

White Rose

Magazine

THE PARISH MAGAZINE OF OLD ST PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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MIND THE GAP

REFLECTIONS ON MONEY AND CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP

EXPLORING THE LINKS BETWEEN
GIVING AND DISCIPLESHIP

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IN & AROUND OLD ST PAUL'S

RECENT IMAGES OF THE OSP COMMUNITY



MIND THE GAP!

WHITE ROSE EDITOR SHEILA BROCK INTRODUCES THIS EDITION



Gap. Funny word, isn't it? Gap. The more you say it, the more peculiar it sounds. But it's an old word in our language brought to us long ago by the invading Vikings, meaning 'a chasm'. It has so many different uses. Bridge the gap – fill the gap – gap toothed – gap year – gap site. And Mind the Gap? That phrase which can be found on T-shirts, mugs and countless other objects, found its way into the language via the London Underground where the curve of the station platform meant that the train could never align itself without leaving – yes, a gap.

But why use it on the title page of the White Rose magazine when the predominant theme is Stewardship? Antonia Swinson in her book *Root of all Evil* writes about spiritual values and the way we deal with our money – and the disconnection that exists in our minds between the two. Perhaps, she suggests we should “devise and sign a form that hands over our assets and money to God... making us merely stewards of his wealth... talking about this money in terms of ‘Your’ and ‘His’ rather than ‘my’ and ‘mine’”.

In this way we become stewards with responsibility and free will...we are less likely to lose a bundle on the horses or indulge in comfort shopping and “we might manage to give away a bit more money...sometimes so much harder to do than wasting it”.

So the current issue of the magazine is concerned with this disconnection, this gap, between God and money. Sometimes it seems that money is one aspect of our lives that we think we can keep to ourselves. God does not need to know how much we give or what we do with what we have. Yet the evidence of the New Testament is that Jesus talked openly about faith and money; that he spent a good deal of time showing people

“... though it is true that stewardship involves time and talents as well as money, there is a direct link between giving and discipleship.”



how - perhaps not always wilfully - they short-changed God. And of course, though it is true that stewardship involves time and talents as well as money, there is a direct link between giving and discipleship.

My thanks to all who have contributed articles providing different views of Stewardship and its implications for OSP: Nick Adams, Margaret Aspen, Andrew Barr, Michelle Brown, Nigel Cook, John Kitchen, John McLuckie, Ian Paton, Matt Rees and Jim Wynn-Evans. By the time we are finished with the ‘S’ word this will be, to misuse Keats, ‘all ye know on earth and all ye need to know’!

I am grateful also to Andy Collier, who meant to write about stewardship but found himself instead in memory lane; to Elizabeth Koepping for her fascinating insight into Christian Asia and to Helen Tyrrell for her masterly summary of our varied interests in other parts of the world. And from other parts of the world - it was good to have ‘letters home’ from Richard Bloomfield, Rowan Guthrie and Duncan Paton, our OSP alumnae! The book reviews are as eclectic and well-written as ever so that there is something here for all tastes.

Credit for photographs goes to Brenda White who has succeeded in making even North Gray's Close look positively romantic, to Jubin Santra and Richard Bloomfield who might be said to have done the same for the choir and the church building, and to Ginger Franklin for providing photographs with a difference. Dave Gaskill kindly gave permission to use one of his cartoons. London Underground images were sourced from the iStockPhoto and stock.exg website. Finally, my thanks to Kate and Justin Reynolds who undertook the production of the White Rose with very little advance notice.

FOLLOWING OUR GOD OF SURPRISES

RECTOR IAN PATON CHALLENGES US TO FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE SET BY THE EARLY CHURCH IN THE WAY WE THINK ABOUT AND USE OUR MONEY

Old Saint Paul's is a complex place. All sorts of people come here for a wide variety of reasons, some of them very personal. The church, by being open daily again (after recent damage) offers a space for prayer and contemplation, or just to be still in a place hallowed by the prayers of others. Day by day, worship is offered here, in its beauty and relative formality. It is not a means of escape from the world outside with all its problems, but a way to draw us closer to the heart of God, to the reality of his presence, so that we may discover God's purpose for us and be released to be his people in the world.

Yet all of this comes at a price, and Old Saint Paul's is showing a deficit on its balance sheet. We are not able to balance our books. This matters for two reasons. Prudent housekeeping requires that we pay our way. If we do not, that induces a stand-still mentality, which prevents us from thinking in a visionary way about what we would like to do if we could afford it. There are a number of practical things we dream of achieving: to provide better facilities for our work with children; to refurbish the Laurie Halls vestry building; to make better provision for disabled people; to provide better literature and display material for visitors and pilgrims; to offer better facilities for the local community who use our hall. I could go on, but little of this is possible with a stand-still budget, so the challenge is plain for all to see.

