Roll, for which we need everyone over 16 who claims St George's as their church to claim their rights and declare their allegiance. Forms are available in church, or you can print one off from our website <<http://www.stgite.org.uk/media/erform.pdf>> to complete and return to church, in person or by post to Wendy Ramanoop (the Electoral Roll Officer) at the church address.

And next, an appeal for all to join us for our annual meetings after the morning service on **28 April**, when first we elect churchwardens for the coming year and then appoint our church council and receive the annual report and accounts for 2012, thinking about what we have achieved in the past year and what we hope to do in the future, in line with the soon-to-be-launched diocesan programme Capital Vision 2020. The meeting is not just a formality; it is about affirming the hard work of those who have served us faithfully in the past and pledging support to those who will do so in the future.

Marathon & Patronal Festival

Two days after **Marathon Sunday** (when our service is at 9am and we serve refreshments to the crowds to raise funds for Richard House - volunteers needed to staff the stalls, please!) is **St George's Day**, which this year we have decided to keep on the day itself, so that members of other local churches can join us, and to try something special - a spring garden party, starting at 3.30pm, with stalls and refreshments and activities (with the children of our school participating), ending with a service in church at 6.30pm, at which the preacher will be the Rt Revd Graeme Knowles, formerly Bishop of Sodor and Man and Dean of St Paul's. Keep the date free - flyers with more information nearer the time.

Other saints' days in Eastertide

This year **Lady Day** (the Annunciation to the Blessed Virgin Mary, 9 months before the birth of Jesus) gets transferred out of Holy Week to the first available day after the octave of Easter, 8 April (prompting some to ask whether Christmas should therefore be transferred to 8 January!) **Mark the Evangelist** - the writer of the earliest (probably) gospel - is commemorated on 24 April. Anglicans keep 1 May as the feast of the apostles **Philip and James**. Roman Catholics keep this day as St Joseph the Worker, tying in with the European tradition of International Workers' Day with May Day rallies and the like; we, however, remember Joseph of Nazareth on a different date without these associations. There are many old May Day traditions in England, mostly secular or even pagan in origin (including maypole and morris dancing) but some Christian (like singing from the top of church towers) - but it no longer necessarily coincides with the early spring bank holiday.

School News

In the last few days of term, as well as the school service in church, we had two class visits to think about Holy Week: year 1, whose knowledge and enthusiasm was most impressive (for instance, they spotted the symbols of the passion on the Easter candlestick), and year 5, who have done some interesting work on Stations of the Cross. This was also the day of the **Section 48 (denominational) inspection**, examining how we rate as a church school, not just in RE and collective worship, but in the whole ethos and governance of the school. We pride ourselves on being faithful to our 1870 foundation to offer education based on Christian values to local (and poor) children - which for many years has been in an interfaith context (once with a majority of children of Jewish heritage, now Muslim), and we await the outcome!

Other news in brief

¶ We continue to collect for **Water Aid**, with a bucket at the back of church and literature available about their projects

¶ April sees another group from **Finland**, coming to look at multicultural Britain (PS did you know that the longest single-word palindrome in Finnish is the 25-letter *saippuakuppiniippukauppias* - a wholesale vendor of soap dishes: not a common word!)

¶ singers are rehearsing in church for a performance of **Puccini's La Bohème** at the end of May

¶ our **peregrine falcons** up the tower were the first in London to lay eggs and the mother will be sitting on them until they hatch (hopefully) later in April

¶ finally, we plan to re-instate the **Tuesday lunchtime (12.30pm) eucharist** in May.