

St Peter's Parish Chest Advent 2015

Parish Office: 020 8997 3655

e-mail: admin@stpeterealing.org.uk www.stpeterealing.org.uk

A monthly bulletin of all that is accomplished by and within our church's community

Suggested contribution 50p

Letter from the Vicar

Behold, the bridegroom cometh!

I really don't mind winter other than, that is, the dark. I can put up with the cold, the wind, the rain. I don't mind snow and ice, though I'd rather be indoors than having to go outside. I love frosty mornings, that crystal blue sky and the bright, brilliant sunshine of cold crisp, clear days. It's the dark that wears me down. Getting up in the morning and it is dark. Coming home in the mid afternoon and the darkness closing in. Having to put on lights at 3 o'clock because it has been a grey day.

At first I can cope with it. At first it is a bit of a novelty. At first there is a level of expectation and the darkness is mitigated a little by Christmas lights (but only a little). After a while the darkness gets to me. By February I've had enough, but then, slowly the darkness begins to retreat. By March, as spring knocks on our door the days are definitely getting longer. It can still be cold and wet and windy, but now there is a little ray of hope as I wake in the morning to at least a promise of day light and I don't have to switch on the lights until after tea.

It is no accident that darkness is a major theme of Advent. Darkness dominates our lives at this time of year so it is bound to show up in liturgy and writing about Advent. In her poem 'Advent Sunday' (see the book review) Christina Rossetti draws upon a parable of the Ten Maidens, with trimmed lamps waiting in the darkness for the coming of the Bridegroom (Matthew 25.1-13). It is in the darkness that we wait. In my dislike of the winter nights I wait for the coming of spring. In the darkness of Advent we wait for the coming of Jesus Christ, the Lord.

Each Advent we begin the next cycle of the Christian year. It starts with the darkness that marks expectation and calls us to patience. We are told to be ready to receive Jesus when he comes again and we know he is coming again because the Christmas story reminds us of how God has already fulfilled promises made to humanity, that God's promises are not made lightly, they are costly both to God and to us. If we are unsure of what that means we need only to look to the cross of Good Friday and see how much our redemption has cost God; through the Christmas story we know it cost God his only Son. The patience we are called to is to be ready for the coming of Jesus when the time is right, and that will be right by God's time not ours. Jesus said there would be all sorts of awful things happening in the world, but they would not be portents of the coming of Jesus just the outworking of human history. We have seen and continue to see awful things happen in the world; Paris, Beirut, Syria, stabbings on our streets and inhuman murders and abuses. These are the outworks of humanity in all its brokenness and inhumanity. We still have to wait, be patient for 'Lo!

He comes with clouds descending' Amen. Come Lord Jesus.

Fr David



Autumn Fruits

Much has happened at St Peter's and much "accomplished by and within our church's community" (to quote our strap line) since the Harvest edition of the *Parish Chest*. What follows is just a little taste of the rich fruits of this past autumn season:

Parish Reflections



A Time to Reflect...

Over three Sundays in September Fr David led us through a series of reflections, where we were invited to get out of our pews and to share our ideas on how we see St Peter's, what we appreciate and how we hope the next chapter of our life together will look. A Saturday Study Day facilitated by the

Reverend Andrew Corsie (Area Training Officer) on 26th September allowed for a more in depth review of all the responses given to these questions. Lots of material and ideas were generated during these very helpful sessions but four key areas emerged to guide our plans for the next five years or so. They are as follows:

- We value the traditional worship style offered at St Peter's.
- We value and wish to extend the inclusiveness of our welcome.
- We value and wish to further encourage the musical life of the church.
- We need to make what we offer more visible and available to those in the parish and beyond.

These key areas will be the framework of our new Mission Action Plan. Members of the Mission Team and additional PCC members will be working on this in the New Year.

Thanks to Alex Pridgeon for the photograph.

Marathons



Giving thanks for 40 years.
(Thanks too to Sarah Hare for this photograph.)

