

*The Parish of St George-in-the-East with St Paul*

# Newsletter for DECEMBER 2011



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Allan Ramanoop & Alex Nelson

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## **Advent and Christmas**

In December the church enters on its annual balancing act: trying to keep Advent, with its own powerful themes and readings and hymns, as a sober and serious time of preparation for the coming of Christ, while joining the world around us in its prolonged anticipation of the festival. For many people, Christmas this year will be less lavish, and families will struggle, and this pattern will continue in the years to come. Might this be a pointer towards simpler, more heartfelt celebrations in tune with the 'real' meaning of the festival? May you know the true peace of Christmas.

## **Dreaming dreams**

Because our church council's agenda can so easily become dominated by practical concerns about the maintenance and management of our complex building, we held an additional meeting with the single purpose of thinking about

where we are going as a parish, and what are our hopes for our future mission. Alex ably led this session, and has charted our dreams and aspirations for a follow-up meeting in January. There was a great deal of energy and enthusiasm around this process (designed to help us formulate our Mission Action Plan for the next three years), and we fully intend to turn some of our dreams into reality!

It links in well with the meetings around our deanery at the end of November to introduce our new bishop Adrian and archdeacon Rachel to us, and the deanery of Tower Hamlets to them. They visited each parish, attended the clergy chapter and deanery synod, and had meetings about specific areas, such as the Highway parishes of which we are one. They fully share the aspirations we all have for our future together across the deanery, and we have been greatly encouraged to find that they already have a real grasp of the local context - Rachel through having previously worked in the deanery, and Adrian because before his appointment he spent some time reflecting on issues of urban ministry in the years since *Faith in the City* and the launch of the Church Urban Fund. We can email you on request the full text of his thoughtful and stimulating paper. One theme to which he draws attention is the need to balance growth (for which we all long) with faithfulness (in situations where growth may seem a long time coming).

## Charitable giving

Thanks to all who responded, in writing or verbally, to the congregational survey. In the light of your comments the PCC agreed the following policy:

1. Our charitable giving will be 2% of unrestricted income (*i.e. a 50% increase, to around £3,000 a year*)
2. It will be allocated: one third locally, one third to international development charities and one third to specifically Christian charities or churches
3. To make our gifts meaningful we will support up to three in each category (but if a particular charity falls into more than one category, it could benefit twice)
4. We will publish our policy, and details past and future giving (*on the website, to the congregation, and - as previously - in the annual financial report*), with a reminder of the importance of responsible Christian stewardship.

Thanks also to those who nominated specific charities or areas of concern. All these, together with those who mail us seeking support, will be listed in the PCC minutes. In making our allocation for 2011, we have prioritised some with which we have personal links, and for our local causes have focused on those dealing with homelessness, family poverty and mental health. We have not included some which we support in other ways, either financially - e.g. Richard House, with tea/coffee and Marathon proceeds; Water Aid, which we support in Lent - or in other ways - e.g. Whitechapel Mission at harvest, ministry training through the Rector's time commitments to NTMTC and as an examining chaplain. Those not included this year can of course be considered again next year.

For 2011 we will be sending £500 each (except as indicated below) to the following (website links given if you'd like to know more):

### LOCAL

- ◆ **Providence Row**, providing shelter, food, health care and support throughout the East End - <[www.providencerow.org.uk](http://www.providencerow.org.uk)>
- ◆ **Docklands Outreach**, working with vulnerable young people across the borough <[www.dockout.org.uk](http://www.dockout.org.uk)>

### AID & DEVELOPMENT

- ◆ **Christian Aid**, the British churches' primary aid agency <[www.christianaid.org.uk](http://www.christianaid.org.uk)>
- ◆ **Médecins Sans Frontières**, - personal links - <[www.msf.org.uk](http://www.msf.org.uk)> (£250)
- ◆ **The Leprosy Mission**, both medical and Christian <[www.leprosymission.org.uk](http://www.leprosymission.org.uk)> (£250)

### CHRISTIAN MISSION

- ◆ **ALMA**, the diocesan link with the church in Angola & Mozambique <[www.almalink.org](http://www.almalink.org)>
- ◆ **USPG**, the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, one of the two main Anglican missionary societies, with which we have personal links <[www.uspg.org.uk](http://www.uspg.org.uk)>

### Recent events

Thanks to all who helped to make the well-attended **Quiz Night** on 19 November - one of our rare forays into the refectory crypt - such an enjoyable success: to Paul, our skilful and remarkably patient quizmaster, to our wardens who organised the setting-up, and to all who provided great food to share.

There have been two recent concerts: on 12 November, **Gaudeamus** (Maryln Whaymand and friends) offered a varied programme of music old and new, as a tribute to her mother and aunt who grew up locally, to an appreciative and good-sized audience, with proceeds to Christian Aid. On 17 November **F-IRE Klang Codex** presented another typically intriguing programme, in 'palindromic' form (reading backwards and forwards through a variety of musical styles) with a group ten talented performers. Fred Thomas, who 'curates' these concerts, is nothing if not versatile; during the evening he played piano, organ, double bass, guitar and percussion. The staged performance of Puccini's opera *Suor Angelica* planned for early December, and mentioned in previous newsletters, has unfortunately been cancelled, or maybe postponed, because of various tensions and disagreements among the performers.

## December events

A 'foreign correspondent' has pointed out that 7 December sees the 200th anniversary of the famous **Ratcliff Highway murders** (details on our website) and is providing flowers for church the previous Sunday to mark this.

Despite all that has happened at **News International** during the year, their annual carol service is going ahead on Monday 19 December at 1pm [note change of date previously publicised], with Wapping Great Voices and the choir of St Bride's Fleet Street (but not our school choir, as it falls outside term). All are welcome.

Our own **carol service** is on Tuesday 20 December at 6.30pm. We chose this time, although some may still be working, to enable children and also older people to attend. This year our handbells (on temporary loan to a group of ringers) will be included in the programme, and Lydia Sargent our organist is putting together a choir - do let us know if you'd like to be part of it. Christmas refreshments will follow the service. Do bring family, friends and neighbours!

With **Christmas** falling on a Sunday this year there should be no problem in filling the church for Midnight Eucharist (actually at 11.30pm, as usual!) on Christmas Eve, and Parish Eucharist on Christmas Day at 10.15am - both with congregational carols. **New Year's Day** likewise falls on a Sunday; however late you stay up to see in 2012, make it part of your new year resolutions to be in church the next morning, to start the year in the right way!

## Congregational news

**Georgina Bateman** died in hospital on the morning of Advent Sunday. She was a long-standing member of our congregation, and latterly also of St Mary Cable Street, and like others of her generation was quietly faithful - even though she held strong opinions on a variety of subjects! - and even when her own health was failing persisted in running errands for neighbours and friends (including Edith): a remarkable example of Christian care and service to others. She had said she was ready for death, and asked for no fuss, so her funeral will be on Thursday 15 December at 3pm at the City of London Crematorium, with a Requiem to be arranged at a later date at St Mary's. We give thanks for her life and friendship.

Ann Willer's husband **Harry** is very poorly in hospital, and we hold him and the family in our prayers. **Olive Wagstaff** manages to get to church on Sundays, but is having continuing and painful problems with her jaw. We continue to remember **Ken Leech**, responding now to memories of his life and doings which friends have supplied.