

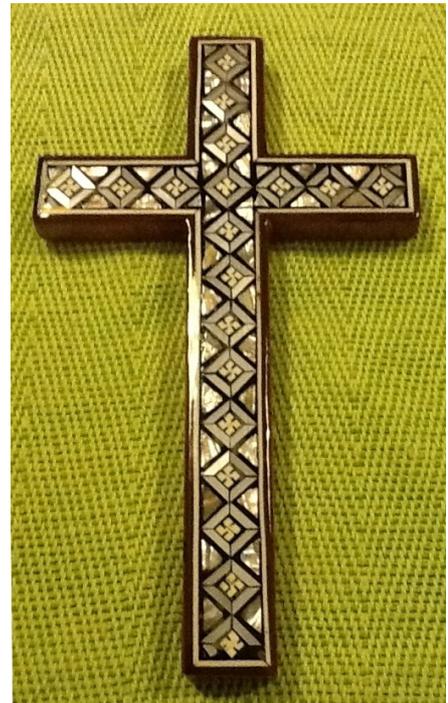
The Parish of St George-in-the-East with St Paul

Newsletter for FEBRUARY 2013

Lent...

...is almost upon us! What are you going to do to keep this season, as a time of focusing on 'Christian basics' and putting aside distractions, as a serious-minded preparation to make ourselves ready to share more fully in the joy of Easter? Unlike our Muslim neighbours, for whom the keeping of Ramadan is tightly defined, and a corporate observation, Anglicans are given a degree of choice as to what they give up, or take on, both publicly in shared activities and privately, with Jesus telling us not to parade our piety - though remember that the Prayer Book does prescribe days of fasting and abstinence. Making church attendance a priority should be part of this, but what we do individually will vary greatly, depending on our particular circumstances and needs, and that's fine.

We should certainly start and end the season together. That's why we'll follow the somewhat unusual, but successful, pattern of recent years in having soup and pancakes immediately before our evening service on Ash Wednesday eucharist, rather than the day before, so that people attend both events rather than one or the other! On Monday evenings in Lent we'll gather in the panelled room for Evening Prayer and discussion of its bible readings, perhaps picking up some of the current themes besetting our church. We'll also give details of some of the various Lent courses around the deanery and beyond, and of material for personal study and reflection. Beyond that, it's for you to choose what Lenten commitments you make, both in reaching out to your neighbours and seeking to strengthen your own faith. We wish you a happy and a holy Lent.



Thanks

Last month we reported our giving as a parish for 2012. Here are three responses:

Stephen's Children

Wilfred Wong writes, *Thank you so much for the very kind and generous donation from your church of £500 to Stephen's Children. Given the escalating difficulties for impoverished Christians in Egypt this gift is very much needed and appreciated.*

As a thank-you and sign of our friendship, Wildred has given us (via Richard, our treasurer) a simple and beautiful mother-of-pearl cross made in Egypt [*pictured above*], which we shall display in church.

Hand in Hand for Syria *from Church Times, 18 January*

After learning of the plight of refugees in Syria, Gill Newman, the wife of the Bishop of Stepney, took matters - or, rather, money - into her own hands. She contacted her MP, participated in a national protest, and set up prayer meetings for the cause in the Stepney area of London diocese. Last year, she discovered the work of a small charity, [Hand in Hand for Syria](#), which has been providing medical and humanitarian assistance to Syrians since violence in the country began in March 2011. She organised a 20-mile sponsored walk and raised nearly £8000. Hand in Hand for Syria asked her whether she would like to go and deliver the money that she had raised. *I thought this was a good idea, because so often people give money and it disappears into a vacuum*, she said.

