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Christmas at St John the Divine

By Revd Joe Moore

Being new in post means that there are lots of 'firsts', and it was wonderful to experience my 'first' Advent and Christmas at St John's. Advent was a short one and so Christmas seemed to arrive very quickly, but it was great to be part of RTM for the festive season and all that comes with it.

The season began with the annual **Blue Christmas Service** on 11 December—a small, quiet gathering for people who, for any number of reasons in a particular year, find Christmas a difficult prospect. This was a very powerful service and a privilege to lead.

It was lovely to welcome back **Sanders Funeral**

Directors to St John's for their **Christmas Memorial Service**. They invite families and friends of people who have died during the year to a service of readings and carols, with a brief address and some time for quiet, prayerful remembrance and the lighting of commemorative candles. There was a good congregation of all ages for this reflective and moving occasion. It was lovely that staff from Sanders read and assisted in the liturgy, and the carols were sung by the congregation with gusto.

New for 2023, we were very glad to host **Radnor House Prep School** for their carol concert on 13 Dec. It was great to have the church



*The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay -
Revd Joe Moore*

packed with the children, staff and families from the school. The children were excellent and assisted with rousing musical accompaniment from the organ, drums and keyboard.

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Christmas at St Mary Magdalene

On 2 December, our friends the Regimental Band of the Honourable Artillery Company came to St Mary's once again for their annual Christmas concert and for which members of the audience had been encouraged to wear Christmas jumpers. The

HAC programme included well known carols and also orchestral pieces for the band – including Polar Express and Prokofiev's Troika. Everyone really enjoyed the concert and it set a good spirit for all the services and events that followed.

The next day Sunday, the Advent Procession Team Service of music and readings took place at 6 30 pm.

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Christmas at St John the Divine - continued



Charlie and Joe at Midnight Mass - Revd Joe Moore

Our **Children's Nativity and Christingle** was held on 17 December and was very well attended by families and the young at heart. Emma, our CYP Lead, explained the meaning of the Christingle beautifully. It was a joyful occasion and greatly appreciated.

On 16 December we had our **Service of Words and Music for Christmas**.

There was excellent participation from members of the congregation in reading Bible

passages and poems, as well as community partners too. There was wonderful music from Ben and our loyal and talented choir, enhanced by some of Ben's university friends. The service was followed by fabulous festive refreshments.

It was great to have Charlie as Deacon at our **Midnight Mass** and celebrate the birth of Christ with candle-light and carols.

It was a great season and I am hugely grateful to those

who supported throughout.



Christmas decorations - Revd Joe Moore

Christmas at St Mary Magdalene - continued

On Christmas Eve and Christmas Day we welcomed more than 900 people to St Mary Magdalene, in 7 services in just 28 hours

The service included well known Advent hymns such as Hills of the North Rejoice, and also three modern anthems by the composers Richard Rodney Bennett, William Matthias and Olivia Sparkhall.

There were five readings and during each of those, servers, with lighted candles, stood either side of the lectern emphasising again the importance and dynamics of light, darkness and shadows in this special service.

In the afternoon of 10 December the choir of St Mary's sang carols for the residents of Michel's Almshouses, another annual event that everyone looks forward to, with choir members being treated to mulled wine afterwards. A week on, Saturday 16 December involved a lot of work by volunteers, for the church was being cleaned and prepared ready for Christmas and more immediately the Service of

Nine Lessons and Carols the next day. The Christmas tree was erected to the right of the High Altar and the upright candlesticks placed down the aisle all making the church very bright and welcoming. Overhead hung golden paper bells sparkling in the light, with special messages of joy written on the reverse by members of the congregation. The nativity set was also erected in front of the nave altar but this year with an element of sadness as the nativity scene had been made by Palestinian Christians in Bethlehem and bought during the RTM pilgrimage in 2019. Now the upheaval and war in the Holy Land meant life was very difficult for them.

On Saturday 23 December a working party met in the morning in St Mary's to prepare the Christingle oranges for the next day - a merry gathering and an efficient production line!

