

An Occasional Newsletter



The CTiW 2016 United Pentecost Service held on 15th May

One of the fixtures of Churches Together in Westminster's calendar is our united Pentecost service. This year, 55 of us, from a dozen churches met together to share Evening Prayer at St Giles-in-the-Fields. Our Pentecost service is in the tradition of "receptive ecumenism"; that is, instead of putting together something that reflects a variety of traditions, we attend a "normal" service of the host church, and participate in their tradition. This service at St Giles is regularly a 1662 choir led service, and it was a delight to share in resonant phrases, and be led in beautiful music.

For some of those attending, this was a familiar pattern and the language and cadences were old friends. For some, especially those from other countries, this was very new, and a fascinating and illuminating encounter. The rector, Alan Carr made sure we knew what to do, and welcomed us so that we felt at home. Preaching on the theme of Pentecost, and introducing us to Samuel Pepys' experience of attending Pentecost worship in 1662, he encouraged us to know the Spirit as the gift to a community, and bringing the capacity for resilience as we live in a complex world.

The sense of continuity, of joy, of rootedness in the depth of tradition, and the openness of the welcome exemplified the Pentecostal reality of the coming of the Spirit to renew the world, and further deepened the sense of Churches Together as a community of believers seeking to serve and to understand in the middle of the city. Thank you to St Giles for the welcome, thank you to so many for coming – and if you didn't make it, put the date in the diary for next year; June 4th, at Hinde St.

Rev'd Ruth Gouldbourne

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Dates for your diary

2016

1 June—"Meet the Neighbours" at The Royal Military Chapel, The Guards' Chapel, Wellington Barracks, Birdcage Walk, SW1E 6HQ at 11am

9-15 October Prisons Week

Sunday, 27 November—CTiW Advent Service (details to follow)

Note: Venues and dates may be subject to change

If your church is interested in hosting a future "Meet the Neighbours" we should be pleased to hear from you.

Contact us

Website: www.ctiw.london
Email: ctiw.net@gmail.com

“Meet the Neighbours” at Notre Dame de France on 19th May 2016

Leave behind you the razzamatazz of Leicester Square, animated by film premieres and excited tourists, take ten steps up Leicester Place and you will find a beautiful, peaceful and restorative space.

About forty five of us, coming from fifteen different places of worship gathered for an evening of worship and learning more about each other and, in turn, more about ourselves at the Church of Notre Dame de France. The evening started with the ancient “office” of Compline, during which we were calmed for the night, after the work and activity of the day.

Fr Kevin Mowbray, one of the Marist Fathers who serve this church, then gave us a brief history of the French Catholic Community and its church building. In the late 18th Century and early 19th Century many French nationals found themselves in this part of London, fleeing persecution and dangers in France, experienced particularly during the French Revolution. In 1865 a building in the neo-Gothic style was begun. The spiritual needs of the French speaking Catholic population of the area were now being met more effectively through this initiative of Cardinal Wiseman. The congregation is more diverse

now, with many of the Franco-phones coming from parts of Africa as well as France and Belgium.

The site chosen has its own fascinating history, being the location for a rotunda housing The Royal Panorama, created by the painter, Robert Baker, in 1791. When this came on to the market, it became the site for the similarly circular church building. It was an architectural wonder, constructed, as it was, from cast iron, yet displaying the features of a traditionally French Gothic structure. Sadly, like many London churches, it suffered bomb damage in the Second World War and had to be demolished. A new building was erected, still fitting into the same circular footprint, by 1955.

The art work of the church is remarkable, containing the famous murals, depicting The Life of Mary, painted by Cocteau. There is also a large Aubusson tapestry, maintained by the French State. There is of course, much more and a visit is recommended, to appreciate the full picture.

We moved to The Refugee Centre, where we were inspired by Ivan’s talk about the work which goes on in the rooms of Maison Pierre



- Tapestry designed by Dom Robert over the main altar (above)

Chanel. Those in need queue from early morning to gain access to the wide variety of advisers available to help them re-settle. There are also many classes and activities: language classes, CV creation guidance, job application support, drama group, sewing group, art therapy, health advice to name a few.

This work has been going on since 1996 and is widely recognised for its excellence. Maison Pierre Chanel also offers shelter, food and conviviality in the rather challenging and sometimes hostile environment experienced by many refugees and asylum seekers.

The evening ended with delicious refreshments and an opportunity to socialise with fellow Christians from the fifteen churches.

Of necessity this report is brief. A book, specially written for the 150th Anniversary “*Rendez-vous Leicester Square: A History of Notre Dame de France 1865-2015*” by Isabelle Le Chevalier, is full of interesting detail. The Refugee Centre has an informative website. The internet gives information about the Marist Fathers and Brothers.

Ray Crocker



- Cocteau murals in Our Lady’s Chapel (left)

The Enthronement of Archbishop Silouan at The Orthodox Cathedral of St George, Albany Street, Regent's Park

I represented the CTiW Executive at this event on Saturday 27th February 2016. I have attended parts of Orthodox services before as a tourist in Eastern Europe, Ukraine and Russia but I have never attended a whole service so was somewhat apprehensive since I like to understand what is going on and I like to sit down. Fortunately, the pews from the Anglican church which this building was until 1989 are still there and used! Fortunately, too, I sat next to a very helpful English lady who gave me a booklet and who explained parts of the liturgy.

This was an important event for the Antiochan-Orthodox Community in England as the Archbishop (Metropolitan) was being enthroned as Head of the newly formed archdiocese of The British Isles and Ireland. This comprises nearly twenty parishes with gathered congregations. He will be doing a lot of travelling!

