

NEWSLETTER for January 2010

The Promise of his Glory - Advent to Candlemas

Someone asked at a recent service what is the difference between Advent and Easter, since both are about light and hope. Although Advent (with its weekly candles) is about the first and second coming of Christ, and Easter (with the great Easter candle) is about his resurrection, this unusual question is worth pondering, for these great themes do indeed underlie every season of the Christian year - to which we might add the theme of 'glory': the various ways in which God's purposes are revealed.

As usual, Advent spilled over into Christmas with special events through the month - including the News International carol service, which was as excellent as ever (with the choirs of St Bride Fleet Street, Wapping Great Voices and our own school children); our own carol service, for which Elspeth got together a choir for several items alongside the congregational singing; and St Paul's School Christmas play, a setting of the nativity story with some good contemporary touches and presented with their customary flair and enthusiasm, ably orchestrated by Mr Rubin. Every child in the choir played a full part. How sad it is that at secondary school many children lose the capacity for uninhibited singing and acting.

Unfortunately, the concert on 13 December, the third in our current series (with a Christmas theme) had to be postponed because the singer was unwell. This will be rescheduled in the new year, so anyone who bought tickets for the whole series will not lose out.

Though many - perhaps the majority? - of our regular congregation were away this Christmas, we had a good number at Midnight Mass, and a respectable quorum the next morning. And everyone appreciated Annadale's Christmas flowers, and the ivy on the pillars (a labour of love on the part of our devoted churchwarden Allan, in place of the hangings on the light fittings which posed electrical safety risks). We shall know how to do it next year!

And our celebration of the light and hope Christ brings continues throughout January, with Epiphany (the coming of the Magi) at the start and Candlemas (the presentation of Christ in the temple) at the end - both of which are special all-age services.

Charitable Giving

In December the Parochial Church Council agreed to send £250 each to:

- ALMA - the diocesan link with the church in Angola and Mozambique: Sheenagh Burrell, the ALMA Communications Officer, spoke at a Sunday service here earlier in the year
- Water Aid - an effective and practical charity which we are keen to support
- Church Army - who also provided a speaker for us this year, Paul Tomlinson, and have some excellent projects in London and nationally
- Twenty5 Ethiopia - St Matthew's Children's Fund was established 25 years ago to work with war orphans, and their work has now expanded, working with community groups in 17 of the poorest slum areas; both our Archbishops have endorsed this appeal
- Médecins sans Frontières - with which John Allison has ongoing connections
- St Joseph's Hospice - a highly-regarded local facility currently planning significant expansion
- Providence Row - another well-established local agency, working with vulnerable and homeless people in our area

This is in addition to various sums sent throughout the year on particular occasions; for example, we sent the collection at our carol service - £70 - to the Children's Society.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, 18-25 January

This year sees the centenary of the international missionary conference held in Edinburgh in 1910 which is often regarded as the start of the modern ecumenical movement, seeking the visible unity of the world's divided churches in worship and service. Sadly, in recent times ecumenism seems to be in the doldrums - not helped by some of the recent initiatives of the Roman Catholic Church. Our local group, Churches Together in Stepney and Wapping, organises several events throughout the year, and some are very successful, but the energy levels are lower than once they were.

To mark this centenary, Scotland has been asked to 'host' the Week of Prayer and to prepare worship material for it. They have chosen the theme 'You are witnesses to these things' (Luke 24.48), and we shall be incorporating this material in our service on 24 January.

The Archbishop of Canterbury's Visit

But our great event in January will be the Archbishop's visit on Wednesday 20 January, for a service to mark the 150th anniversary of the 1859-60 ritualism riots at St George's. The flyer included in last month's newsletter is included again, to make sure that all our readers know about it, and come to hear and meet the Archbishop. Some have asked if tickets are required: although we are expecting a full house, the answer is NO! So pass the word around, and come early to get a good seat.

Congregational News

Just before the morning service on 13 December, and only a few weeks after her last attendance at church, Jackie Seward died, after a courageous battle with cancer and other related conditions. Michael and Jackie had been very open about the fact that her days were numbered, but the end - mercifully, for her and for the family - was more sudden than expected: they had only just sent out their Christmas letter with news of her prognosis. Her funeral was at St George's on 18 December. Following her wishes, Prebendary Gary Piper gave the address, with memories from Jean Place and Caroline Spencer, and Noël Tredinnick played the organ; many clergy and other friends were present, including Bishop Michael Colclough, representing St Paul's Cathedral. Michael is spending some time with his son in France; he and their four children remain much in our prayers.

Having lost her mother earlier in the year, Wendy Ramanoop's aunt Hilda died in December. Sylvia James also experienced a double bereavement: having attended her brother's funeral in Sierra Leone some months ago, another brother, Silvanus, died. He was a prominent member in the church and business community of Freetown, and a lay canon of the cathedral. Sylvia was not able to go back again, but shared the photos and service booklet with us.

Finally, congratulations to Ann Willer's husband Harry on his 91st birthday (for which the Rector read the 91st psalm with him). He is more or less housebound, and we hope that the temporary steps at Noble Court will not further complicate life!