Following this some of the Christingle makers went out and standing in front of the war memorial sang carols to people passing by. In just an hour a very respectable sum was raised for the Children's Society. On Christmas Eve the oranges were handed out at two Christingle services, the first at 3 pm for the very youngest children who were asked to come dressed as a Nativity story character. The second service was at 5 pm for older children and included a nativity play. Later that evening Midnight Mass was, as always, very well attended. Christmas Day itself opened with the 8 am service and then at 10 am an All Age Eucharist Service when children were asked whether they had opened their presents and what they had received. The first answer was 'a Yo Yo' which reminded everyone, young and old, of the fun of playing with this simple present.



The Joys of Christingle Making - Canon Wilma Roest



Christmas Greenery -
Elspeth Fearn

Christmas at St Mary's was memorable and inspiring, the church looking very beautiful. Speaking to Team Talk Revd Canon Wilma Roest said ' Christmas is always a busy time in church, but also such a blessing. On Christmas Eve and Christmas Day we welcomed more than 900 people to St Mary Magdalene, in 7 services in just 28 hours. That is 900 people who are loved by God and invited to witness to the mystery of God incarnate. It is a joy to minister to them all.'



Nativity - Canon Wilma Roest

Christmas at St Matthias

Revd Anne Cranford

St Matthias saw an uptick in attendance with the Carols by Candlelight service on Sunday 17 December at 6.00 pm having the largest congregation of 2023 with standing room only. One other interesting trend is that the Christingle service no longer just attracts young families with children. It is much more

mixed age with lots of couples (young and the not so young) coming along as well as families. Adults outweigh children by quite a margin.

There was standing room only at the Carols by Candlelight service!



Christingle Candles - Emma Smellie



Nativity - Emma Smellie

Posada 2023

by Emma Smellie



The Holy Family - Emma Smellie

The Posada set off on its travels again last December. The Holy Family, accompanied by their donkey, were hosted by seventeen different houses and organisations during Advent, before being returned to St Matthias for the first Eucharist of Christmas.

The Posada (also known as the Travelling Crib) originated in Mexico. In its origin, two young people would dress up as Mary and Joseph and travel around their village telling people about the imminent arrival of Jesus and ask if they could make room. Nowadays churches all around the

country replicate this tradition with Nativity figures.

Our Posada consisted of the knitted Nativity figures (as you can see in the picture) with their donkey. Each host would look after the Holy Family for one evening and then transport it to the next house. Upon arrival, a small prayer would be said, and an Advent Candle would be lit. Our Holy Family visited members of all congregations spanning a range of generations. The family also travelled to work with Helen Kelsey and visited her class at St Mary's Primary School in Twickenham.

Taking part in the Posada helped families remember the true meaning of Christmas and offered a way for parishioners to connect and meet new people (Rachel Fulljames). Heidi Munn remembers how hosting the Holy Family helped her reflect on her own position in people's faith journey. She reflects that you might not be there for the beginning or the end, but the help you can offer can be invaluable. For the moment, our knitted Holy Family are taking a well-deserved rest before they head out on another journey for Advent 2024.

A Herd of Richmond Reindeer!

Everywhere you looked in Richmond there were reindeer



A kind community knitter had decorated the top of the post box at the junction of George Street and King Street as a present for everyone and put a reindeer at the front of this pleasing tableau - Elspeth Fearn



This magnificent and quite large reindeer appeared in the front garden of a house in Old Palace Lane - Elspeth Fearn



Adorning the Angel and Crown Public House in Church Court was this large wreath whose centrepiece was a reindeer - Elspeth Fearn

RTM Away Giving To The Fishermen's Mission

By Elspeth Fearn

RTM gives 10% of its direct giving income each year to charities, both church and secular. For several years a donation has been made to the Fishermen's Mission.

