

NEWSLETTER FOR AUGUST 2012

Olympics and Paralympics

The long countdown is over, and the **Olympic Games 2012** (are we allowed to print the name? - we're not advertising anything) are under way. The Olympic Route Network (**ORN** - aka 'Zil lanes') and changes to bus routes have kicked in, a few days earlier than advertised, causing some confusion, but local people seem to be coping well. So far, it's actually easier than normal at some times of day to cross The Highway, even at non-crossing points. And the local surprise is that up to 2,000 soldiers are billeted in **Tobacco Dock**, making up for the G4S fiasco in failing to recruit sufficient security guards (though apparently they still intend to claim their full £57m fee). It's good to see the place in use at long last, but it's tough for the soldiers, working 12-hour shifts with limited washing facilities, particularly since some are just back from Afghanistan and were looking forward to some well-deserved leave. They plan a big 'do' on their last night here, with entertainment and a bar licence. They will have little time to explore the local community, but have been given encouragement to do so. We hope some will visit our church and gardens, as a place of quiet away from their cramped conditions.

We are open for business as usual, from 8am to 6pm every day, and are on the **'Faith Walks'** trail produced by the diocese (booklets available in church) so expect our usual trickle of visitors to swell somewhat. When church is staffed, we are offering loo, drinks and maybe WiFi access. For two weeks, on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, there will also be a **Highway Neighbours** drop-in centre from 10am to 12 noon (depending on demand - the mail drop which local people have received advises callers to check first with the main drop-in centre at St Paul Shadwell, 020 7680 2778, which will be open every day, since they have moved their office into church for the duration).

So far Highway Neighbours has been resourced by four Jellicoe interns - students spending a month exploring urban life and ministry through the Contextual Theology Centre (**CTC**): Ali and Austin (both from Baylor University, Texas) and Jonathan and Euan (from Oxford University). It has been good to have two of them staying at the Rectory: Jonathan, who has been working mainly with St Paul Shadwell (but attending daily morning prayer at St Peter London Dock) and Austin (who has joined me here for morning prayer, and has been with us on Sundays and elsewhere too). They have set up a number of local events - some more successful than others - and conducted a large number of one-to-one interviews for their research. But their time is now up; we wish them godspeed for the future. CTC will now take responsibility for staffing our drop-in centre, hopefully with some local volunteers.

The interns have also visited the **Gosling Gardens** project, set up at short notice by Alex Nelson and other Watney Market residents from local churches and mosques, working with the youth team 'The Rooted Forum' based at St George's Town Hall. The immediate focus is to engage young people out on the streets late at night (during and after mosque prayers) during Ramadan, which coincides with the Olympic period, and to make the Gardens a quieter and safer place for all, but there will be an ongoing 'legacy' in terms of better community and inter-faith relationships. It is funded by **Near Neighbours** (government money administered by the Church Urban Fund, for bringing faith groups together) and endorsed by St George-in-the-East (since it is in our parish), and so far has been a success, with some good stories to tell. We will ask Alex to provide a fuller report in due course.

Meanwhile, there is all the Olympic - and in due course Paralympic - sport to enjoy, either by attending (if you've been able to acquire tickets) or at home or at various big screen locations. 'Local boy' Danny Boyle's £27m opening extravaganza has been widely praised for its sheer creativity and for catching the tone of Britain with wit and an amazingly wide range of 'iconic' references (even if some of them were lost on foreign viewers) - though a few right-wing critics dismissed it as a load of socialist propaganda! - and for successfully co-ordinating the vast army of volunteer performers, many of whom have paid tribute to the self-effacing and approachable way in which he directed them.

Not to be outdone by Boris, after church on 29 July the Rector recited the Olympic **Pindaric Ode**, in Greek, which with a proper sense of history the Mayor commissioned, and has himself declaimed. It contains a few slightly corny puns (referencing Usain Bolt, Sebastian Coe and Boris himself) but then, as he has pointed out, that is part of the tradition.

Please pray this prayer, written by St Paul's Cathedral, during the coming days:

*Almighty God, give us courage and perseverance to run the race that is set before us,
in faith and hope and love,
that we may follow the example of your Son Jesus Christ
and enter into the joy of him who runs beside us when we triumph and lifts us when we fall.
We ask this for the sake of the same, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Please note that, because of the Olympics and other holiday arrangements, there will be no 12.30pm Eucharist on Tuesdays until September.

Events in July

On Saturday 7 a group of us went on a river trip from Greenwich, in Mount Royalty, a 100-year old craft (which had featured in the Jubilee regatta) up to the Pool of London where we scattered the ashes of **Ernie Askins** (brother of Lil Mountain). Permission for this is not automatically given, but Ernie was a freeman of the Watermans and Lightermans Company and the Pool was the place he loved and worked from, and many of his former colleagues joined us for the occasion (the master of Mount Royalty was his 'apprentice'). Ironically, it was near the spot where the Episcopal Floating Chapel - precursor of St Paul Dock Street - see <http://www.stgite.org.uk/floatingchurch.html> - had been moored in the early 19th century. We then sailed up into town, and back to Greenwich with food and drink, dancing and speeches. A wonderful reunion and send-off!

The following day saw the baptism of the youngest member of our congregation, **Fabian Elijah Crocker Griffiths**, administered by his uncle, the Revd Jeremy Crocker, and followed by a splendid afternoon tea (in church, since it was judged too damp to risk the Rectory garden). Fabian, as well as being the name of a venerable socialist Society, was a 3rd century pope chosen above other better-known candidates because a dove alighted on his head at the time of the elections, which the church took as a sign that he was God's choice, even though he was still a layman. (Would this be a way of resolving our current difficulties over women bishops?) The descending dove of peace became a theme for the service, which included two musical items from Susan and friends. A collection for WaterAid was added to the church's contribution to one of our 'favourite' charities, which will attract matched funding from the government until September.

Our 283rd **Anniversary of Consecration** barbecue was on 15 July (for which the omens for the Rectory garden were more favourable). Our thanks to Michael Page, who rose splendidly as ever to the occasion, with everything cooked to perfection at exactly the right time and a fine array of salads and desserts. Richard Powell assisted, and everyone helped to make it a good parish do for all ages. It was good to welcome Abba Seraphim, the Orthodox bishop of the group now regularly meeting here, and some of the congregation, and also Rachel Treweek, our archdeacon. There were plenty of interesting conversations!

Three anniversaries

When and where do you imagine the first-ever **peal of bells rung by 'ladies'** (as they were then called) took place? The answer is 100 years ago, on 20 July 1912, at Christ Church on the Isle of Dogs, a centenary that was duly marked there, and here the previous evening with an all-female band. Congratulations: you don't have to be a 'college youth' to ring bells!

13 August sees the centenary of the death of **Octavia Hill**, a pioneer of housing reform who - like Beatrice Webb after her - began her life's work as a rent collector among the tenants of early social housing in this parish, at the former Katharine Buildings on what is now Cartwright Street. Canon Rawnsley (who was a fellow-founder with Octavia of the National Trust) wrote that she strove to enable
the poor to feel that better far than dole / was self-respect, self-help and self-control.

There is more about Octavia Hill on our website at

<http://www.stgite.org.uk/media/katharinebuildings.html#octaviahill> which has links to her 'own' site. Various anniversary events are planned nationally.

And finally - our congratulations to all Jamaicans on the 50th anniversary of independence (6 August) now extend to those from **Trinidad and Tobago**, together with Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi (31 August). Ramanooops need little excuse for a party, but no doubt will find occasion to raise a glass to this event, and we happily join with them.