

*The Parish of St George-in-the-East with St Paul*  
**Newsletter for MAY 2012**



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Allan Ramanoop & Alex Nelson

## This joyful Eastertide....

continues, until we have had enough of repeated Alleluyas (of which every occurrence on Easter Day was marked by ringing bells from the collection amassed by Edith Wyeth over the years). We had a 'good' **Holy Week**, with a Passover-style liturgy on Maundy Thursday beginning in the panelled room, the preaching of the passion on Good Friday and an intimate Easter Eve vigil. Earlier that day we'd had a spring-clean of church, with coffee and cakes - all part of the preparation for the festival. Our **Easter Day** celebrations culminated in a wonderful congregational lunch by/for **Michael Page**, nobly deferring his birthday feast from Holy Week and expertly conjuring up, despite our cramped facilities, a menu with middle Eastern flavours.

The Easter season has so far seen a variety of special events. On **Low Sunday** we welcomed Joan Guénault, a friend of the Rector's from his days as a curate and college chaplain in Lancaster, where they worked together at the recently-formed branch of The Samaritans. (Her husband Tony was, and still is, one of about a dozen licensed Readers at Scotforth church, and also treasurer of the branch.) Joan went on to have national Samaritan training responsibilities, and was here for a memorial gathering for **John Eldrid**, who was one of the key leaders of the movement in and after Chad Varah's time, and she spoke about John during the service, for he had served his first curacy in this parish, from 1953-56, living on the top floor of the Rectory with his new wife Rosalie and their first child - and also his fellow-curate! - with the Boggis family below. After the memorial event, Rosalie shared some memories of those days with the Rector. John broke all the rules, but was an inspirational figure, and his 1988 book *Caring for the Suicidal* remains a valuable text. He remained active in ministry, in Porstmouth diocese, until his death late last year.

By a further coincidence, Joan and Tony's son Paul - whom the Rector last knew as a teenage musician - has been appointed head of the **Wapping High School**, the free school which starts in September and will temporarily be using the space in the crypt soon to be vacated by the North Thames Ministerial Training Course - more about all this next month.

The following Sunday saw the London **Marathon**, so after an early service (for which we sat in the sanctuary around the altar - which some found a moving experience) we set up our gazebos to feed and water the crowds, and wave the flag for St George, alongside those of the many charities the runners were supporting. We raised £204 for 'our' Marathon charity, **Richard House**, before we ran out of supplies - it's always a puzzle knowing how much to lay in. Thanks to Allan, John, Paul (amidst a house move), Cathy and others who helped.

And next day, **St George's Day**, we were back for our patronal festival. It was heartening to have the support of a number of local clergy - a welcome reversal of recent trends - who almost outnumbered our own parishioners, though as one of them pointed out, a number of the clergy present also technically fall into this category. One of these. Rod Green, the Associate Rector of St Paul Shadwell, who lives in the former Cable Steet School, preached a compelling and thoughtful sermon on good and bad reasons for honouring St George (whoever he was), and was much- photographed by his colleagues wearing a dalmatic - though he stressed he had done this once before! Thanks to all who provided fine eats and drinks, which helped stimulate some good conversations after the service.

The following Sunday saw our **Annual Vestry and Parochial Church Meeting** - reported on below. As part of our preparation for this, we asked the children, during their session, to look back and forward; at the end of the service their findings were reported and the adults added their own thoughts and comments, which are listed here:

### What has been the highlight of your year at St George-in-the-East?

- ◆ The singing
- ◆ The children's group and all the activities
- ◆ The brass rubbing trip
- ◆ Baby Fabian's first outing to church - we all celebrated together
- ◆ Going out on our day trip - getting to know people more
- ◆ The quiz night - everyone meeting socially
- ◆ The marathon
- ◆ The communal functions
- ◆ The friendliness
- ◆ Easter prayer

- ◆ Easter lunch/Michael's birthday lunch
- ◆ Time together outside of church

### What would you like to see happen in the next year at St George-in-the-East?

- ◆ Stronger ties with schools in the area and emphasis on children's church
- ◆ Try to increase numbers and increase community spirit
- ◆ Would like to see our congregation build up
- ◆ More social events (x3)
- ◆ Need Advent and Lent studies midweek
- ◆ Another trip/meals together
- ◆ Time to talk
- ◆ Encourage more to our congregation
- ◆ Take more part in the running of our church (congregation)

### And in the next 3 years?

- ◆ Build up the congregation
- ◆ Increasing children's numbers and children's focus of worship and social events
- ◆ More of a congregation and more children
- ◆ Bigger sustained congregation supporting work of the church
- ◆ Working harder for disabled access
- ◆ More concerts
- ◆ Go from strength to strength and attract more youngsters to the children's group

The coming days will see further special events:

On Friday 4 May **Raine's Foundation School** come - as always on the first Friday of May - for their Founder's Day service, to give thanks for the rich and varied history of the life of their school and to lay a wreath at the foot of the memorial to 'Henry Raine, Brewer'. We value our links with this Church of England secondary school, even though long ago it moved out of the parish, which a number of children from our past and present congregation have attended, and we wish them well for their future.