On Friday 14 October 1881, henceforward known as Black Friday, a terrible tragedy occurred in the Scottish fishing port of Eyemouth, a busy place which regularly landed large catches of haddock and herring. A storm had passed, fine weather had come and the fleet went out to sea to fish, it being the custom that the whole fleet should go out together. However, a violent European cyclone with hurricane force winds, suddenly arose, resulting in the fleet being dashed upon the rocks or sunk by the mountainous seas as they attempted to get back into the port. Some 26 of the fleet's 46 boats were lost. Perhaps the worst of this disaster was that the fishermen perished in full sight of their families on the shore. The death toll was 189 men and boys who left 93 widows and 267 fatherless children. Immediately a public subscription fund was raised for the families with Queen Victoria giving £100 to start the fund. Black Friday was, and remains to this day, the worst British fishing disaster.

Also watching from the shore, horrified, was a devout Christian, Ebenezer Mather, who had long campaigned for a better working environment and welfare for fishermen. Less than a month later in November 1881, he decided to set up the National (later the Royal) Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen to provide ministry and support for fisherman and to improve their health and working conditions. Nowadays called The Fishermen's Mission it is the only national charity that works solely to support fishermen and their families. As well as fishermen it covers sea going staff working in the UK aquaculture industry breeding, raising and harvesting fish and shell fish. The Fishermen's Mission also supports migrant fishermen working on UK vessels. Although it is a Christian charity it is there for fishermen of all faiths and of none. We remember the importance of fishermen as Christ's disciples.

Originally the charity went to sea to meet the fishermen, sailing in 'mission ships' with hospital facilities, a place of worship, a clothing store, a library and a clubroom. Later, centres were set up in various ports and today there are over 70

centres. Services include accommodation, internet access and recreational facilities. There is a 24/7 emergency service to respond immediately to accidents or illness at sea in UK waters. Practical financial and emotional support is given to both current and retired fishermen. A new day the National Fishing Remembrance Day has been established with the first taking place on Sunday May 12 this year - a day for reflection and commemoration of all those fishermen who have died. Fishing is one of the most dangerous industries in the world, a back breaking job exposed daily to risk and hazard. Only recently, in the autumn of 2023, fishermen have lost their lives in Scottish waters and also off the coast of Sussex. The Fishermen's Mission is there to support those who work in these arduous conditions and their families.



Modern Memorial to the Eyemouth Disaster showing the anxious wait of the families - Creative Commons Andrew Bowden



Illustration from 1881 of the disaster

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 18-25 Jan

The Week of Prayer for Christian unity is an annual international event which provides an opportunity for Christians from various denominations and communities to come together for prayer and also joint services. Its roots go back over 100 years and reminds us of Christ's prayer for his disciples that 'all of them may be one Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so the world may believe that you have sent me.' (John 17:21) The week is planned jointly by the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church and sets a theme and provides materials for each year. 2024's theme was

'You shall love the Lord your God and your neighbours as yourself' Luke 10.27

In Richmond for many years members of the various churches have been involved in the organisation Christians in Richmond and have come together for regular meetings and events such as a Unity Service, St Andrewtide supper and Prayer Groups. Because of the effect of the Covid epidemic disruption and with some clergy at the various churches moving on, momentum in the group has declined a little of late. So, in order to start things off again the week of prayer for Christian Unity saw a gathering at St John's Hall on

Saturday 20 January from 6-8 pm with a bring and share supper and an opportunity to meet and talk to other Christians in Richmond. It was a very pleasant evening getting to know everybody or meet old friends.

At the end of the evening a short service was held, beginning with the Methodist hymn 'What shall our greeting be, Sign of our unity, Jesus is Lord, Give me your hand my friend...' followed by a reading from Genesis and a short address. Finally, the service concluded with a Hebrew blessing and melody Shalom Cheverim. It had been a successful evening and coming together as there is so much that unites us

rather than divides us. The intention is to hold another similar event later in the year.



Symbol of a boat on the wall of St Anne's Church Augsburg, Germany. The symbol of a boat commonly reflects the ecumenical movement and also refers to Jesus calling fishermen to be his disciples - Creative Commons Arvedui89

Richmond Soup Kitchen

Now In its third winter of operation, the Richmond Soup Kitchen (RSK). held in the forecourt at St John the Divine under gazebos, provides free hot food and drink including sandwiches, toasties, soup, home made cake and fruit. RSK serves anyone who is in need, of whom there are many. 2023-2024 has been a difficult winter with numerous storms and often intense cold. All set against a background of so many people struggling to cope economically and finding it very difficult to afford food or heating. As with last winter, RSK has seen a noticeable increase in demand – from single homeless people as before but more often families and older people now - who are finding it such a challenge to make ends meet.

