

Tidings

St J

The magazine of St James's Church, Piccadilly

December 2017

www.sjp.org.uk

Urban harvest
A family united
Not so rough . . .
Pilgrim trails



In this issue

Scientist and educator **Deborah Colvin** is a churchwarden at St James's.

Andrea Wood of the BRC International Family Tracing Service has been working with St James's during their three year partnership.

Eleanor Butler is a retired GP who helps with the Winter Shelter and the International Breakfast.

Emily Young is frequently described as Britain's foremost sculptor in stone.

Artist and placemaker **Sara Mark** has created several art works at St James's, most recently a 'golden' censer.

After many years as an English teacher, **Trevor Lines** is now almost a full-time churchwarden at St James's.

Church Council member **Raks Patel** is a long-time activist for LGBT rights.

Mick Twister's Biblical limericks are exclusive to St James's Church. He can be followed at @twitmericks.

Letters

When the last edition of '197 Piccadilly' came out in December 2016, we said that we were pressing the 'pause' button while we considered how best to proceed. We also asked for feedback and a few people kindly made contact:

"I have read most of it . . . think it is very good . . . liked the art bit, think it important, also article by Karl Jenkins. Alicia Fowler was very funny and inspiring. Not sure why you feel you might stop publishing this." SG, Wales

"I love calling in at St James when I visit London. It has become an accidental place of pilgrimage for me. I need you to be that place of pilgrimage; others may feel the same. Can the magazine reflect aspects of its surroundings, e.g. a book review from a member of staff at Waterstones? Perhaps future interviews with pilgrims could be included." CW, Norfolk

"I am sorry the magazine is closing having been comforted by the cheerful 'voices from outside' and found refreshment in Rant Anon (having thrown my fourth computer out of the window, hence the handwritten letter); the cartoons and the Curators of the Soul. Please consider releasing the 'pause button'." RG, Kent

Dear Reader

Welcome to **Tidings**, our new-look little magazine just for December 2017. This church is visited by thousands of people every month, from near and far, and we are busiest of all during this Advent month of December.

Maybe you're a regular here, maybe you've come for carols, or music, or to shop in our wonderful markets, or buy cards for good causes, or to light a candle, or seek help in our caravan. Maybe you're not quite sure why you're here. Maybe you're reading this online and wanting to connect with a

place that has special meaning for you. Maybe you've come in from the cold. Whatever brings you to these pages, welcome. This space, and this magazine are for you.

A whole variety of activity radiates from this quiet centre of stillness and worship. In these pages we talk about just a few. We hope you find something here that speaks to you.

We hope that Christmas brings you peace and joy, and we'd love you to stay in touch with us, if you'd like to.

Rev Lucy Winkett

Tidings is edited by a team led by Lucy Winkett and Jo Hines. The views expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those held by St James's Church.

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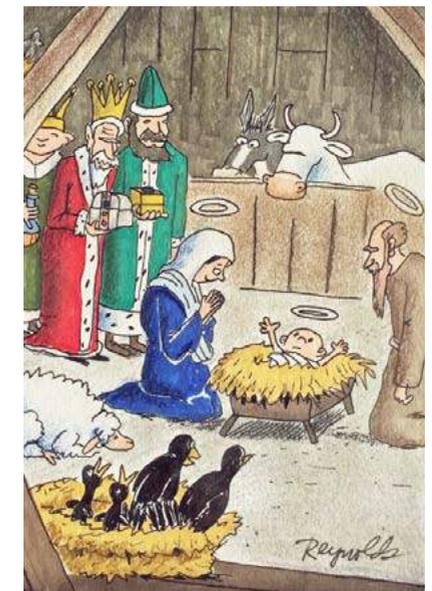
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"They act like they've never seen a baby in a nest before."

Urban harvest

Deborah Colvin explains why St James's chose an Eco Fun Palace for their harvest celebration this year.

First, a question: how can we celebrate harvest authentically, in a way that is consonant with our hyper-urban lives? We don't have an allotment in Piccadilly, or any local produce. This year we sang 'We plough the fields and scatter', but we don't usually. However, lack of immediate contact doesn't make us any less dependent on the rhythm of the seasons, food production, the soil, geology, weather, and the planetary water cycle.

Second, as a church community we are committed to continuously reducing our carbon footprint, and working towards Eco Church Gold Award. It's been said, possibly first by Jacques Cousteau who was spellbound with wonder at life in the oceans, that 'people protect what they love, and they love what they understand'. If this is the case, then we need to do all we can to help people understand the planet and its processes – which does not exclude

ourselves – to enable them to love and protect it.

