

NEWSLETTER for AUGUST & SEPTEMBER 2010

The organ stool

On 11 July we bade farewell to **Elspeth Wilkes**, who has been our organist and director of music for twelve years, and a valued member of the parish community. Last month's newsletter included a tribute to her musical contributions. What it didn't mention is that she is also a quiz aficionado, with tv appearances to her credit, and over the years has organised many enjoyable quizzes for parish socials; we shall miss these!

At the end of the service we gave Elspeth a print of an old map of the area round St George's, to remind her of her time here, and some vouchers towards the equipping of their new home in Reading. Then we repaired to the Rectory garden for a splendid barbecue organised by Michael Page and Richard Powell, attended by friends old and new – a most enjoyable event.

Elspeth's successor as organist will be **David Wright**, who played on the following Sunday for the Anniversary of Consecration and had chance to meet members of the congregation before disappearing (like Elspeth) on summer musical commitments. He will start officially at some point in September, and will be living in one of the refurbished flats in church, once this work is completed.

David is a local lad, whose journey into professional music is a colourful and fascinating one. He has previously been organist of two churches in the deanery – St Paul Bow Common and St John on Bethnal Green. He is primarily a harpsichordist, and is continuing to tour Bach's *Goldberg Variations* (which he has recorded). He was recently invited to become a member of 'Red Priests', a Vivaldi-based performance group. He is keen on Georgian architecture and the vernacular musical traditions of the period – the music of the pubs and taverns – and in due course will no doubt tell us more about the Tickle-Fiddle Gentlemen.

You can find, and hear, more about him on <<http://www.harpsichord.org.uk/oldsite/guests/davidwright.htm>> and <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k-EuV4UoE9s>>

We look forward to welcoming David as a member of our parish community.

Anniversary of Consecration: the Dunedin link

We had a surprise visitor at our 281st anniversary of consecration. **Margaret Harding**, the sacristan of St Paul's Cathedral in Dunedin, New Zealand, joined us for worship, fittingly bringing to an end our Ritualism Riots programme, which the congregation there been following with interest, as the cathedral is now home to Bryan King's chalice and vestments. The chalice (bearing the inscription *Pray for the officer – a sinner*) was given anonymously to Bryan King by friends at Easter 1860, inset with jewels contributed by well-wishers. It, and four chasubles, were taken to New Zealand by Bryan's eldest son (also Bryan), who after a time as a convict chaplain in Australia was an incumbent in Dunedin from 1882 until his death in 1911.

Two more generations of the family were priests in the diocese – Vincent Bryan King (from 1904-1954) and Meyrick Vincent Bryan King (1948-1988); the latter presented the chalice and vestments to the cathedral. The chalice is used at Easter and on other major occasions such as ordinations; the vestments, being small and fragile, are not used but on display. (The white one – which allegedly bore the stains of a rotten egg thrown at Bryan King – is not currently shown.)

Margaret brought the greetings of her bishop and the churches of the diocese, pictures of the vestments (now on our website) and a copy of the diocesan magazine *Southern See* for Easter 2010, which included an article about the Riots.

Having had a parish barbecue the week before [see above], we had wine and nibbles after the service, and then **Anne Willer** appeared bearing a large and splendid dish of chicken. Although increasingly tied to the care of her elderly husband Harry (who does at least now have regular carers visiting – not before time!) Anne loves to cook for parish occasions, in generous quantities – plenty to feed everyone remaining! Thank you, Anne, for these practical tokens of your love and care for us.

Other congregational news

Alice Daniels continues to make progress following her transplant. She has had some adverse reactions, and still has to be careful about mixing with people and picking up germs, but hopes to visit London, with her two sons, over the summer. We continue to hold her in our prayers.

Alex Sinclair, who keeps us informed about Alice, is a volunteer with the recently-launched **Fastlaners** project, and asks us to mention it. This is an initiative to help recent graduates into employment, and they offer high-quality development courses. Alex writes:

Our target market is those who have graduated in the last 5 years and felt the pain of being unable to make use of their shiny new qualification - especially those in particular need of a helping hand to navigate the employment market because their family circumstances haven't given them all the advantages in life to find a great job - eg they might be the first in the family to get a degree, working class, ethnic minority. This year's courses are funded by public money and free to participants if they are Tower Hamlets or nearby East London residents and UK/EU citizens. Our website is at www.fastlaners.org.uk, and gives a lot of detail about the course and an application form.

If you know anyone who would benefit from this, have a word with the Rector.

Edith Wyeth is now home after a spell in hospital – weary but in good (albeit arrhythmic) heart. **Olive Wagstaff** has had successful varicose vein surgery, and is adjusting to a gluten-free (coeliac) diet. We have missed **Rodney Sawers'** presence on Sundays and Tuesdays, and are glad that he is now back with us from time to time. And in recent weeks we have been pleased to welcome back some old friends on Sundays, as well as quite a few newcomers.

