

NEWSLETTER for NOVEMBER 2010

November celebrations

The leaves fall, a bit later each year as global warming takes hold; and the clocks go back – and yet again there are proposals for a move to GMT+1 throughout the year, with GMT+2 in the summer, to maximise daylight hours, reduce carbon emissions and accidents and bring us into line with other parts of western Europe. This all makes sense to me, but Scotland doesn't like it, so nothing may come of it.

Whatever the clocks say, the national mood changes as we begin to look towards winter and Christmas. It will be interesting to see how the 2-month shopping bonanza, and the round of parties, fare as spending cuts and job losses take hold: will we spend more, or less, this Christmas, and will festivities be truncated?

The mood of the church also changes, as we look towards Advent, preparing for that precious season through the darkening days of November with a focus on 'the things that cannot be seen' – the kingdom of God and the Christian hope of life immortal. First **All Saints** (marked with an all-age Eucharist on Sunday 31 October) and **All Souls** (Eucharist at 7.30pm on Tuesday 2 November), when we remember those who have gone before us in the faith – both the famous heroes and heroines, and our own loved ones, unknown to the wider world but who have inspired us along the Way. We are gathering names to remember at the Eucharist on 2 November.

Two weeks later comes **Remembrance Sunday**, when we recall all – including civilians – who have died as a result of war, and mark the sacrifice of those who give their lives in the cause of freedom. Nowadays this is preceded by almost a month of poppy-wearing by public figures, except those who are brave enough to challenge this excessive new convention. Does not Jesus tell us not to parade our almsgiving? Would it not be better to focus our remembrance for the fallen on and around the appointed days, and make sure that it means something? We shall mark the day in the usual way, with a procession to the war memorial in the churchyard, and two minutes' silence, during the morning service. See this page of our website for background to the keeping of Armistice & Remembrance Days in this parish: <www.stgite.org.uk/media/warmemorial.html>

The last Sunday of the Christian year (this year, 21 November) is named '**Christ the King**' – for he is the one who inaugurates the kingdom of justice and peace, whose fortress – says the hymn – is a faithful heart.

Harvest gifts

Tony Miller, from Whitechapel Mission, writes:

Please accept and pass on our most grateful thanks to the congregation at St George-in-the-East for their harvest gifts and toiletries. This support is essential to the continuation of our work with homeless and vulnerable people. Harvest gifts provide the essentials for our clients who are reliant on the Mission for the provision of what, to most of us, would seem a very basic existence. This is particularly true as we approach the colder months when life on the streets is at its most difficult. Please convey our gratitude to everyone who contributed. May it please them to know that together we really are making a difference to those who are homeless and disadvantaged.

Our thanks to all who brought harvest gifts. We have passed on this message to St Paul's School, who provided the bulk of our offerings.

News International

We record with thanks a grant of £1000 from the Community Affairs Fund of News International for the work of the church. In previous years they made a regular contribution, but the personnel and organisation of the Fund have now changed. However, it is appropriate that they continue to support us, as we provide rehearsal and concert space, without charge, to Wapping Great Voices –

the NI choir, which is an expression of their commitment to the local community. And of course we are pleased to host their annual carol service, which this year will be on Thursday 16 December, where the choir is joined by that of St Bride's Fleet Street (the 'newspaper church') and children from St Paul's School.

Charitable giving

Each year we give a proportion of our income to local, national and international charities (both church-based and other), and the Parochial Church Council will be deciding on this distribution on 9 November. We have invited members of the congregation to submit suggestions for causes they would like us to support (providing background information to help us decide), and we have already received some proposals. But it is not too late – please give details to the Rector as soon as possible.

New Step

Our Mission Action Plan identifies the provision of Christian nurture and teaching, both for established members of the congregation and for newcomers, as a priority. We are therefore intending to host a 'New Step' course in the new year, for which we will provide the nucleus of participants, but hope that members of other local churches (not just Anglican!) will join us. This is a high-quality course organised by the Stepney Area ministry training team, with excellent speakers and tutors, and is suitable for anyone who would like to refresh and deepen their faith. It does require you to 'sign up' and commit to the series of weekly sessions, so we will be looking for this the next few weeks, so that we can decide if the course is viable.

Host UK

Jenny Petersen, chaplain at Queen Mary College, asks if anyone would be willing to provide hospitality for one or more of the very many international students at QMC at some point over the Christmas period, perhaps for a family meal. This is organised through 'Host UK', and would be an excellent way of extending Christian friendship over a period which is difficult for those who are 'stranded' here over the holiday period.

Morwenna Tredinnick

We have recently received cards and letters (including a kind donation) from Morwenna's family, who are grateful to receive this newsletter each month. In a recent addition to the 'licensed workers' page of our website <www.stgite.org.uk/layworkers.html> we record how, when Morwenna died in 2006 (at the age of 95), they found under her bed a silver tankard presented to the Newcastle architect John Green (her great-great-grandfather) when his Scotswood Chain Suspension Bridge spanning the Tyne was opened in 1831 (it was demolished in 1967).

Tobacco Dock

Another recent addition to our website is a page of historical detail about Tobacco Dock <www.stgite.org.uk/media/tobaccodock.html> and the sorry tale of its present state, which ends with a reference to the latest plans for the vacant lot adjacent to The Highway, currently a car park, for which a hotel is now proposed by Messila House, the current owners, plus a piazza open to local people. It remains to be seen if this comes to anything, but the plans are being showcased at Wapping Pensioners' Club, Raine Street on Monday 1 November from 2pm-8pm and Tuesday 2 November from 8am-6pm.

Carole Wilson

was laid to rest on 15 October, after her sudden death on holiday in Egypt, at the age of 66. Carole was particularly known in the area as the last co-tenant (together with the late Jackie Deppie) of the *Crown & Dolphin* on the corner of Cannon Street Road and Cable Street – in the days when

the Marathon ran along Cable Street rather than The Highway. Always immaculate in appearance, she raised three children – Jason, Boyd and Kelly – at the family home in Chapman Street, who have plenty of stories to tell of the area. We offer our condolences to them, and to all her friend.

Death is nothing at all...

You may recognise this as the opening line of a passage that is often read at funeral services, or printed in service booklets. It is popular because it exhorts us to behave naturally in the face of death – not to resort to elaborate mourning rituals, and to talk freely and openly about the one who has died, which is a very 'modern' attitude, and good in many ways. But the author, Canon Henry Scott Holland, would surely turn in his grave (and, yes, he was buried rather than cremated) at the use to which his words have been put. They were part of a sermon at St Paul's Cathedral, where he was a noted residentiary canon, a hundred years ago, when war and conflict were looming, and were prefaced by the words 'some people say....' and followed by the assertion that this is not the Christian view – death is not 'nothing at all'; it is utterly transforming. Which is why, whenever I have been asked to read these words at a funeral, I have always prefaced them with a word of explanation about their true context.

To mark the centenary of this sermon, the ecumenical Churches Funerals Group, of which I'm an Anglican member, has arranged a series of seminars about contemporary understandings of death and mourning at St Andrew's Holborn on Friday 12 November, followed by Evensong at St Paul's where the anniversary of this sermon will be specially marked. I can provide more details for anyone interested.