The last Sunday in September has been for the last few years the chosen date for the very successful Ealing Half-Marathon. Each year hundreds of runners pound past St Peter's water station on their way to the nearby two mile mark, and hopefully to the finish line itself. This year on **Sunday 27th September** St Peter's was well-represented with runners. One of them, Jane Stephens, had a quick turn around to be ready to celebrate another happy milestone; her parents' 40th Wedding Anniversary. Val and Ron shared this special occasion with drinks and refreshments after the later than usual Sunday service. Our love and congratulations and all the very best for many years to come.

Harvest Fayre

Saturday 3rd October St Peter's first Harvest Fayre was the culmination both physical and metaphorical of seeds sown in early spring. Our aim was to share with our parish our joy at God's great blessings to us in the festival of Harvest. From jam to nail painting and from pumpkins to candles St Peter's put on a truly splendid and happy show. It was very good to have Brownies, Guides and Cubs with us and to see a range of new stalls and stallholders.

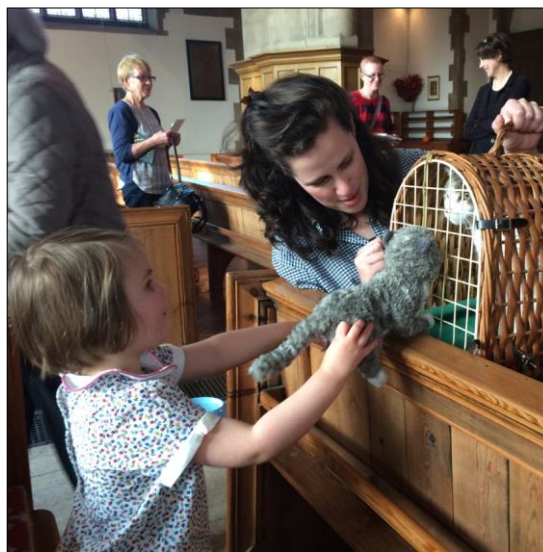


Enjoying the fruits of the season...

All our many visitors seemed delighted with the goods and delicious refreshments on offer and the lovely atmosphere of the occasion. Funds were raised for the Ealing Churches Winter Night Shelter, which we are hosting at the time of writing this issue of the *Parish Chest*. Congratulations to all involved this Harvest Tide. A word of warning... after Christmas we shall be planting new "seeds" for Harvest 2016!

Richard Peatfield took lots of lovely photographs of this event. Please speak to him if you would like to see them.

Pet Blessing Service



"If only they could talk..."
(Thanks to Alex Pridgeon for this lovely cat chat snap!)

"He prayeth best who loveth best all things both great and small" so wrote Samuel Taylor Coleridge and so it proved as we met on the afternoon of **Harvest Sunday 4th October** for our first Pet Blessing Service.

Led by Fr David, the human, canine, feline and piscine (by photograph) congregation settled down together to pray and receive a blessing like the picture of the peaceable kingdom. Not quite the lion laying down with the lamb, but next year who knows!

From St Peter's to St Paul's



On His Way...

On **Saturday 7th November** Oliver McAllister joined some eighty candidates from the Diocese of London to be confirmed by the newly appointed Bishop of Edmonton in St Paul's cathedral. It was a glorious occasion, where voices affirming their decision to follow Christ into adult life flew up to the dome and came down as a blessing on all who attended. We join in our prayers with those on the day for Oliver and all the good things that God has in store for him.

Pilgrim

The Christian life is often described as a pilgrimage. Not one decision but many decisions every day and many twists and turns in following Christ. "Pilgrim" has an ambitious remit, to be, like St Paul, "all things to all people" in that it encourages those at all stages of their journey to be a part of the conversation. It welcomes those new to seeking God, those preparing for confirmation, as well as those who wish to refresh themselves and their understanding of the faith. Our new "Pilgrim" group at St Peter's has now begun to look at the questions posed at baptism: Turning to Christ. Although this year's programme has begun, please do speak to Fr David if you would like to know more about the course.

Seeing the Light! West window restoration project



(Photograph: National Churches Trust)

Allison McAllister writes:

Great News!

We are delighted to announce that we have been successful in our bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for funding towards Stone and Glazing Repairs to the West End of the Church. We have been awarded a grant of £224,900 for project costs of £300,461.