A crucial factor in the running and existence of the Soup Kitchen are the volunteers who help cook the food and also serve the guests. Mark and Susie Cox prepare food at home and say 'The RSK is a very worthwhile venture, providing meals for the homeless. We are delighted to be involved making a small contribution, and feel we receive far more than we give.' Jo Kitson writes 'I am one of the Volunteer Coordinators so every 2 weeks I run one of the soup kitchen sessions. This involves organising the front of house staff, putting up the gazebo and ensuring cooks have the right supplies for the evening. We are serving between 25 and 35 guests during a one hour opening slot and we are kept pretty busy with both drinks and food orders and also chatting to those that

come to eat. There are often extra goodies to hand out such as socks, hand warmers, army rations and of course always plenty of clearing up too. I enjoy the interaction with guests and our volunteers and we are always welcoming new faces both as guests and volunteers. It's a short, sharp session with a real feel good factor - definitely for me but hopefully for our guests too.' This season's kitchen will run until 25 April. We thank all who are involved with the RSK and the contribution they make to alleviate the difficult circumstance that so many people live under these days, by showing love and care for those less fortunate.

www.richmondsoupkitchen.org

We thank all who are involved with the RSK and the contribution they make



The East End Of St John The Divine

We are so often used to seeing our church buildings from one familiar angle, the way we enter, or the view as we walk past. However, it can often be rewarding to explore and to go round the back or side of a building or indeed look upwards towards its roof. A good example is St John the Divine. The exterior of the east end backs on to the busy St John's Road with cars whizzing by, so it is not so easy to stop and look at the building in detail from there. Yet, if you are able to do so, it is rewarding. Features include a brick facade with pale stone banding, chequer patterns, lancet windows and at the

top a Calvary sculpture. Attached is a photograph of the sculpture which was carved in 1905 by Richard Garbe RA (1876-1957) a distinguished sculptor and the son of a German ivory carver from Dalston. Amongst many roles he was head of sculpture at the Royal College of Art and his works are in various collections including the Tate. It is always worthwhile to look at buildings from a fresh perspective. So much care and thought went into constructing the exterior of St John's as well as the interior.



Exterior View of the East End of St John the Divine - Wikimedia Creative Commons Andrew Bowden

There was no edition of Team Talk in November so this present issue also covers the period from September to then

Reflections Of A Diocesan Secretary

By Ruth Martin

Years ago some of you may remember that I co-chaired a church discussion group called Christians at Work - like many of us I have always been challenged to see ways in which our faith informs our everyday lives including work. I have personally found my faith a source of valuable insight and an anchor in the storms of life. For about 16 years I worked in the City in financial services, the last 12 years of which as a Managing Director and frankly it was tough. Twice a week I used to attend Morning Prayer at Southwark Cathedral on my

way to work which really helped me. And it was through the Bishop of Woolwich, who used to sit opposite me in the cathedral at Morning Prayer that it was suggested I apply to be the Diocesan Secretary of Southwark. Team Talk has asked me to share my reflections following my farewell service as the Diocesan Secretary after nearly nine years last autumn.

The Diocesan Secretary is a role that combines being CEO of the Diocesan Board of Finance, COO of the

Diocese which has around 300 parishes as well as the Diocesan Secretary role developing and upholding the governance and ecclesial structures for the Church of England. I became a Lay Canon of the Cathedral shortly afterwards. Of course, Richmond is one of the wonderful parishes, so it was important to be low key about my role in the diocesan structures in the parish.

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Ruth and her family and The Bishop of Southwark—Ruth Martin

Reflections Of A Diocesan Secretary - continued



At the party afterwards
- Ruth Martin

I am grateful for the support I have had and the freedom to worship in my own parish without being on the receiving end of every grumble about 'the diocese'.