The same day (from 6pm onwards) sees events in **Altab Ali Park**, the former churchyard of St Mary Whitechapel near Aldgate East station, marking the annual commemoration of the nearby murder of a 25-year old Bengali textile worker on this day in 1978. A few days after the 'Rock Against Racism' event that year - attended by 80,000 people protesting against the activities of the National Front - he was senselessly stabbed to death on his way to work, provoking an appalled reaction from the whole community; his funeral became a major show of solidarity against extremism. The park was re-named in memory of him; for some years Fr Ken Leech, working as a community theologian in East London, lived overlooking it, and entitled one of his books *Doing Theology in Altab Ali Park*.

The event has been co-ordinated by the **United Platform against Racism and Fascism**; our church is named as one of the event's sponsors. We have produced material for school assemblies, used by the Rector in our own school, where children are alive to the issues of racism. The Bishop of Stepney will be one of the speakers.

**Christian Aid Week**, which provides an annual focus for the work of the primary aid agency of the English churches, working with partner churches around the world, with house-to-house collections in many parts of the country (though that is now almost impossible to organise in central London), runs from 13-19 May, and envelopes will be available in church for any who wish to make a one-off donation to their work. (We know that some members of our congregation give regularly, through direct debit or standing order.) The focus of this year's Christian Aid Week materials, which we will follow on Sunday 20 May, is Sierra Leone - the home country of Sylvia James, a member of our congregation. This is timely, in the light of the International Court of Justice's recent verdict on Charles Taylor.

Michael and Jan will be away on 13 May, so we hope that the congregation will give a warm welcome to **Kevin Scully**, Rector of St Matthew Bethnal Green, who will be presiding and preaching at our Parish Eucharist that day. You can be assured of a lively service: Kevin is a forthright Aussie, and author of a number of books about inner-city prayer and spirituality. One of his distant predecessors at St Matthew's was the notoriously absentee Joshua King, cousin of Bryan King, the Rector here at the time of the Ritualism Riots. Kevin, by contrast, is notoriously present in and around Bethnal Green!

On 15 May Bishop Adrian will be formally licensing Jan to serve in this parish (hitherto she has held the bishop's permission to officiate) - together with Angus Ritchie, for his work at St Peter Bethnal Green. Please remember them both on this day.

Then comes **Ascension Day**, on Thursday 17 May. We will celebrate this 40th day of the Eastertide with a Eucharist at 7.30pm, followed by a take-away curry - an experiment proposed by our Worship and Nurture Committee which we hope will be a success! The focus of Ascension Day is Christ's royal and high-priestly rule over all creation, and therefore our part in his universal mission.

Earlier that day we shall also be welcoming the **Worshipful Company of Gunmakers** for a service at 5pm (to which all are welcome). As explained in previous newsletters, and on the parish website, this is the only livery company whose base lies outside the City, because of the dangerous nature of their trade, 'proofing' weapons, which in the past produced explosions - though nowadays their systems are so good that there is no danger of this. Their headquarters, the Proof House on Commercial Road, falls just within our parish, through the accidents of history: formerly in St Mary Whitechapel, it then fell into St Mark Whitechapel, and on its closure into St Paul Dock Street, which is now part of our parish. They are one of the few livery companies still actively engaged in the function for which they were founded, which in their case is to ensure that all small arms licensed for use are safe and fit for purpose, and they rightly take pride in their professional expertise. Their members are geographically dispersed, so although they have a chaplain (the Revd David Cooper, who is a Falklands veteran, based in Somerset) they do not have a tradition of regular London-based worship, so their coming here is something of an experiment. The Company's patron saint is St Dunstan, whose feast day is 19 May. We have engaged some musicians and put together a service to celebrate their work - and will see what happens!

Which brings us finally to the Day of Pentecost (the 50th and final day of Eastertide), and .....

### Canon Michael Seward

At the end of May we shall be saying farewell to Michael, who is moving to Bromley College (founded in 1666 to provide homes for retired clergy and widows). He's a well-known figure in church circles, and seems to know everyone who is anyone! He was in effect the Church of England's first communications director (then known as 'Radio and TV Officer'); ran lively parishes in Fulham and Ealing - where the notorious 'vicarage rape' of his daughter Jill occurred; she and he have continued to speak out on the issue, and support rape victims; was an area dean; and for the nine years before his retirement was Canon Treasurer at St Paul's Cathedral. While very much a man of the 'establishment', he has never been afraid of taking risks and breaking ranks with the evangelical constituency to which he remains deeply committed, as his intriguingly-titled 1999 autobiography *A Faint Streak of Humility* shows. But he is best known as a hymn-writer and editor of various hymnals. *Christ triumphant*, a fine text with a fine tune, is a firmly-established favourite of many congregations, but there are many more, and Michael continues his involvement in the 'hymn world'.