Whilst the restoration of our glorious West Window will form the major part of the project, we will also be able to complete any necessary high-level stonework repairs to the Towers and the West Front. In addition to this, the project includes funding for refurbishment and re-ordering of the toilets to ensure they meet current accessibility standards.

As with all HLF grants there will be an activities programme running alongside the restoration work. The aim of this is to increase the opportunities people and the wider community have to engage with the heritage of our beautiful building. At St Peter's we will do this by sharing more historical information on our website, exploring training opportunities in conservation, organising a schools art project and having a Heritage Day when work is complete.

Presently, we are in the development phase of the bid. We need to develop the project further. This will involve further investigative work to enable design and specifications to be written before tendering the work to at least 3 contractors. In the next week or so you may see a cherry-picker in the church car park. Things are progressing! We are delighted that Roderick MacLennan will again be our Lead Architect for this final phase of external work. We hope to submit a fully worked bid by May 2016 with work starting in autumn 2016 or Spring 2017.

Below is a summary of the project figures. Please note that we have done our best to keep the cash contribution of St Peter's congregation to a minimum. The total Parish fundraising required is less than £5000.

West window funding

Heritage Lottery Fund awarded grant of £224,900 for project costs of £300,461. This is divided into 2 phases.

Development Phase

Grant £24,400
Costs £34,791

Delivery Phase

Grant £200,500
Costs £265,670

Summary of Proposed income

Development Phase

HLF GRANT	£24,400
Reclaimed VAT	4,948
Volunteer time	1,000
Non cash contributions	1,800
Parish Fundraising Contribution	2,643
TOTAL INCOME	34,791

Delivery Phase

HLF GRANT	£200,500
Reclaimed VAT	40,839
Other Charities/Trust	17,369
Parish Fundraising	1,962
Non Cash contributions	4,500
Volunteer time	500

TOTAL INCOME **£265,670**

Allison McAllister is our Church Project Co-ordinator for this. Please do talk to Allison for further information about the project or activities programme.

If you would like to make a contribution to the Project Fund cheques should be payable to St Peters PCC and marked ('West Window Project') Thank you. – and thank you to Allison for all she does on our behalf in this.

Advent Tidings

A leaflet outlining events and suggestions for Advent is available at the back of the church including details of all Christmas services. Our Christmas card is also ready for delivery. Please do see if you can take a bundle and share with your neighbours the joy of Christmas and the Light of Christ. Make sure you have these dates in your December diary too:

Advent Reflections on Wednesdays

As a part of the Wednesday Mass at 7.30pm in the Lady Chapel there will be a short reflection each week on the Advent antiphons - the names we call Jesus reflecting his gift to us. If you do not usually manage to come to this service think about making it a part of your preparation for Christmas this year.

St Peter's Service of Nine Lessons and Carols is at 5.30pm on **Sunday 20th December** followed by mulled wine and mince pies. Please speak to Susan Peatfield if you would like to read a lesson at this service.

Our **Christingle Service** (not just for children and young families but for all who want to gather at the crib this Christmas) is at **3.30pm on Christmas Eve**.

Preparing for Christmas



This preparation includes everything from ordering the turkey and decorating the tree to preparing our hearts and lives for the coming of Christ. What follows is a miscellaneous selection of things to help prepare for all that is to come.

Fr David starts us off by recommending a book of poems by a poet well-known to regular readers of the *Parish Chest*:

***Waiting on the Word* by Malcolm Guite**

Published by Canterbury Press

Fr David writes:

In recent years Advent has increasingly become a focus for reflective reading material. That material has improved each year. As with most things there seem to be fashions in the type of book offered. This year there are a number of books offering different approaches to poetry, either collections of other people's poetry who reflect the Advent theme or personal collections.

As someone who of recent times have begun to return to poetry with a new eye this is good news. But of course one of the problems with such a subject is its subjectivity. If the reader doesn't like a type of poetry or a particular poet then such a publication can be difficult to read.