Third, the Fun Palaces movement, conceived by Joan Littlewood in the 1960s as a 'laboratory of fun' and 'a university of the streets', has been renewed in our time. The idea of a welcoming space, open to all, embodying the conviction that communities make culture, where everyone is an artist and everyone a scientist – well that seems like an idea that might nurture understanding and love.



Canjo CanDo –

Trombone player Paul Sylvester demonstrates the amazing Canjo.

He says, "The Canjo and my elastic band guitar sound OK – well, actually, not all that great – but they show what can be done with unwanted household items. Though in fact I had to buy most of the materials from Wilkinsons . . ."

A family united

St James's three year association with the International Family Tracing Service had its climax in September with a concert hosted by Ian Shaw and featuring Sarah Jane Morris and her guitarists, and the Citizens of the Word Choir. Andrea Wood describes how a last minute addition to the programme electrified the evening.

What better place for the Syrian Osama family to play in public for the first time in over a year



The Osama family

than a concert for the Red Cross International Family Tracing Service?

Like so many of their compatriots, this talented family had been fragmented by their country's tragedy. Mr Osama, who plays the oud and sings

with the London Syrian Ensemble had been granted asylum in the UK.

Once this was granted, he was able to apply for visas for family members; once the visas were secured, BRC Family Reunion Travel Assistance was able to assist with the journey. So the Osama family were only too happy to join the concert. Their presence brought the significance of **Day of the Disappeared** into sharp perspective, with their electrifying perfor-



Sarah Jane Morris

mance and huge warmth of welcome. By the end of the evening the whole audience were on their feet, together to celebrate everything that community and connection can create.

Suspended

After the awe-inspiring 'Flight' two years ago, where a rubber dinghy and life jackets dominated the nave through all the Christmas services, Arabella Dorman's new installation uses clothes cast off by refugees in their desperate search for a new place to call home, as Jo Hines explains.

The images of snaking lines of refugees and perilously overloaded boats have all but

vanished from the media. But the heartbreak is far from over.

Arabella Dorman says, "The use of worn garments as an installation artwork reflects the state of limbo faced by those caught between a past to which they cannot return and a future to which they are denied, thus highlighting the sense of disempowerment and imprisonment, stuck in a present that is fraught with uncertainty, risk and often, fear."

Why place this in a church? "Empty clothes are evocative of the people who wore them," says Lucy Winkett. "One of the church's roles in situations of injustice is to 'create witnesses'.

"At Christmas, we tell stories of Jesus becoming a refugee. At the festival of the Incarnation, we sing about Jesus being clothed in humanity, 'veiled in flesh'. This is a way of seeing Christ in all people who are rootless and far from home. And being willing ourselves to be 'clothed in compassion'."

A BAFTA for the Rector?

Not exactly.

The Jerusalem Awards which aim to promote excellence in broadcasting are hosted by St James's neighbour, BAFTA.

But she did get two: one for the Radio 4 **Good Friday Meditation** (also featuring Leah Hoskin from our congregation) 2017 and one for **Thought for the Day** on Maundy Thursday 2017. Oscars next.



Lucy Winkett and Rosie Dawson

Not so rough . .

Why did Eleanor Butler sleep out in the Southwood Garden one night in October?
Clue: 57 others joined her.

When I volunteered to join the **Sleep Out** one of my friends offered to sponsor me **not** to do it and my husband suggested I should remember that I am 'elderly'. (I did realise that I am old enough to be a mother, grandmother and nearly a great-grandmother to my fellow sleepers.)

Friday, October 13th. From the moment we arrived it was clear that we were not going to experience the hardship of those who **really** sleep rough. The warm evening was probably an October record and we were soon peeling off the layers.

We met old friends and made new ones; we had guitar music; we drank delicious soup donated by Pret; we were given warm hoodies and showered with thanks from the staff at the West London Mission.

trees of the Southwood Garden provided a beautiful canopy. Clouds floated by in a strangely orange-grey sky, autumn leaves floated down on us but it was **not** quiet. Piccadilly is clearly on a circuit for the boy racers. Lucy must have to put up with it every night . . and probably every night is bin night. Tipping glass bottles into vans is not done quietly.

