

## NEWSLETTER FOR MARCH 2012

### Lent programme

Our Lenten observance began in a slightly unusual way - with the children of our school joining in an impromptu sung litany in procession around the church on **Ash Wednesday**. The Litany is not often sung in this way nowadays, though once it was - it was one of the bones of contention of the ritualism rioters here in 1859-60 - and it is a very Anglican devotion especially appropriate in Lent, which ought to have its place alongside the Catholic tradition of Stations of the Cross. I wasn't sure if it would work, but the children rose splendidly to the occasion (as so often they do). Candle-bearers, moving slowly and decorously, led different groups of children around the building for each of the selected sections of the *Common Worship* litany, with 'stations' or stopping-points at the font, at the icon of Christ the Merciful, and at the abstract picture of the church on fire in 1941, all of which we thought and prayed about. Everyone joined in singing the responses, and it felt very prayerful, heightened rather than compromised by the fact that 85% of them are of Muslim background. Such events can make a deep impression on children. A report some years ago asked children what they thought formal liturgy was all about, and one observed approvingly *People moving about in patterns* - which would have gladdened the heart of Percy Dearmer, arch-Anglican liturgist!

We continued in another slightly unusual way, which proved successful last year: prefacing the evening liturgy of the day with soup (three delicious varieties) and pancakes (the Rector managing an efficient production line despite his crutches), and so moving directly from feasting to fasting.

Flyers giving details of our **Lent programme** have been distributed. At the last minute, three local churches (St Dunstan's, St Mary's and ourselves) managed to put together a pattern which offers daytime and evening opportunities for worship and study for each weekday. Our contribution is a Monday evening service and discussion group, and the regular Tuesday eucharist followed by a simple lunch in the Rectory. Further details can be found at <<http://www.stgite.org.uk/library/lent2012.jpg>>

### Orthodox London Mission

We were recently asked if we could provide a home for a mission initiative by the British Orthodox Church (within the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate): a monthly English-language liturgy on Saturdays, with the Raising of Incense and Morning Prayer at 9.30am leading into the Divine Liturgy, and ending with a simple lunch, interspersed with a monthly midweek meeting for prayer and study. Having received helpful and positive advice from various people in the diocese, we have given this project our enthusiastic backing. The aim is to establish a London base for Orthodox worship, teaching and fellowship, that is rooted specifically in the ancient Coptic, or Oriental, tradition (as distinct from the Russian and Greek forms of Orthodoxy). While this church has strong links with its roots in Egypt, many of its members are second and third generation British, and others (including clergy) are converts, so the priority is to offer English-language worship that is accessible to this 'constituency' and to enquirers who want to explore the Orthodox way.

What they are calling the 'Mission of St George and St Paul the Hermit' begins as an experiment - humbly seeking if this project is of God (in welcome contrast to others who have come to East London confident that they have all the answers, and purporting to bring Christ's light to dark places where hitherto he has not been present). At <<http://britishorthodox.org/news-events/>> you can view the address by Fr Peter Farrington which sets out their vision, and elsewhere on their site you can find out more about their community. In his address he draws good parallels with the mission here led by Bryan King in the 1850s.

Fr Peter, and his bishop Abba Seraphim (who was also present at their inaugural meeting, together with a priest from North India), are strongly committed to working ecumenically, particularly through the forum linking Anglicans and Oriental Orthodox, and our hope is that this project will indeed succeed and bear fruit. If it does, it will be formalised (with the inevitable faculty!) in a few months' time.

### Highway Neighbours

As the Olympic and Paralympic season approaches, and information dribbles out about its drastic impact on local transport and services, and daily life in general, the churches of the deanery have been considering how we might respond to particular needs and crunch points in our various local communities. There has been a great deal of planning - but is it joined up? Near Neighbours - government money, distributed through the Church Urban Fund - has set up a project working with the churches along the Highway, together with local mosques and other community partners, to survey the likely needs, and build relationships between people all faiths and none. Caitlin Burbridge is the designated project worker; a **Highway Neighbours** website will shortly be launched. We need to be careful not to duplicate work that others are already doing (and also to steer clear of canvassing programmes in March for the mayoral elections); but we will be looking for some help in mapping the area, and in consulting local residents, so that we are ready to respond. At the very least, we will be offering our church as 'quiet space', with access to some facilities, for any who are stressed out. Watch this space!

## Concerts

Word has got around that St George-in-the-East is a good concert venue - an inspiring space, an excellent acoustic, a first-class piano, and rather more affordable than the City churches! Several Trinity College students are planning to showcase their talents, beginning with **Aled Start and Liam Mattison** on Saturday 17 March. The following Saturday we will be hosting the **London Transport Choir** (directed by Michael Keyte, a Reader in the deanery) - flyers for each of these events will be circulated nearer the time. In April **Fred Thomas**, our multi-talented local musician, will resume his fascinating avant-garde concerts. And there is much more to come. Although we advertise these events to our congregation and to local churches, and some of us enjoy the variety of musical styles on offer, we make it clear that, though we're happy to provide a venue at reasonable cost, it's up to the promoters to advertise and build their audiences. The benefit for us is that it puts us on the map - and it's very much in line with the vision of Fr Alex Solomon and others when the church was restored.

The church is currently quite heavily used by practising musicians. Kornél Rédei, a Swiss student (with a background in the Reformed tradition of Berne) is currently enjoying the opportunity to practice here regularly; Elspeth Wilkes continues to rehearse here with her students from time to time; Wapping Great Voices have had extra practices (having, against their expectations, progressed to competition semi-finals - congratulations and good luck!); and we have our resident piper Paul Ritchie, who needs to escape from the pressures of the banking world to maintain his skills (as composer and recorded artist) in a place where the neighbours do not object! We must get him to pipe for one of our special occasions.....

## Congregational news

We welcome to God's world, with all its possibilities and challenges, **Fabian Elijah Crocker-Griffiths**, born on 16 February at Homerton Hospital at 7lb 1oz. Susan's labour this time was so straightforward that she and Mark, and Emilia the overjoyed and solicitous sibling, were able to bring him to church three days later, where we offered prayers of thanksgiving and blessing after the service. Time was when bringing 3-day old babies for baptism was commonplace (though mother remained in bed - she came a few weeks later to be 'churched'). How much better to have the whole family present to give thanks - and to look forward to his baptism in due course!

We had lost touch with **Rodney Sawers** when he left the area, because his carers claimed they could not tell us where he had gone; but now, after anxious requests from his brother in Australia, and elderly mother in South Africa, we hope this will be rectified, and we are told that he is doing well.

Plans are being made for Fr **Ken Leech** to move into residential care next door to a local history library where he plans to research and write about church life in the Mossley area.