So I offer a few thoughts about a particular publication for this advent with some caution. Malcolm Guite is an Anglican priest, he is also a poet in his own right and of some standing. At present he serves as Chaplain of Girton College, Cambridge. He has published a number of collections and so is well-versed (pardon the pun) in the field of publishing and writing. Malcolm is a little different; born in Nigeria, raised in Canada, a singer, song writer, blogger and explorer of life he draws different perspectives in his desire to understand life and come closer to God.

He opens his book with a little known poem, 'Advent Sunday' by Christina Rossetti and he uses this offering to help the reader get into the right frame to explore the meaning of poetry and the many images it contains. From there on in, for each day from 1st December through to Epiphany, using his own words, poems of other contemporary poets as well as some well-known classics (very pleased to see George Herbert there) Malcolm helps the reader stop for a few minutes (depends how long it takes you to read on average about four pages) and spend some time reflecting on the season and what has been said about it. Some may suggest the offering is insufficiently spiritual, others may be critical of Malcolm's analysis. I have had a flick through and am very much looking forward to spending a little more time with his words and insights.

To see some of Malcolm's poems visit malcolmguite.wordpress.com.

Quick Carol Quiz

How many of these will you be singing this year?

1. Far off with the cows?
2. Festive flower arranging?
3. Shhh – it's dark!
4. Quality Czech Square?
5. Original "deal or no deal"?

The Kitchen Diaries 3 by Nigel Slater

Published by Fourth Estate, London

This is lovely book for both the armchair and actual cook this Christmas and into the New Year and beyond. Nigel Slater's new book is far more than just recipes – though they are all delicious – it is a reflection on what feeds him day by day and season by season. The entry for Christmas Eve finds him savouring the beauty of Christmas carols, especially "Silent Night" and contemplating baking a glorious rich and fruited Christmas Pie. Deeply satisfying.



(Photograph from Good Food Channel.)

More Food for Thought at Christmas...

Harold Stringer writes:

Why Buy from Traidcraft?

It is good that Fairtrade has got into the mainstream, and supermarkets – well, *some* – may beat our Traidcraft stall on price and product range, (though there's lots more in the catalogue we'd gladly order for you.) But though all Fairtrade is fair, some is fairer than others, and there are still good reasons for choosing Traidcraft where possible.

The purpose of Fairtrade is to change the way trade works for the poor and disadvantaged, which often means the more remote or marginalized and smaller producers: no handouts, but helping them trade their way out of poverty. Yet with 70% of world trade controlled by a few hundred companies, food prices are at the mercy of wild price swings, through speculation and traders making profits out of food shortages. Large scale orders for supermarket chains are fine, but to depend on them is precarious – think of the horror stories about how they treat their grower-suppliers *here*, at home.

Traidcraft can help cushion the effect of these arbitrary forces, as it is in it not for the profit, but as a Christian response to poverty: to bring justice, fairness and respect for the humanity of those who work so hard for meagre reward. So it works especially with co-operatives and other local groupings, and is with them for the long haul, not just when the price suits or it's good for the corporate image.

A small company I visited in rural Zambia was producing wonderful art-works on fabric. They'd made a breakthrough into airport shops in Africa,

and even buyers in the US and EU. Traidcraft had been offering them advice on the products, and on the skills of marketing. Talking with the management team we asked about the difference it had made. They said those big customers were just fine, until fashion or their policy changed, and then that was that. But "Traidcraft has stayed with us, helping us get through the difficult patches. They're a thoroughly good outfit."

This year's poster about Traidcraft Christmas gifts, "Show You Care", includes the startling headline that an estimated **15,000** women are sold or illegally trafficked from little Nepal each year – for the sex trade or forced marriage or virtual slave labour (or any combination). The poster features **GPI**, long-term associated with Traidcraft, who employ women at risk or rescued, in simple craft-making and in their handmade paper factory. On my visit last year I was impressed by the working conditions, fringe benefits and associated school. But what really struck me was their outreach project for girls in isolated hill farms, who are very much at risk – even from their own parents selling them (the dowry system can make girls a crippling liability). From the project's mixture of mentoring, mutual support groups, and enabling the girls to get schooling, they were learning to be savvy enough to see through the too-good-to-be-true offers from strangers, and becoming no longer liabilities, but even respected contributors to the family income.

