

NEWSLETTER FOR JULY 2010

Farewell to Elspeth

Sunday 11 July will be Elspeth Wilkes' last Sunday as our organist and director of music, and we shall be marking the contribution she has made to our worship and as a member of the community of St George-in-the-East for the last twelve years, both in the service and with a barbecue following in the Rectory garden, to which all are warmly welcome. The food and drink will be provided by our skilled 'in house' team, though if you would like to bring some small specialities of your own please do. There will be opportunity to pay a proper tribute to her on that occasion.

Elspeth has served us faithfully, and will be much missed. She is, of course, a highly accomplished professional pianist, much in demand for a range of work, including accompanying singers and musicians and as *répétiteur* for various colleges, academies and festivals, as well as giving private lessons. We have particularly appreciated her carefully-chosen and beautifully-played piano pieces during communion. Her sight-reading skills mean that she can cope on the spot with anything that is thrown at her! She has also convened and rehearsed choirs for special services, drawing on her network of friends and family; and in the last couple years she and others have arranged some Sunday afternoon concerts in church, all of which have been of breathtakingly high standards even though audiences have not been huge.

Elspeth, her partner Alexis and her sister Verity will be leaving their flat in church, Elspeth and Alexis for pastures new in Reading because of his work, and we wish her well in adjusting her career to this new location. She hopes to continue occasional links with us for concerts and other special occasions.

As part of our ongoing maintenance programme, two of the church flats will be refurbished, and it looks likely that her successor, another professional musician (harpsichordist and organist), will live in one of them. I hope to be able to introduce you to him next month. He will be playing for our...

...281st Anniversary of Consecration

on Sunday 18 July – a service of celebration, though as we have shifted the barbecue to the previous week (see above) refreshments on this occasion will be in church. 281 may not be a specially significant number, but it's a reminder of how we have been here for longer than almost any other local institutions, and we hope you will join us on this day to give thanks for the ongoing life of our extraordinary parish church.

Farewell to Bishop Stephen and Archdeacon Lyle

This month we say our formal farewells to both of the senior staff who have been responsible for our area – the three deaneries of Tower Hamlets, Hackney and Islington which make up the episcopal area of Stepney and the archdeaconry of Hackney. The service (which will be brief and simple, and followed by refreshments) is on Tuesday 6 July, 7.30pm at St John Hackney, and all are welcome. Bishop Stephen and Archdeacon Lyle will both receive 'scrapbooks' for which each parish has provided a page of text and pictures, and a gift from the parishes. We have already sent our contributions.

Dr **Lyle Dennen**, an American with a Russian-speaking wife Xenia, has served all his ministry in London – south of the river before coming in 1999 to be Archdeacon of Hackney and vicar of St Andrew Holborn, where his personal assistant Jenny Harding has also been based. As Lyle will continue to minister at St Andrew's (which is in fact outwith the archdeaconry), his successor will presumably work from elsewhere, but we do not yet know when or on what basis he or she will be appointed. Although archdeacons are technically officers of the diocesan bishop, we expect that Bishop Richard will be consulting carefully with our three deaneries, to establish what we most need. Ideally the next area bishop should also have a say in the appointment of his principal colleague, if the timescale makes this possible.

Stephen Oliver has been Bishop of Stepney since 2003. His ministry began in Southwell diocese (to which he is now retiring) before a 6-year spell in religious broadcasting with the BBC. Then came a time as Rector of Leeds. It so happens that several of the clergy in this area, as well as me, are proper northerners, or have served in northern industrial towns (eg Alan Green in

Liverpool; Chris Burke in the north-east – and about to depart to Sheffield Cathedral; Alex Logan from Lancashire). We share with Bishop Stephen perspectives about the relative depths and effects of deprivation between north and south – an issue which with budget cuts and other trends will become ever more critical in the next few years. There is no doubt that East London is as vulnerable to cuts now as it always has been, but the impact is likely to be greater elsewhere.

Stephen came to London as a residentiary canon at St Paul's before succeeding Sentamu as Bishop of Stepney. There has been a 'bishop for the East End' in one form or another since the late 19th century. Walsham How, Bishop of Bedford (later of Wakefield), author of *For all the saints* and other hymns, was the first, and frequently visited this parish. He was a honorary member of the men's group at Christ Church Watney Street. The 'one and only' Bishop of Islington (1898-1923), Charles Henry Turner, was previously Rector of this parish; after his time the post lapsed. The post of Bishop of Stepney was created in 1895, and some details about Bishop Stephen's 13 predecessors can be found on our website at <http://www.stgite.org.uk/media/bishopofstepney.html>

Bishop Richard has said that the consultation process used to appoint the new Bishop of Kensington will also be followed for Stepney, though we do not yet know how long this will take; we shall be watching with concern and interest.