It was **one** night for us. It's **every** night for the many homeless men and women who sleep alone in our streets. We were safely behind locked gates. They are **so** vulnerable.



"SAY, WHAT'S ALL THIS RELIGIOUS STUFF DOING ON THESE CHRISTMAS CARDS?"



Christine, Osei and Buqui at the Sleep Out – *‘As an asylum seeker I know what it’s like not to be able to do anything for yourself because of the situation you are in, so I think it’s important to help other people,’ Osei (centre). ‘Everything is free from God,’ says Buqui (right) ‘so I give my support to others for free. I’ll do it again and again and again!’*

Best of all, two gentlemen who had been helped out of their homelessness by the WLM came along to tell us their stories and join the Sleep Out.

The vergers had collected a pile of flattened boxes worthy of Guy Fawkes night and the plane



I guess none of us found it easy to ask our sponsors for money, but they responded generously. We raised, in total, £54,000 and of that the St James’s team contributed over £13,000. The West London Mission will use it well for their amazing work.

So, can you help?
In association with the WLM, St James’s Night Shelter operates every Tuesday from November to May.

Note: All referrals into the shelter are through the West London Mission.

Stone stories

Emily Young, frequently described as Britain's foremost stone sculptor, on creating the works now showing in the Southwood Garden.

When I first started carving pieces of stone, I was constantly saying to myself: this is extraordinary – what on earth am I doing? Many answers came, none the final one: but the best answer is – I am doing Nature's bidding.

There is a story told in every piece of stone that is more magnificent than any creation myth; it's a story that shocked and astonished the Christian geologists of the late 1700s in England, when they first started to decipher, through the fossil record, the history of life on Earth. The science we depend on in our everyday lives is tied in, inextricably, to that history of learning to read the fossil record, in the stone, in the land.

When I carve a face into the stone, I seem to be acting out my self-consciousness onto the stone, a stone that holds some of the history of the globe, formed of the very same original kind of

material that I am formed of. The expressions of sadness, of reflection, are easy to read – I like to think that anyone who ever lived on Earth, anywhere, any-when, would recognise these forms, and the expressions.

These expressions, and the breaks, showing there on the pieces of old stone, also tell another story: there is in our human nature, a short-sightedness and self-obsession that now appears to lead to self-destruction: this self-destruction has two effects: one, we destroy, profoundly change, our physical habitat as we strive to feed this infinite desirousness, and two, we lose our dignity in that process.

So my work is a kind of temple activity now, devotional; when I work a piece of stone, the mineral occlusions of the past are revealed, the layers of sediment unpeeled; I may open in one knock something that took millions of years to form: dusts settling, water dripping, forces pushing, minerals growing – material and geological revelations: the story of time on Earth shows here, sometimes startling, always beautiful.



Face of Stillness 1



Emily Young has said, 'I can be a Buddhist, a Hindu, or a Christian, all before breakfast' but recognises that her sculpture has a special resonance with sacred spaces.

Just walk with Amos

100 years since the Balfour Declaration, 50 years since the occupation of the West Bank, 10 years since the blockade of Gaza, 147 days after they set off from Trafalgar Square and 3300 kilometres later, eleven indefatigable walkers arrived in Jerusalem on the 2nd November.

Justin Butcher remembers, "At the end of a life-changing journey through Europe and the Middle East, crossing eleven borders, three seas, countless rivers and mountains and soul-stirring landscapes from the

green fields of Kent to the desert dust of Jordan, we walked at last down the Mount of Olives and through the Lions' Gate into Jerusalem. Our companions clapped and cheered us through the gate, Palestinian drivers tooted their horns in welcome and high-fived us through car windows – and a great tide of relief and joy swept us up and into each others' arms."

This epic pilgrimage had one purpose: full equal rights for everyone who calls the Holy Land home.

Christmas Blues

Christmas comes with high expectations, but the reality is often different. Sometimes, Christmas can be tough, as Mercedes Pavlicevic recalls.

"I used to spend Christmas with my old aunt in Beirut. Apart from the red and silver bling with which I insisted on decorating her living room, this was a low key time of being together, reflecting, reminiscing, visiting her elderly friends, going to church and having a special meal. When this time

passed, Christmas in London felt like an incessant torrent of multi-sensory shocks. The Christmas liturgies, too, seemed to blur into the maelstrom of sounds, music, colour, people, excitement, frenzy, and the astonishing creativity of shop windows in Piccadilly.