Some beautiful handmade wrapping paper from **GPI** will be on our Traidcraft stall. And do read the leaflet – "Not All Fair Trade is created equal" – for some more examples.

FairTrade Fortnight runs from 29th February to 13th March 2016. Please speak to Angus McAvoy if you have any ideas for how best to mark this at St Peter's.

Help for Burma



A helping hand...

Keith Win has sent in this picture of some of the relief he and his company and charity have been able to offer those affected by the floods in Burma earlier this year. If you would like to know more about this work, please do speak to Keith about it and how you might be able to become involved in helping those who are struggling at this time.

Monthly Martyrs (who are not always martyrs...): St Nicholas



John Peatfield writes:

Saint Nicholas, most commonly known as Santa Claus or Father Christmas, has his feast day on the 6th of December and is rather confusingly the patron saint of bakers and pawnbrokers. He was born in March 270 and died on what was to be his festival day in 343. He was born to wealthy Greek parents who raised him as a devout Christian, and he quickly became the bishop of Myra. He seems to have got around a bit, and there are more than a few stories connected to him that all contribute to his legendary status. The first, and probably the one that forged his name as the gift-giver, is the story of a poor man who needed money for dowries for his daughters. Unable to find the funds, the girls seemed destined for a life on the street. However, on three consecutive nights many bags of gold coins (or sometimes balls) were thrown into the house through the windows and the doors and landed in the stockings the daughters had put by the fire to dry. The money paid for the dowries and all involved lived happily ever after. Now, there are no points for guessing which tradition the stockings inspired, but what I didn't know is that the golden balls which St Nick threw in are the reasoning behind the oranges sneaky parents put into the bottom of your stocking to bulk it out. There are countless other stories, including calming of a great storm, saving three children who had been ensnared in a Sweeny Todd/Hansel and Gretel-esque trap, and numerous others about saving children from grisly ends. St Nicholas' day is still the major day for gift giving in Europe, with sweets thrown through your window in the Netherlands and small boys dressing up as bishops and begging for alms for the poor in Poland. However, our image of the jolly and rather plump red-coated old man famously comes from a very successful advertising campaign, but I don't think that needs to get in the way of our enjoyment and love for a saint – who by all accounts – was a wonderful man.

Year's Mind

1 December	Malcolm Dillon (2004)
3 December	Doreen Walker (1989)
6 December	Colin Pratt (2011)
14 December	Marcel Rogers (1959) Carole Johnson (2008)
15 December	Jill Ford (1961)
19 December	Diana Hewlings (1990)
21 December	Beatrice Clover (1957)
23 December	Daphne Doherty (2002)
24 December	Elwyn Jones (2001)
27 December	Connie Ives (2002)
29 December	David Hewlings (1990)

Famous Faces

Patrick Neyman is currently appearing in a stage adaptation of Agatha Christie's "A Murder is Announced". Those at St Peter's who have seen him in this production enjoyed the play and thought his performance one of the best things in it. The play is now touring in the country and unfortunately the theatres on the tour are all rather a distance from London, but do check the details at <http://www.middlegroundtheatre.co.uk> in case your travels take you near Patrick's next year.

Our former vicar, the **Revd Dr Mark Powell** will soon be appearing as a canon at St George's, Windsor. We congratulate Mark on his appointment and the great and good of Windsor on their wisdom and good fortune in making it!

Happy Christmas and Au Revoir...

This is the last issue of the current format of the *St Peter's Parish Chest*. From January a shorter version "Letter from the Vicar +" will be published. Although it is hard to say good bye, the time seems right to sign off. I have enjoyed my time as editor and wish to thank everyone who has contributed over the last three and a half years. I know from the comments that I have received over the years that articles by members of St Peter's are very much valued. Fr David's monthly letter, David Blumlein's Music Notes, John Peatfield's Martyrs, along with regular pieces by Harold Stringer and Mike Tiley have made the *Parish Chest* both enjoyable and instructive. My thanks to them and to Christine and Trevor Bates for their faithful editorship for over eight years, and to Lesley Brooks for her patience, forbearance and generosity in time and skills in preparing the *Parish Chest* for publication each month.



We wish you a Happy Christmas and
Blessed New Year!