When Michael and Jackie moved to Discovery Wharf in 2001 they became active and valued members of this congregation (when Michael was not preaching elsewhere) - deliberately choosing their local, if not technically their parish, church rather than one of their preferred tradition. Perhaps it helped that years before Michael had played diocesan cricket with Fr Solomon! Both of them offered supportive and thoughtful comments on the preaching here, and Michael has led and assisted at worship on a regular basis. We have shared in Michael's sadness at the last illness and death of Jackie, which he has borne bravely, but he remains lost without his helpmeet.

Michael will be preaching, and choosing the hymns, on Pentecost Sunday, his last day here, which will be followed by lunch in the Rectory for all who wish to join us.

More next month about how we will be marking the Queen's **Diamond Jubilee**.

### Highway Neighbours

By now readers who live locally should have received a mail drop about Highway Neighbours, a funded programme which brings together the local churches, mosques and other community-based groups to address the questions of how daily life - travel, shopping, getting around - will be possible during the ten weeks of the **Olympic and Paralympic period**, starting on 25 July, and how together we might address the problems. (There have been difficulties with the Bengali translation of this, so a further drop will take place which will provide an update.)

You may also have seen the banner on the church railings asking how it will be possible to cross The Highway during this time, since all forms of transport - cars, buses, DLR, Overground, bikes, even on foot - will be affected. Once the mayoral elections are over, we expect that there will be more information released about the negative impact of the Olympics on our area (through which the Olympic Route Network runs), alongside all the more positive encouragement to participate in all that's on offer. There will be some local canvassing, and some 'focus groups' in public places, to gauge people's concerns. We need to be both upbeat and realistic about what's in store for the coming months! Let us know what you think.....

### Concerts and other visitors

We continue to host a variety of performances. April saw another innovative **F-IRE Klang Codex** concert, curated by Fred Thomas, who has also used the church for various recording sessions, and also a concert by Trinity College musicians performing works for piano and singers from the **Russian art song** repertoire (repeated the following day in Cambridge). The concert by an Italian choir in May will not now take place, so the next event will be a performance by **St Andrew's University Madrigal Society** on 2 June - details will be circulated nearer the time. Pending a new appointment, we have welcomed various interim organists - most of them highly skilful - as well as welcome return visits from Elspeth.

There are a number of school visits booked, plus as a local history event 'Charles Dickens in the East' on 21 May.

### A date for your diary

It's clear from the feedback at the annual meeting that parish trips combining fun, food and fellowship with a spiritual dimension are popular, so we hope you will put **Saturday 23 June** in your diary for this summer's trip to Wokingham which will combine all these elements: more details in due course.

### What's going on up the tower?

The installation of **telecommunications equipment** (for which the diocesan Chancellor granted a faculty, commending the parish for the careful way it had negotiated the legal processes) is proceeding smoothly. Unfortunately it prevented bellringing for St George's Day - when all churches were asked to ring their bells - but we expect that it will be possible for them to ring out again on Ascension Day. We were able to raise a **new flag** in time for St George's day (with thanks to an anonymous donor who has once again funded this - they don't last for ever!) despite intruding on the territory of the **peregrine falcons** nesting up there. Against all the odds they have produced three chicks, of which we hope to have some pictures to circulate next month.

### Annual Vestry and Parochial Meeting

We met after church on 29 April, first to elect churchwardens for the coming year. **Alex Nelson** and **Allan Ramanoop** were nominated to serve for a further year, with our grateful thanks for all their labours: with their different skills they have served us well! The Annual Meeting then elected members to the Parochial Church Council, filling 8 of the 9 places (in addition to the wardens, and **Michael Page**, or Deanery Synod member now in the second of his three-year term): **Richard Powell, Charles Reese, Anne Willer, Susan Crocker, Margaret Coulter, Toni Davey, Kim Ali** and **Annadale Ramanoop**. The PCC will now appoint Treasurer and Secretary for the coming year, and can co-opt further members.

The meeting expressed thanks to all who have served us in the past year, and welcomed new members. Special thanks were expressed to **Fiona Lawrence**, our kindly and dependable parish administrator who bears with all our quirks and quibbles; to **Paul Kellaway**, the inspector of our accounts, for getting them into shape so helpfully and with the minimum of fuss (even in the midst of moving house); and to **Alan Gardner**, our parish surveyor, for interpreting our building and its needs to us, and for enthusiastically helping us to promote our various projects. We are fortunate to have such skilled people to help us on our way.