Bishop of Stepney, Archdeacon of Hackney

St John at Hackney was packed full for the farewell service for **Bishop Stephen** and **Archdeacon Lyle**, led by the three area deans and with Bishop Richard as preacher, who linked his remarks with the martyrs Thomas More and John Fisher who were commemorated in the calendar that day. Worship songs (extremely loud!) were provided by musicians from St Paul Shadwell. Both were presented with cheques, in excess of £2000, and 'scrapbooks' with a page of pictures and greetings from every parish in the area.

Bishop Pete of Willesden has been seconded to provide episcopal care for the area, which he is doing with his customary energetic efficiency. The Bishop of London is consulting with parishes on the appointment of the next Bishop of Stepney, following the 'Kensington process'. The three area deans continue to hold many of the archdeacon's responsibilities, and the archdeacon's office is moving from St Andrew's Holborn (where it has been located for the past 39 years) back into the Stepney area: **Jenny Harding** (the archdeacon's PA, who has worked there for 20 years) will be based, for the time being at least, at the Bishop's house in Coborn Road, working alongside Daniel Gerrans, the Bishop's PA. This makes sense, but will be a wrench for her: we wish her well for the move!

Rev

Speaking of archdeacons.... perhaps you have been watching the comedy series based on the life of an East End vicar played convincingly by Tom Hollander and filmed in and around St Leonard Shoreditch (using local Baptist premises managed by Fiona, our parish administrator, for costume and make-up). Gilleen Craig, in his *Church Times* tv review column, acknowledged that the series, far from mocking the church, has been affectionate, taking 'goodness' and even the vicar's prayer life seriously. But he has been critical of the 'egregious mistakes' in the plot lines, which he says reduced the credibility of the series. Others have taken him to task for this, pointing out that it is a comedy series, not a documentary, and as such needs to exaggerate and twist the real-life stories on which it is based, and which most East End clergy recognise as part of their ministries.

My own view is that it is remarkable how much they did get right about church life (but then, they did have a team of clergy advisers). Yes, there were some factual errors for the pedants among us (for instance, in the second episode we were told that the deanery synod had decided that the charismatic church plant could use Adam Smallbone's church twice a month, which could not happen; the stuff about insurance claims was also wrong). But most of the detail was correct and nicely-perceived. It even affirmed the ministry of Readers (though in a back-handed way since Nigel was something of a pain)!

In terms of the basic scenario, there were two main difficulties. First, how did an innocent curate from Suffolk get appointed to this parish in the first place, and without any support (where was the area dean)? There is a lot of competition for inner-city parishes in London, even horrendous ones like this, and in real life someone more experienced would have got the job. But there are clearly clergy who are out of their depth for one reason or another, and the series depended on this fact.

And second is the archdeacon from hell – a sinister black-gloved figure, using taxis as a mobile office,

pouring Adam's instant coffee straight down the sink and treating him with utter disdain. Gillean's main complaint is correct: no archdeacon (especially one who proclaims himself to be so busy) drops in unannounced several times a week – you see them by appointment several weeks hence. But I can forgive this not-very-believable caricature since he provided some of the best comedy lines of the series.

Rev was sometimes painful to watch, and some scenes may have caused offence. But I enjoyed it – unlike *The Vicar of Dibley* which I absolutely loathe – and hope there is a second series. There are plenty more plot lines for them to explore!

St Paul's School news

This year's year 6 **leavers' service** for the church schools of Tower Hamlets deanery was at St Botolph Aldgate. Their school, Sir John Cass, is not actually in the deanery but joins in its activities (for instance, the annual residential conference for heads and deputies that helps build a 'family' sense within the London Diocesan Board for Schools – important in the face of current government proposals for re-structuring schools). As usual, each school contributed a musical or dramatic item. Our school sang *Make me a channel of your peace*, with Abigail as soloist, which they had sung at St George's for the Archbishop's visit. The Dean of St Paul's, Graeme Knowles, clearly knows how to hold an audience of children, and gave a memorable address comparing moving house (which he told us he had done nine times in his life) with going on to a new school – scary and unwelcome at first, but when you unpack the box of things you've brought with you, and settle in, the new home can prove even better than the old one.

The major **re-building project** at the school is behind schedule, and there have been legal and other problems, giving the group of governors who are overseeing the process many headaches; but at least it has not been a victim of government cuts!

While the workmen are on site, we are planning a **visit into the crypt** beneath the school, to see whether there are any remains of the former Danish church which stood here from 1694 until it was demolished for the building of the school. It has been claimed that the coffins of the architect, Caius Gabriel Cibber, and his wife, were bricked up in the vault when the school was built, but this remains the subject of conjecture. However, up in the roof of the year 1 classroom there is a wooden carving of cherubs (now painted over), from the Danish church – we hope to put a picture of this on the website.