Let's press Pause and step into St James's Church on a semi-dark Sunday afternoon. We're invited into a quiet circle; musicians play Bach cello and piano, which segues into a Taize chant, and there are candles on the floor, surrounding a crib awaiting a birth."

Rev Lindsay Meader, who leads the service, writes, "Leading the Blue Christmas service is a quiet, low-key pleasure. It's very special to have one carol service in which, alongside giving thanks for the miracle of Christmas, we acknowledge that our lives don't automatically unfold in parallel with the rest of the world or the seasons of the year. Whatever your reason for coming, you can be assured of a non-intrusive welcome, a simple, spacious service, and for those who wish, a listening ear afterwards."

Blue Christmas, 3.00 pm, Sunday 10th December. The service is followed by light refreshments.



© Amos Trust/Mark



Over 160 people snake their way through the Judean Wilderness – 27 October 2017

Pilgrim trails

Pilgrimage is in the air. Sara Mark, whose unforgettable Ice Melt installation took centre stage for Harvest 2015, here writes about the inspiration behind Sea Well, pictured below.

Pilgrimage calls with a quiet insistence. The idea lay dormant for years until in August 2015 I met a volunteer from the Co-Fraternity of St. James, an organisation that cares for British pilgrims in Europe.

"I'm going to walk the Camino de Santiago de Compostela one day", I remarked casually, "Which route?" he replied.

I had no idea that there are numerous Caminos across the continent, but when he told me that the Del Norte follows the coast of Northern Spain, I felt something hit home.

A pilgrimage is not a holiday. Wherever the path takes you, you have to go there. There are beautiful alpine meadows,

Romanesque churches, cows with bells, ancient oak woods filled with thrush-song and ferny streams. But there are also miles of ankle-deep mud, days on end of rain and hours trudging on tarmac roads.

Many times I was at the edge of my physical endurance, but like a giant magnet the Camino draws the heart onwards.

Most of the time I didn't feel remotely spiritual. I had to concentrate, because missing a yellow arrow meant retracing your steps until you find them again. But I did make a piece of work entitled 'SEA WELL.' The subtext for my journey was to collect water from the End of the World: fresh and saline. The photograph became a postcard printed in Spain and the bottles of water an installation when I arrived home to St James's Piccadilly.

And what did I learn?

- One step is one step nearer the goal.
- Tackle big challenges slowly.
- Be humble because the Camino is immensely powerful.
- Offer kindness to strangers.
- Find your own rhythm and breathe.

A group from St James's plan to take a very different kind of pilgrimage

In June 2018 a group from St James's Church will be making a pilgrimage with a Human Rights and Holocaust theme. The journey will begin in Berlin, with visits to the Dietrich Bonhoeffer house; his writings will accompany the whole trip. From there to Krakow, an overnight stay in the Centre for Dialogue and Prayer and a visit to Auschwitz. The final destination is Nuremberg where the group will visit the rally grounds and the court room where the war criminals were tried.

The intention is that the pilgrimage will be open to be shared by the whole community, whether able to be physically present or not. So in preparation there will be three evenings to explore different aspects of the journey:

November 14th – the testimony of Dietrich Bonhoeffer

February 15th – the origins of Human Rights

April 23rd – the Holocaust



Piccadilly people

Raks Patel has been coming to St James's since 2014 and is a passionate advocate for minority rights. Here she explains how growing up in the West Midlands shaped her thinking and how Tom Hanks helped in a family debate.

Recently I started a new job, and a few weeks ago one of my staff asked me when I had come out. She had assumed I was gay and was surprised to hear I was straight.

I volunteer for LGBT charities, I actively campaign on LGBT issues, I seek out LGBT theatre and film, I have interned with, and written for, online LGBT

and having Indian parents who migrated to the UK in the 1960s, I was often asked where I was from - the answer is Birmingham! I was defined as coloured, then as ethnic minority, then Asian, then British Asian. I define myself as British and a Londoner.

I was educated in British schools, amongst predominantly white peers, influenced by Western culture (books, TV, film), and taught Western values, at a time when my Indian parents were trying to hold fast to their Indian heritage, values and culture.

I know what it feels like to be perceived as different, to be a brown girl growing up in a white culture. I know the importance of creating and building your own identity from the ground up, so it truly reflects who you are.

I was a teenager in the 1980s, and I recall the hostile environment for LGBT people. It was a very difficult time to be gay. I remember the AIDS tombstone adverts, people discussing a

gay plague, and the footage of Princess Diana visiting wards filled with young gay men dying of AIDS.

