

NEWSLETTER FOR MAY 2010

Events in April

Easter Eve and **Easter Day** were joyful events (though numbers at the vigil were small) - with a real sense of celebrating Christ's resurrection. Thanks to Annadale for the flowers, to all who helped spring-clean the church, and to Michael Page for adding to the festivities by celebrating his birthday with us! Our **WaterAid** bucket during Lent raised £70 - a much better result than the individual contributions of previous years.

Jan and the Rector left straight after church to spend a few days in **Grenoble** with Judith, who was spending her year abroad there (she's back home now). It was wonderful to be surrounded by snow-capped mountains on every side, and to enjoy some local cuisine (including tripe and calf's head, as well as Chartreuse, made in the region).

Some others who travelled in the Easter holidays got stranded - which either gave a few bonus days with family, or long and frustrating coach journeys, or both! As a result, one or two key people missed the **Annual Vestry and Parochial Church Meetings** on 18 April. Allan Ramanoop and Alex Nelson were re-appointed wardens; a full list of church council members will follow next month once we have met to elect officers for the coming year.

The first of the current series of three concerts was also on 18 April, and featured Vox Tops, a trio from Birmingham who gave a cleverly put-together and skilfully-presented programme of cabaret songs by Sondheim and others. We continue to try to build audiences for concerts in a variety of styles, but number continue to be modest: a pity, with such high quality performances. Sundays 16 May and 13 June are the next two dates.

On the previous day, seventeen young people, with their leaders, came to do some painting of two of the spiral staircases. They were members of the '**Refresh**' project of Cathedral Camps, which has been successfully widening its activities to involve volunteers from a wider range of backgrounds than those who took part in their traditional summer residential events. Alan Gardner, our quinquennial inspector, gave up the day to be with them, and set the context with a demonstration of how to make limewash, and why it is still used; he then took groups up the tower while others were painting. Paul Kellaway provided a splendid lunch - the best we've ever been offered, said the organiser. Allan and Danny also helped in various ways. So they enjoyed it, and we hope they'll come back for more! For the price of materials we got some useful 'refreshing' of our building. Thanks to all who helped make it a good experience for all concerned.

Friday 23 April saw our **patronal festival**, for which we were delighted to welcome **Jenny Petersen**, of St Benet's Chaplaincy at Queen Mary College, as our preacher. She engaged in a bit of gentle sparring with fellow-Australian Fr Kevin Scully, who came with members of his church - this was Melbourne v. Sydney! Gone are the great days of patronal festivals in East London - especially when they fall on Friday - but especially at election time it's important for us to reclaim **St George**, and his flag as an inclusive rather than an exclusive symbol. Children at our school are well-aware of this: they can tell you that St George is honoured by Christians in many other parts of the world - including Russia, Greece and the Middle East (where George lived and died), as well as by Muslims.

On the following day, Lyndsay our Gardens Ranger organised a day of St George-style activities for children. (Bethnal Green also saw a special programme of events.) And we also had a rather unusual service in church, with 30 or so Russians coming together to **celebrate the engagement** of Yuri [= George] Prokofyev and Olga Yamaleeva, who will be marrying on their return to Russia in a few weeks' time, and wanted an event around St George's Day for their Russian friends. The couple had created a simple and very moving 'courtship' dance to express

aspects of their relationship. The service was followed by refreshments and speeches in the Churchwardens' Garden.

And then it was **Marathon Sunday**, so an early service after which a well-organised team served drinks and refreshments, and provided access to our loos, for the assembled crowds. (There were a lot more groups gathered along our bit of The Highway than in previous years, including a jazz band.) Wendy was up at 5am filling rolls, which Beth and James sold; Elspeth and Alexis service hot and cold drinks; and Paul and Hannah made copious quantities of high-class cakes and buns. Unlike last year, when we ran out of supplies, we had enough to go on serving until mid-afternoon, and made a splendid profit of over £400, for Richard House and church funds. Many thanks to all who helped.

