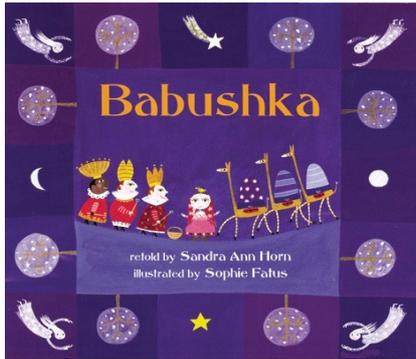


# Newsletter for JANUARY 2013

## Christmas

We had a good December at St George-in-the-East. In the final weeks of term, several local primary schools visited church - some of them bringing lots of mums and dads for whom this was a first - to discover how Christians prepare for Christmas, so there was much lighting and relighting of the Advent candles, singing of 'Twinkle, twinkle Christmas star' (with puzzlement as to why the Rector did not have to climb up among the organ pipes to accompany it) and viewing the crib - thanks to Alan, Phil and others for preparing this, and the ivy on the pillars, and to Annadale for Christmas flowers.



Our own school came on the last day of term, having mounted that week both an excellent Early Years nativity and a splendid junior performance of **Baboushka**, with enthusiastic singing by a large choir and some excellent acting and solo singing: these talents, nurtured by our committed staff, are precious. The Russian legend of a woman so obsessed with keeping her house spotless that she missed her chance of travelling with the wise men, yet found that, miraculously, the toys and gifts she handed out on her delayed journey appeared in the Christ-child's crib, can sometimes seem sentimental, but our children have the knack of imbuing everything that they do with a down-to-earth realism. See the school newsletter for other events in

a busy term, including the visit of Jamie Oliver in connection with their growing and cooking project, as well as for the possibility of entering into a federation with St John on Bethnal Green school.

The church **carol service**, with candlelit carols round the tree, handbells and a proficient choir (all done on 45 minutes' rehearsal!), was much appreciated, as were the various **Christmas services** - though bad weather reduced numbers on Christmas night.

And there was also a fine concert by **Fred Thomas** and friends, who love to rehearse and perform and record in the church - see [here](#) for details of some of their CDs.

## 2013 charity donations

We have given £500 to the following six causes, in line with our charitable giving policy:

- *local* - [Docklands Outreach](#) and [Age Concern Tower Hamlets](#)
- *aid & development* - Philippine disaster (via [Christian Aid](#)) and [Stephen's Children](#) (work with persecuted Christians in Egypt, with which we have a link through Wilfred Wong, as well as hosting a Coptic congregation here)
- *mission* - [ALMA](#) (the London diocesan link with Angola and Mozambique) and [US](#) (formerly the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel)

We support other causes in different ways through the year, including Richard House (with Marathon catering and collecting boxes) and Water Aid (during Lent).

## Thank you

to friends from all parts of the globe for Christmas cards and email messages. St George-in-the-East has a wide network of contacts, both past and present, and it is good to keep in touch.

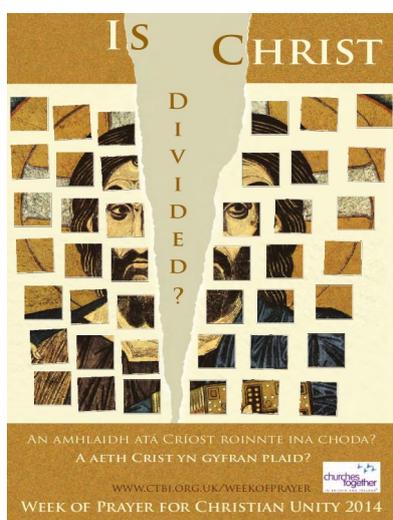
## January

offers us a rich variety of liturgical themes, all under the 'umbrella' of the revelation of Christ's glory to the whole world. On 5 January we mark the **arrival of the Magi** - all nations coming to worship, a symbol of the church's global mission. It's part of the extended feast of Christmas, so please don't take down your tree and decorations and cards until Twelfth Night, and if you have a crib at home keep it out until we get to Candlemas at the start of February! At our all-age service on 5 January we travel with the wise men and their gifts to the stable.



On the following Sunday we reflect on the **Baptism of Christ** which began his public ministry, and this year will be using some elements of the **Covenant Service** which is one of the gifts of the Methodist tradition to the wider church, kept in all their chapels near the start of the year - a renewal of our personal commitment to Christ, with some challenging prayers and declarations. Its central prayer runs:

*I am no longer my own but yours.  
Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will;  
put me to doing, put me to suffering;  
let me be employed for you, or laid aside for you,  
exalted for you, or brought low for you;  
let me be full, let me be empty,  
let me have all things, let me have nothing:  
I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to your pleasure and disposal.  
And now, glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
you are mine and I am yours.  
And the covenant now made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.*



This year's material for the **Week of Prayer for Christian Unity** comes from the churches of French Canada - a country with a diversity of language, culture and even climate, as well as diversity in expressions of Christian faith. 'Has Christ been divided?' they ask us, provocatively taking their cue from the passage from I Corinthians set for this Sunday. Their reply is a definite 'no' - for there are many examples of mutual support and co-operation between Canadian Christians, not least on issues of poverty and social justice; and yet old divisions remain. What is interesting about their material is that it stems from their sense that God has blessed them through the very land from which they derive their living, and which they are learning to treat with dignity and respect. In all its beauty and diversity, they tell us, it is a gift from God - *Don de Dieu*, the name of the ship that carried the founders of Québec to this land 300 and more years ago. They see this as a resonant reminder of the peace we share in the eucharist - as we shall discover in our special service on 19 January.

The Week of Prayer, which Christians have observed for over a century, is timed to end with the celebration of the **Conversion of St Paul**, the great apostle of unity - in Christ Jews and gentiles, men and women, everyone in fact, belong together without distinction, he taught. Our Cathedral is of course dedicated to St Paul, and they invite us to join them for their patronal festival - which we have done in previous years, joining with our school (the closest St Paul's school to the cathedral) which played a key role in last year's service. Let the Rector know if you'd like to attend this year's service, at 4.30pm (with workshops for children from 2-4pm). And we will celebrate St Paul in our own service the following day.



The Christmas and Epiphany season comes to an end with **Candlemas** (the Presentation of Christ in the Temple) on 2 February, when the focus shifts from the infant King to the coming season of Lent - this will be our next all-age service.

A reminder that the second Sunday of each month is **Hot Potato Sunday**, when after the service we sit round a table to discuss some hot potatoes (perhaps based on the readings of the day) and then eat some - with a nice selection of salads!