We are of course collectively the diocese but the role is a way of life rather than a job, working closely with the Diocesan Bishop to serve, resource and support the parishes which are very diverse.

I was delighted to see so many of you at the Choral Evensong to mark my farewell from the role – Evensong is my favourite service. I was really pleased that Tony Demby and Martin Brecknell were in the serving team, as we had served in the Richmond serving team for some 15 years before I became a Reader in the team. Those of you who attended will have seen my daughter Elizabeth who also used to be a server here as a youngster, and my two grandchildren shared one of the readings.

As we enter Lent, we will each be reflecting on our journeys as disciples, we will have had mountain top dazzling and enjoyable parts of our journey, and tougher darker valleys. God is with us all the way.

It was a joyful occasion last September and I felt privileged to serve the church in that role bringing my other experiences to bear, as we all do when we step out to do something different. Knowing when to move on from any role, voluntary or paid is also part of our journey. I feel so privileged with my own working life that as a Christian I have had opportunities to share my faith and the Diocesan Secretary role was the pinnacle of that, combining with a Reader and a Street Pastor was such a blessing. As a reader I have preached all over the diocese, often combining it with issues of property in a parish or parish giving! I am now semi-

retired and assisting the diocese in a time limited part time role in strategic development including property strategy. I would like to thank all my friends who have supported me in my work for the diocese and wish you all a reflective and fruitful Lent as we each move on to the next stages of our pilgrimages.

Remembrance Sunday



Dove of Peace - Wiki
Commons Elembis

In November we had Remembrance Sunday thinking of all those who had died in the First and Second World Wars and subsequent conflicts. On 27 January we observed Holocaust Memorial Day commemorating all the people murdered in the Holocaust under Nazi persecution and also all those lost in later years in the genocides in Rwanda, Bosnia, Cambodia and Dafur. We thought that the world

had moved on from all this terror but sadly the killings in Israel on 8 October and the bombing and conflict in Gaza together with the continuing war in Ukraine remind us that the world is still a very dangerous place. And people's lives are being torn apart. The Holocaust Memorial Day theme for this year is the Fragility of Freedom a thing so important but so vulnerable. We pray for all across the world who have

experienced hatred, persecution, devastation and loss. May they be healed.

Eco Church in RTM

The Winter 2021 edition of Team Talk included an article on an Eco Day conference led at St Matthias on 2 October 2021 by Martin and Margot Hodson, representing Eco Church and which was designed to begin the process of RTM joining Eco Church and working towards their system of Bronze, Silver and Gold awards. The conference was a very powerful and thought provoking day and as a result PCC subsequently agreed that becoming an Eco Church would be the first item in each church's MAP (Mission Action Plan). In order for this to take place, PCC Standing Committee, which consists of the Clergy, Churchwardens and Treasurer, suggested that a working group be set up to look at sustainability and Eco Church accreditation. A call was put out in the RTM newsletter for Eco Champions and the Green Team was formed in 2022 with its first meeting in September that year. Emma Meredith chairs the group which has 12 full members from across the three churches and with the clergy being involved at times. In order to represent the view point of the youngest members of the congregations, Emma Smellie our Children and Young People's Ministry Leader also attends. There are two or three meetings a year with email catch-ups in between. (The Team is always happy

to welcome new members - especially from St Matthias and St John the Divine.)

The Rocha Eco Church Scheme ecochurch.arocha.org.uk has as its vision that churches of all denominations should care for creation as an integral part of loving their neighbours and following God faithfully. Eco Church has a questionnaire that is split into a number of categories looking at liturgy, the buildings, church life and community. Within the RTM Green Team, members of each church were tasked with finding answers to the questions which was completed online as a Team. St John the Divine and St Matthias achieved their Bronze Eco Award in February 2023 and, with a little more work. St Mary Magdalene achieved its Bronze Award in October 2023. Now everyone is working hard to progress to the next goal - Silver Award level.

The first edition of a new quarterly RTM 'Green Tips' newsletter, an idea suggested by Jo Kitson, appeared in November and gives updates on progress and suggests ideas and ways to improve sustainability for everyone to try. The newsletter can be found on the RTM website.