The enthronement took place within the liturgy of Vespers, which was sung

by two choirs. A men's choir sang in Arabic (I think). The words looked Arabic in the pamphlet) and a women's choir sang in English. The words were not dissimilar to those in Western Vespers liturgies. They were unaccompanied, which, of course, is the age-old tradition within Orthodoxy.

After the Liturgy, His Eminence was welcomed by several other eminent men, each introduced by a young woman who holds an important position in the Antioch Society. There were representatives of The Archbishop of Canterbury and The Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster. What was remarkable was that several of the welcomers spoke warmly of ecumenism. There was a strong theme of Christian love crossing all barriers of denomination.

There was rather a scrum leading to the refreshments in the church hall so I gave up and returned home. I was a bit disappointed at this point as it is always interesting to sample the refreshments of other churches. I learnt a

good deal from my partner in the pew as her husband is an Orthodox priest and they have a parish in Dorset. He had been an Anglican Priest most of his life but decided to leave the C of E when the ordination of women was celebrated by many of us. She tried to tell me the joys and wonders of Orthodoxy and its strength in the lack of change in two millennia. I was a guest so desisted from putting the case for liberal Christianity which takes note of historical, sociological and psychological changes and discoveries. This was Receptive Ecumenism, after all, and it was no place to express one's views.

A word about the building: It was Christ Church, an Anglo-Catholic parish church until 1989 when it was taken over by the Antiochan Orthodox Church. Christina Rossetti was a parishioner and her brother, Dante Gabriel produced the Sermon on the Mount stained glass window. More recently, in 1950, the funeral of George Orwell was held there.

Ray Crocker

About Street Pastors



Rev. Les Isaac, the founder of Street Pastors, recently gave a talk to the CTiW Executive about the organisation's work and mission in Westminster and elsewhere.

Street Pastors, a well-known sight in many city and town centres on busy nights, are always looking for more people to be involved. Starting from an immediate local initiative to find a solution to knife crime and gang culture, Street Pastors has grown into a national organisation of people who commit to spend at least one evening a month as part of a team mingling with, and being available to those who are on the streets at night – coming out of pubs and clubs, working on the streets or simply just there. Street Pastors work with the police and ambulance services, and with those who run pubs and clubs to make the streets friendlier and safer. Street Pastors offer a listening ear, a bottle of water, a comforting conversation, maps, presence. It is one of the ways in which the Body of Christ serves the community.

Thoroughly ecumenical, mixed in age, ethnicity, gender, gifts and style, Street Pastors have room for all sorts of people – and needs all sorts of people! Maybe you can help? There is full training, lots of support and great opportunities to serve.

If you want to know more, check out here... <http://www.streetpastors.org/> and for the local initiative, check here <http://westminster.streetpastors.org.uk/>

“Meet the Neighbours” at The Salvation Army’s Regent Hall, Oxford Street on 1st March 2016

Over seventy of us from churches in Westminster and beyond gathered in The Regent Hall, affectionately known as *The Rink*. The event started with an act of worship led by the Corps Officers, Majors Graham and



Dawn Mizon, in which we sang “Sing to God new songs of Worship” to the tune of Beethoven’s *Ode to Joy*. Singing this reminded us that many SA hymns have well-known tunes drawn from many popular sources. Our prayers were deepened by reflecting on the inspiring words *This is the air I breathe, your holy presence, living in me.....*

Corps Sergeant Major Richard Stock took us on a romp through the building’s and the corps’ history from 1882, when it ceased being a market, hitherto skating rink, hitherto stables and yards, when it was leased and opened by General Wm Booth himself. Our imaginations were excited by picturing enthusiastic congregations of over a thousand, worshipping so energetically that neighbours complained! The Open Air Meetings have always been a strong evangelistic feature of SA mission and ever since 1882, the band has been seen leading lively worship at the corner of Argyle Street and along the 1.4 mile route back to the worship base. In the early day this activity sometimes led to mayhem with several serious incidents reported in The Press. Over time, it has settled down to form a valuable aspect of outreach and a feature by which the SA is recognised and appreciated by many. The mind boggled somewhat when we heard about the personage of Catherine Bramwell-Booth, no less, leading the band around to Soho to gather up “street girls” and march them back to The Citadel (outmoded term now, I think) for shelter. This resonates with one of the current outreach projects, to work to stop people trafficking.

Another interesting piece of history, which is easily visualized is the way in which the band was invited in to the courtyard of Buckingham Palace by Queen Alexandra

in 1911 upon the death of The King. This practice has been repeated on such occasions as The Queen’s Jubilees.

What about today? One of the greatest challenges is how to “do” church on the busiest street in Europe. It is all too easy to be a “holy huddle” and contract “fellowshipitis”, says Major Mizon. There is a lively programme of services, concerts and groups which draws a regular committed gathered congregation of all ages but there is also an ongoing mission to the “unconnected”. It is felt that God has placed this hall and its corps there for a purpose.

Ros White, the business manager led us through the practical steps being taken to achieve effective evangelism. We were told of the café, the bookshop, the use of the space for conferences and the plans to develop the generous amounts of space between Oxford Street and Princes Street. The place has clearly come a long way from its early days as stables!

The evening ended with refreshments in the in-house café and a chance to hear the famous Regent Hall band.



We discovered the beauty of the period of spiritually charged calmness which is created after the band finishes its playing of a quiet, devotional piece. A benediction, using comforting and inspiring words from Isaiah sent us on our way refreshed and enlightened.

Ray Crocker

If your church is interested in hosting a future “Meet the Neighbours” we should be pleased to hear from you on ctiw.net@gmail.com

Please see <http://ctiw.london/meet-the-neighbours/>