Samuel Butler's Education Foundation

was established over 150 years ago to serve schools in part of what is now Tower Hamlets (plus one in Kent, where the founder had family links!) In recent years it has made grants to the 39 schools in its area for educational trips and visits. We recently severed our links with the Cass Foundation, which administered the trust, and are re-building contacts with the schools. Gordon Warren, the Rector of Limehouse, is now the chairman; the Rector is the vice-chairman; and Richard Powell is the Treasurer. We now have a website, under construction: <<http://www.samuelbutler.org>>

Ride + Stride

We are a 'participating church' for this event, for cyclists and walkers, which is being piloted in London on Saturday 11 September. Detailed information is available in church, but here is an outline of what it's all about:

This year sees the launch of the first ever 'Ride + Stride' event in London! We will be expanding the event across the capital in coming years and it will continue to be held on the second Saturday in September every year, as it is nationally in 36 different counties.

The basic principle of this fundraising event is that 50% of the money raised by those who are sponsored goes to the Church/Chapel chosen by the participant and 50% to (this year) the Heritage of London Trust, all of which will be given in grant aid to Churches across the capital.

Participants plan their own routes, based on the list of churches taking part. Riders and walkers (some also decide to run the route, or even travel it on horseback! However this format may not so suitable for London!) ask their relations, friends and colleagues to sponsor them – perhaps an amount per church/chapel visited between 10am and 6pm on the day. This is recorded on the sponsorship form and participants can take part for as long or short a time within the day as is convenient for them. Congregation members who wish to support Ride + Stride can base their sponsorship on the number of visitors to their Church, using the Registration Form as their guide.

THE RIDE IS OPEN TO EVERYONE!

In fact, the more people from outside church congregations that take part, the more successful we shall be in arousing interest in

and support for our fabulous heritage of church buildings and the case for their support. The ride first started in Suffolk in 1982 and now 36 counties are taking part. Altogether, over £24m has been raised nationally.

ON THE DAY

The day arrives and participants can 'sign in' at their first church from 10am onwards. Their sponsor forms will record the name of the church, the time and the signature of the steward/volunteer manning the church and will sign the register at the church as well. A quick look around, perhaps time for some refreshment, and then off to the next church or chapel. By 6pm the last person will have signed the register, leaving many churches with over 50 names.

AFTER THE RIDE

The riders and walkers show their sponsorship forms, now showing how many churches and chapels they have visited, to their sponsors who reward them accordingly.

Participants (both riders/walkers and congregation members who may have sponsored visitors to the church) then send the forms and money raised (in cheque form please) to the National Churches Trust.

SAFETY ON THE ROADS IS PARAMOUNT and although organisers cannot be responsible for those taking part, they do all they can to encourage safety by reminding people not to put speed before safety and advising them of any local road issues that they may be aware of. It is a condition of participation that, save to the extent required by law (Public liability insurance is covered by the National Churches Trust), the National Churches Trust accepts no liability in respect of death or injury sustained by participants.

St Mary's: Walsingham trip and patronal festival

On Saturday 4 September the congregation of St Mary Cable Street has a day trip to Walsingham – a lovely village in north Norfolk where the Shrine of Our Lady has been a focus of prayer and pilgrimage for centuries – leaving at 8am and returning at about 8pm. Places on the coach are available, and the cost is £20. More details from the Rector, or ring Fr Peter McGeary. We will be joining them for their patronal festival the following Wednesday at 7.30pm, when Angus Ritchie will be the preacher; the service is followed by a party.

Reuilly

is a hard word to pronounce, but is the name of the Declaration made in 2001 between the Anglican and French Reformed Churches – specifically, the Church of the Augsburg Confession of Alsace and Lorraine, the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of France, the Reformed Church of Alsace and Lorraine, the Reformed Church of France, the Church of England, the Church of Ireland, the Scottish Episcopal Church, and the Church in Wales. Like the Meissen Declaration with the German churches, and the Porvoo Declaration with the Baltic and Nordic Lutheran churches, this declaration commits our churches to recognising each others' mission and ministry, and to working together wherever possible.

We had a 'Reuilly experience' this summer when our hosts in France took us, not to a local Roman Catholic church, nor to the local Anglican Diocese in Europe chaplaincy (with which they are also linked) but to the 'temple' – the term used in France for all non-RC churches, where we shared in worship with a small congregation of the French Reformed Church. James our host, a semi-retired Anglican priest, preached the sermon, in impeccable French, and his wife Elisabeth played the flute for the many hymns. Because their pastor had recently retired, 'Madame La Présidente' (a kind of churchwarden) led the eucharist. Under the Reuilly agreement, James could have presided, if he had used an authorised Anglican rite in French translation, but they prefer to have their own form of service... There were two chalices, one non-alcoholic because of alcohol-related incidents involving some members of the church. Despite these decidedly non-Anglican features, we were warmly welcomed and enjoyed the experience.

We also visited many fine Romanesque churches, and the extraordinary 1950s church in Royan, made of wafer-thin reinforced concrete which is now seriously crumbling. It has some fine works of contemporary art, but for their devotion to Mary they prefer a sentimental old statue, surrounded by dusty plastic gladioli. It looks very out of place, and is quite ghastly!