Mrs Newman flew out to Syria ... on arrival at the largest of the refugee camps, Atmeh, she was shocked by the situation of the people in what she described as a *wasteland of red earth that turns to mud every time it rains. As soon as the sun begins to sink, the temperature plummets; they burn branches of olive trees in an effort to keep warm, but several tents have burned down because of accidents with candles.*



She took £2000, strapped to her waist, directly to the camps; the rest was paid through JustGiving, for the charity's winter appeal. Half of the £2000 was given to Hand in Hand for Syria towards a children's hospital that the charity is building. The remainder was used to buy children's clothing and boots. *I noticed many children with bare feet, almost purple with cold ... You're aware you're going out to a war zone, and you hear about the pretty horrendous things that happen. We'd hear stories of kidnapping in Syria, aid workers, journalists; a couple of people said, if it was known I was a bishop's wife, I would be a*

target. She was reassured that the area around the border was firmly in rebel hands, which made it actually relatively secure ... *I felt a slight unease, but I never felt as if I was in danger.* A teacher at a makeshift school in the camp told Mrs Newman of the difficulties of providing education for 5000 children. The teacher said that he wanted each child to have his or her own bag with notepaper and pens. Mrs Newman said that she hoped that church schools in Stepney would raise money for the bags. *[Find out more at Christ Church Spitalfields on Sunday 10 February at 6.30pm.]*

ALMA

Helen Doery, from ALMA [Angola, London & Mozambique Association, a diocesan link] writes: *Your donation to the ALMA General Fund is particularly valued as it enables us to respond to some of the unexpected events and requests such as when a small newly built church in Catandica (between Chimoio and Tete in Lemombo) was subject to an arson attack and we were able to respond by sending £250 toward a new roof. We have also been able to pay the postage for 60 prayer books donated by the church in Portugal to the church in Niassa Diocese where printed materials for priests are very scarce. In Angola the ALMA general fund has supported a Zambian volunteer assisting the church there implement a financial management system. Your donation means we can continue to assist our partners in such important ways.*

More news about ALMA, including a monthly update and details of the Lent appeal, is [here](#).

Services and events in January, and personal news

Epiphany: the wise men having arrived, the tree departed (News International originally proposed removing it the day after Boxing Day!) and our pillars, so painstakingly ivy-clad by Allan (our warm thanks for his labours) were once again laid bare. We then marked the **Baptism of Christ** and gave thanks for our own baptism - the first of our five apse mosaics is a constant reminder of its challenge. We kept the **Week of Prayer for Christian Unity**, using resources prepared by Indian Christians, including a short passage from Rabindranath Tagore, a *Saranam* prayer chant, which we like and will reprise on other occasions, and sharing the peace *namaste*-style. The following Sunday we welcomed **Holly Bethany Pidgeon**, from St Paul's School, in Holy Baptism.

During the month we extended our condolences to the family of **Stephen Ernest Barber** ('Arsenal Steve') whose funeral was on 17 January; we marked the year's mind of Ann Willer's husband **Harry Allwood** on 24 January; we welcomed **Mark Aitken** as the new Master of the

Royal Foundation of St Katharine on 24 January; and are glad that **Olive Wagstaff** is now getting some physiotherapy to increase her mobility - she remains positive, as ever! **Peggy Crispin**, a keen member of Churches Together (formerly a Methodist, and after her marriage closely involved at St Dunstan's) died on 17 January; her funeral was in Ipswich, but many local churches have remembered her. We continue to hold **Linda's** family in Canada in our prayers.

You may be interested to know:

- the **Henderson Trust** continues to offer modest monthly sums to local pensioners - our parish is one of several providing trustees, and we next meet on 4 February
- we are offering rehearsal space on Monday evenings to **Baroque Strings**, a local group who will be offering an end-of-term performance
- the Rector recently had a letter published in *Church Times* on some legal issues surrounding **civil partnerships and same-sex marriage** (though it has not elicited much of a response!)
- **Soyten Sen**, at one of their Saturday gatherings, had a big collection of warm clothes and blankets for rural areas in Bangladesh which were carefully sorted and then picked up from church on 25 January to be airlifted to the region and distributed, through their contacts, to those facing an exceptionally cold winter. We congratulate them on this initiative.