My parents were GPs and they, like most people at the time, made a distinction between innocent victims of AIDS (children, haemophiliacs) and people who had brought this on themselves (gay men, drugs addicts, sex workers). My Mum was a big Tom Hanks fan because she was convinced one of my cousins looked just like him! I made her watch the film Philadelphia and, as she watched, it dawned on her that LGBT people were just the same as everyone else. They had ambitions, they had jobs, they had family, they had friends, and some had life partners. The film helped change her attitude towards LGBT people.

One of the main reasons I came to St James's was because it was known for its LGBT inclusive policy and it had a regular monthly LGBT meeting. When I first stepped into the Church I felt a real sense of community within its walls, and everyone was so welcoming and friendly, even though I was new. I first came on Palm Sunday, and witnessed its famous Passion play, so the donkey was an added bonus!

I have attended the LGBT group ever since I first came to St James's and I am now on the coordinating group. I personally feel it is very important to be a straight ally, and to stand in solidarity with my LGBT brothers and sisters.

One of the most disappointing aspects of the Equal Marriage campaign was so few people from the BAME community, who were not LGBT, joined the campaign. If I am having a bad day I find this upsetting, but on a good day it renews my energy to campaign even harder to change hearts and minds. There is much work still to do!



Hugh Valentine

publications, I often wear rainbow laces, and I am never without my red ribbon for HIV/AIDS. So where does my passion for LGBT issues and culture come from?

Growing up in the West Midlands in the 1970s and 1980s,



Inn trouble

**A couple who left booking late
Were told they would just have to wait
Or crash in the stable:
"We're simply not able
To house you round Christmas time,
mate!"**

One Church, many voices

Meat, anyone?

'Disagreeing well' is the new mantra in the Church of England - something St James's has had a lot of practice in over the years. For instance, on the subject of what to eat . . .

"The short answer is that I don't eat my friends. I am vegetarian to protect animals, my own health, and everyone's right to have sufficient food."

"I began as a vegetarian, but then became a vegan. From there it extended, so now I don't eat honey, wear leather, have feather pillows or knowingly use any animal products. Ritual food is the one exception, so as not to get in the way of someone else's celebration."

"I eat fish but not fowl or meat. I don't really like meat and I don't like the way animals are treated."

"I am vegetarian because avoiding meat is a matter of planetary justice. I don't do it for my own health, and I only partly do it to avoid killing animals. If I lived in a sustainable hunter-gatherer society, or African village I might

eat meat - but these ways of living have mostly gone because of our (western) greed. (On the other side of the coin, I think my preferred death would be to be eaten by a wild animal.)"

"I've stopped buying meat because I think the mass production of animals is wasteful and inevitably cruel. But I like meat too much to be completely vegetarian."

"Half the disciples were fishermen and the prodigal son's father killed the fatted calf, so if we are going to be Biblical . . . but I only eat 'happy' chickens or pork."



WHAT?

Culture clash

From 1-3 February 2018, St James's is hosting three performances of an urgent new play "The Host" by Nesaiah Muthy (BBC New Talent Hotlist 2017) in response to Thursday 23 June 2016 and the European refugee crisis.

Syrian refugee Rabea finds an unlikely host in fellow 20-year-old Yasmin in her South London flat. But on the same estate Yasmin's family face struggles of their own and believe that charity should begin at home.

Zoe Lafferty directs bright young talent in this sparky and comic urban story exploring cultural identity and difference.

St James's has worked with the National Youth Theatre before, developing a new play with them and the writer Louise Brealey which was performed over two weeks in the church in 2013. **Pope Joan** re-told the legend of the only female Pope in history. **Pope Joan** created a bit of a stir, described as "compelling, controversial, atmospheric", and so we're thrilled to be working with such talented young performers again.



The God we hardly knew

No one can celebrate
a genuine Christmas
without being truly poor.
The self-sufficient, the proud,
those who, because they have
everything, look down on others,
those who have no need
even of God - for them there
will be no Christmas.

Only the poor, the hungry,
those who need someone
to come on their behalf,
will have that someone.
That someone is God.
Emmanuel. God-with-us.
Without poverty of spirit
there can be no abundance of God.

Óscar Romero

Óscar Romero,
Archibishop of San Salvador,
was assassinated in
March 1980 for being
'the voice of the voiceless poor'