Over 6,600 churches in England and Wales are now registered as part of the Eco Church Community and nearly 3,000 of them have

achieved an award. Our diocese Southwark is a Bronze diocese at the moment. The Richmond and Barnes Deanery has an active Eco Group with regular news emails and a WhatsApp Group. The RTM Green Team is going to look at engaging with other Eco Churches in the diocese, especially those who have achieved the Silver Award, to learn from them and share tips and maybe invite some representatives to speak at our churches.

Emma Meredith says 'I am pleased to be working with a group of such passionate people on the RTM Green Team. The Eco Church surveys have been thought - provoking and challenging, in a good way, as we strive to make our three churches, congregations and local communities more aware of how we need to care for God's creation around us. The RTM Green Team aims to do this guided by theology and science. I would be delighted to hear from anyone with any thoughts or if they would like to be involved in the RTM Green Team. Please contact me at

emeredith@ctpa.org.uk'

Thanks go to Emma and the Green Team and all those involved in this important work.



A curate's adventures in Cambridge

By Revd Charlie Middleton



Charlie in front of King's College Chapel - Charlie Middleton

In November, I spent an octave in Cambridge shadowing The Reverend Dr Mary Kells, the Chaplain of King's College, to gain a fuller understanding of Oxbridge chaplaincy. So, I attended services among the congregation; read a lesson at Evensong; wrote intercessions; acted as a chapel clerk; intoned Compline; deaconed and subdeaconed at the Eucharist; attended a Chapel Operations meeting and a tutors' meeting; and helped with rehearsals for the Advent Procession, among many other varied activities!

A different calendar

The Cambridge and liturgical calendars are rather mismatched! During term, there are various saints' days, minor feasts, and commemorations. However, every major Christian festival falls outside of term. During my visit, during the last two weeks of Michaelmas term, students were preparing to celebrate Bridgemas (Cambridge Christmas) before Advent had even begun.

I was also surprised to find that, because of the emphasis on daily evensong, its prestige, its musical excellence, and its popularity among tourists seeking quintessential Cambridge,

the Eucharistic services are rather second-fiddle.

Terms are intense

The pace of life during the 8 week terms is astonishing and the chaplains' role is a difficult one in this environment: providing excellent worship and pastoral care requires working at collegespeed, while also providing some sense of peace, of the wider world, and refuting the achievement-identity culture. I was struck by the conversation at the weekly tutor meeting which I attended, about how dangerous 3-7 years at a top university can be. Cambridge is an incredibly demanding environment. That, combined with adolescence and universal stresses and difficulties, can be hazardous to life.

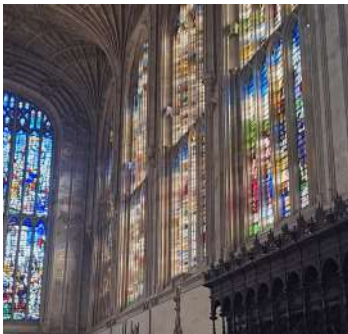
Gender in the chapel
King's College Choir is comprised of 16 boys and 14 men. Although they also have Kings Voices (a mixed gender choir) and the secular King's Women and Minority Genders Choir, the King's College Choir are the world-renowned sound of the College. It is quite significant, then, to hear women's voices in the chapel, particularly women's voices leading worship. There is something

extraordinary about filling that space with your voice, and acting as cantrix for such an expert choir (who were extremely kind to me!)

Whom the chapel serves

The Dean, The Reverend Dr Stephen Cherry, spoke to me about his understanding of caring for and from this extremely unusual place of worship. It is not a Parish Church, he reflected. It isn't measured by its Sunday congregation. Indeed, he would even dissuade Cambridge residents who aren't part of the college from becoming regular attenders, because they would be enjoying the privileges of church community without doing any of the work of getting involved, volunteering, and contributing. The college chapel is for members of the college and their guests, and – oddly – for strangers whom they may never see again.