Meanwhile, Bishop Richard has sent various messages to the clergy explaining how (a) he has created some space in his diary, by giving up some national and international commitments, to give more time to Stepney (an area which he knows well, as one of Bishop Stephen's predecessors here) and (b) he has given Bishop Pete Broadbent, Bishop of Willesden and 'chief of staff' for the diocese, temporary oversight of our area (working with the three area deans, in the absence of an archdeacon), and has adjusted Willesden provisions to make this possible.

We thank Stephen and Lyle for all they have sought to do in leading the mission of the church in an area where a high profile is needed, and hold them in our prayers as their ministries continue elsewhere.

St Paul's School news

School life continues to be as busy as ever, with our dedicated staff maintaining existing programmes as well as tackling new initiatives – and all this alongside the disruption of a major rebuilding programme, which is proceeding according to plan (we were fortunate to get this in place before cuts take effect). As with many other local schools, staff decided (with the support of the governors) not to administer the SATS tests, but instead to use these and other testing materials to profile pupils' achievements themselves – a more time-consuming, but more accurate, process. There has been much discussion, with the diocese and the local authority, about the coalition government's invitation to consider academy status. From the start, church schools have existed under several different funding regimes, so the task is to identify the best option to secure the school's future.

We have gained a reputation as a 'media-friendly' school. You may have noticed that the Olympic mascots were launched at St Paul's – the pupils having been coached not to be too rude about them! The Church of England's national communications unit is currently arranging for Richard Dawkins, and Jan Ainsworth (the church's chief education officer) to do some filming at school, involving some of the children. So we are firmly on the map, and that is good, because it is showing others how a Muslim-majority church school can in fact be entirely faithful to its founding principles of providing education for local children (especially the poor and deprived). 'Hats off' (as Bishop Richard says) to Terry Bennett and his staff for all of this.

The school's founder, Dan Greatorex, vicar of St Paul Dock Street from 1862-97, was certainly committed to this ideal of service. For Founder's Day this year we chose to major on the fact that St Paul's was almost certainly – and quite definitely according to Dan Greatorex, who was never backward in blowing his own trumpet (or vuvuzela?) – the place where, in 1864, free school dinners were first provided for the children of the poor. We celebrated this at our church service on 25 June, and children then spent part of the day researching this story, helped maybe by <http://www.stgite.org.uk/greatorex.html>. What were the menus? how were they cooked and

served (his 'Clothed Scholars' are part of the answer) and financed? why did others complain that providing free, rather than halfpenny, meals, was a disservice to the poor? And they brought the story up to date, looking at issues about healthy and nutritious school meals today, and what children around the world can expect (with a World Cup 'fruit salad').

Thanks to Marcus

We are extremely grateful to Marcus Cook for replanting – and faithfully watering – all the pots on the church forecourt and around the main steps. a real labour of love alongside his quiet and unobtrusive care for the shrubs and creepers along the main church drive. Annoyingly, one of the pots by the steps was overturned by person or persons unknown, and Marcus had to re-do his work on this. We are currently very concerned about the heavy use of the main drive by large vehicles of various kinds, and are considering what remedial work we need to do – alongside a heavy programme of other restoration work.

Thank you, Marcus: the touches of colour give a welcoming feel to the site.

Richard House

living for today, creating positive memories for tomorrow

London's first dedicated children's hospice, providing respite, end-of-life care and bereavement support for life-limited children and their families, opened ten years ago, and throughout that time Edith Wyeth has made sure that we support its work, with regular donations, particularly from Marathon Sunday. They tell us that the £250 we sent this year will fund a fortnight's stay in the family flats, allowing parents to be near their child who is receiving hospice care. The range of services they provide widens all the time, and they are currently involved with over 200 children and their families. Despite the statutory funding they receive, £1.8m is needed each year from voluntary contributions (individuals, churches, trusts and other organisations) to enable the work to continue.

Some of our readers may have visited Richard House, to see its work and facilities for themselves, but if you have not, there are monthly visitor days, which can help to inform you. Details of these, and of all the events planned to mark their tenth anniversary, can be found on their website <www.richardhouse.org.uk> and their newsletter 'our house' is displayed in church.