And congratulations to **Chris Burke**, Rector of Stepney, and his wife Helen, who rain in support of Missions to Seafarers. We shall miss them when they move to Sheffield in the autumn - Chris is to be a residentiary canon at the cathedral.

We are also saying farewell to the Ven Dr **Lyle Dennan**, who has now retired as Archdeacon of Hackney, though will continue as priest-in-charge of St Andrew Holborn, where his home and the archdeaconry office are. We wait to hear the future plans of **Stephen Oliver**, Bishop of Stepney, who has been on compassionate leave for some time, caring for his wife Hilary until her death.

One result has been that much extra work has fallen on **Alan Green**, our Area Dean - including a 'visitation' of our parish, inspecting the church, its contents and records, on 27 April: he pronounced most things to be in order! Very appropriately, Alan will be installed as a Prebendary of St Paul's Cathedral on 15 May. And our neighbour at St Paul's Shadwell, **Ric Thorpe**, will become Rector of that parish, rather than priest-in-charge, on 24 May. Congratulations to them both.

Some good local news is that the **East London Line** - now part of London Overground - re-opened quietly on 27 April. making life easier for many of us, especially those who live in Wapping. Initially services are running from Dalston Junction to New Cross/New Cross Gate from 7am to 8pm on weekdays, and the replacement buses continue. Next month will see a full timetable in place. So once again you can see the picture of our church on platform 2 of Shadwell station, which has been given a trendy makeover. A pity, though, that they could not find a way of making it step free, eliminating the cramped steps between the platforms and the lifts (similar problems at Wapping and Rotherhithe). Nor did they rise to the challenge of a full interchange between trains and DLR.

Still, it means that my favourite pub quiz question can now be re-instated, in a slightly revised form: *Which is the only station on the TfL network whose name has no letters in common with the word 'lobster'?* To which a new question can now be added: *Which is the only station where London Overground goes beneath London Underground?* (Answers on a postcard....)

Events in May

First of all, you may be aware that there's a general and local **election** (plus that question about an elected mayor). There is much that could be said about the complex scene in our two re-configured local constituencies of Poplar & Limehouse, and Bethnal Green & Bow, where local factors may produce surprising results. But the most important thing is that you should cast your vote on 6 May, even if you are feeling apathetic. Don't leave it up to unrepresentative minorities to determine the outcome!

I understand that some readers have received leaflets from an extreme Islamic group claiming that to vote is to commit the ultimate sin of *shirk* - putting someone else above God - for which the penalty is death. This is nonsense and not, of course, what the Qu'ran teaches. By contrast, Christian teaching (again, apart from a handful of fringe sects) stresses that believers have a positive

duty to participate in 'civic society'; and we do well to remember the heroism of those who fought in the past for democratic rights, and of those in the present, around the world, for whom casting a vote involves personal risk and sacrifice.

Christian Aid Week follows on closely, from 9-15 May. This year Christian Aid has been focusing on presenting to politicians and electors of all parties the challenge to end poverty. Our service on 9 May will use Christian Aid materials, and envelopes will be available (Gift Aid if you can).

Ascension Day is on Thursday 13 May, and we shall have a Sung Eucharist at 7.30pm followed by a social in the crypt, which we hope will include a quiz organised by Elspeth. As you may know, Elspeth will be moving to Reading this summer, so this may be her last quiz - though there will be other occasions to say farewell, including her final concert in June. I hope to be able to explain next month our plans for appointing a new organist, in conjunction with Trinity College of Music.

Warmer weather means we can begin to plan some parish **barbecues**....

From the Registers

The funeral of **Daphne Lilian Conn** was held in church on Wednesday 14 April, followed by burial at Manor Park. Daphne was well-known locally, not least at the club in Glamis Road, and a large number came to give her a good send-off. Our sympathies to her husband Thomas, her three sons and six grandchildren, her sister and cousin.