It was an intense and interesting week, important for my growth, and for considering whether college chaplaincy might be for me. As I read back through my diary of the week for this, I smiled at the note: "I like it here. I would like to come back."



Light and stained glass in King's College Chapel - Charlie Middleton

Bells for your birthday?

Church bells are the most historic things that many of us ever hear. The bells ring to call us to worship on Sundays and also as a joyful celebration of weddings and more sadly when tolling for

funerals. Here at St Mary's we offer you the opportunity for a unique gift for those special people in your lives. We will ring to celebrate birthdays, anniversaries, births of

children and grandchildren and any other special occasions you can think of. We can also offer a personal tower tour as part of the gift.

Contact Jackie Harrison, Tower Captain for more information and an indication of proposed donation, which will go to the replacement bell fund. jackieharrison456@gmail.com

Parish Weekend 20-22 October - Wychcroft, Bletchingly, Surrey

By Penny Francis & Bella Hobson

“Psalms, Walks and Prayers”
‘Psalm’ means in Greek ‘the twanging or plucking of a lyre or harp’.

Fourteen of us gathered for tea on the Friday in Wychcroft, the Resource and Retreat Centre for Southwark Diocese. It is a Victorian country house, with lovely views across the grounds and walks to enjoy in peace and tranquillity. We were there to examine the content of the 150 psalms in the psalter, led by Charlie, our curate, with visits from Wilma on music and Ruth Martin on Lectio Divina. Charlie had prepared an extensive programme drawing out different themes from the Psalms – Praise and Lament; Singing and the Psalms; Food, Flowers and Plants and the Poetry of the Psalms.

Our days consisted of

The chapel was our main meeting place for study, contemplation and prayer and we also spent a lot of convivial time in the dining room. The first evening, after evensong and before dinner, Charlie gave us an introduction to these valuable Old Testament writings. We were given booklets with readings, psalms, prayers for the services, helpfully designed with space for note making. There were Bibles available, but we had been encouraged to bring our own too. On Saturday, we focused on Psalms of Lamentation and Praise. Then Wilma, who had joined us for the day with Ruth Martin, led a session on ‘Singing and the

services in the chapel - a simple space dominated by an icon-like painting of Christ the Worker with opened arms; delicious meals; walks and sessions on the different themes in the Psalms. Charlie presented us with a visual explanation of the five books of psalms shown on a torah-like scroll with King David (the supposed originator of the psalms in 1000 BC, often with a harp) on the left and a priest on the right. Scholars believe that the Psalms were formed in Israel over a period of 800 years, becoming The Book of Psalms around the year 200 BC.

Over the weekend we started at Psalms 1 & 2 and worked through the rich treasury via wonderful psalm 139 and finally completing with psalm 150, full of trumpets, harp, timbrel and

Psalms’. We enjoyed the opportunity of singing some together. For the Food, Flowers and Plants theme we were able to sample contrasting tastes of vinegar, honey, olives, dates and be anointed with oil. I have kept the precious gold foil as a reminder of the weekend. A memory was of the beautiful scene from my window early sunny Sunday morning of trees among the rising mist. There was a chance to visit an interesting memorial chapel along the lane. The other way, up the hill, there were lovely views across the Surrey countryside. Some explored the prayer walk which is being made in the grounds. Many thanks to Charlie for

cymbals.

The wording of the psalms, emphasising Israel and Jerusalem made us very aware of the heartbreaking happenings in Israel, in Gaza, in our Holy Land at this time.

Penny Francis



The Group - Revd Charlie Middleton

leading a well planned, interesting and companionable weekend in such pleasant surroundings. It was good to spend time away, good to be home again. Grahame and I were back in time to enjoy Evensong with Revd Joe Moore at St Mary Magdalene Church... appropriately a place where Nicholas Brady, famous for his Metrical Versions of the Psalms published with Nahum Tate, had ministered 1696 to 1726 according to the inscribed list at the entrance.

Bella Hobson



View of the sunlit grounds - Revd Charlie Middleton



Taste of the Psalms - Revd Charlie Middleton

Richmond Team Ministry - Who's Who?

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