This is about money, yes. But what about spirituality? They belong together. When Christians come to think about money, there is no shortage of material in the Bible for them to explore. The Old Testament is full of references to money, ranging from accounts of God's concerns for the poor and vulnerable in society, to complex legal structures about harvesting, land and money-lending. We read time and again that the Israelites will be held accountable for the way in which they use their wealth.

The dangers of wealth were clearly recognised by the early Christians. The first three Gospels claim that it would be easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for the rich to enter the kingdom of God (Matt 19:24). In the Acts of the Apostles we read about the extraordi-



“The first followers of Jesus recognised that all they had came from God and was, in a real sense, not their own.”

nary transformation in the lives of Jesus's followers. The disciples, who fled in terror when Jesus was arrested, and locked themselves in, even after the resurrection, became prominent in Jerusalem. Peter, the betrayer, became the most powerful preacher. When faced with torture, imprisonment and threats, those same disciples responded with boldness and courage.

This boldness extended to matters of wealth and property. We learn (Acts 4:32) that ‘No-one called anything their own, but everything they owned was held in common’. There was no need among them. Those first followers of Jesus recognised that all they had came from God and was, in a real sense, not their own. The believers were “all of one heart and all of one mind” (Acts 4:32). Their unity was not one of possessions, but the way they held their possessions was enacted in their common life. Those who had possessions sold them and handed the proceeds over to the Apostles (Acts 4:35, 37).

Being a Christian is about a lifelong process of being transformed, or converted (to use the traditional word). If we are going to become transformed people, we are going to have to be transformed in the way we think about and use our money, and this is what stewardship is about. To keep money in some separate compartment, sealed off from the moral and spiritual demands of faith, should strike us as an odd thing to do. Yet, again and again, the way we react to the idea of

giving money to the Church for the work of God, or of the Church giving money away to others (through tithing) suggests that we are still rather guarded and hypocritical about this. Many of us on decent pensions or salaries never get round to increasing our contributions in line with inflation, or paying by standing order (so that someone doesn't have to open envelopes and count coins and notes and carry it all to the bank). Some do not even bother to make a proper pledged commitment at all. We need to become more transformed about money!

Perhaps what we all need is a deeper sense of giftedness. That's why money is a theological and spiritual thing, and that's why our attitude to it is an acid test of the liveliness of faith, because it reveals our sense of gifting and giftedness. As Archbishop Rowan Williams says, "God gives us his life and we put it in the fridge. God gives us his life and we put it in the bottom drawer. God gives us his life and we put it aside for a rainy day. God gives us his life and we treat it as a lump of something that we can hold onto and conserve." We turn the giving God, the outpouring, diffusing God, the God who gives us the dignity of being givers, into a god we can cope with and handle. We turn him into a god who can't give any more, who can't surprise us, who can't renew us.

Yet I have found since my early days as a priest that the memories that I cling onto as gifts of the giving God, frequently have to do with the experience of being surprised by ordinary people. Rowan Williams, again, tells a story that could (almost) have been told of Old St Paul's.

"When I was a curate, I had to steer the parish through an interregnum. Just before the new vicar arrived, the bishop rang me up to say, "*You will have to call a special PCC meeting because the man who is coming as the new vicar has just left his wife, and you had better explain that to them.*" So I did, and waited, bracing myself for the worst. The first comment that came was from a very sober-sided churchwarden, an ex-military man, one of the more conservative, middle-class members of the congregation, who shook his head and said, "*I think this man is going to need all the help we can give him.*" I felt deeply converted by that response — surprised and moved and in touch with the giving God, with a giftedness in the man whose first response to what was really quite a disorienting bit of news was generosity."

Old Saints Paul's is nothing if not a place of such surprises, and that is the surest sign that God is here among us. It wouldn't take much, would it, for us to be even more transformed than we already are, and surprise ourselves with our money, too?

Canon Paton is Rector of Old Saint Paul's

PARTY TIME

MARGARET ASPEN REPORTS
ON THE OSP STEWARDSHIP
RENEWAL HOUSE PARTIES

My party season started on October 10th with the first of the Stewardship Renewal house parties. I have attended as many of them as I could and have enjoyed seeing friends in their own homes and taking part in discussions of what Old Saint Paul's means to us and what it will mean to future generations.

Talking to people after the main discussion – and, yet again, enjoying the cakes and wine – the most common response I heard was how good it was to have our financial situation so clearly explained and the options for the future so well laid out.

One clear message from the Stewardship Renewal discussions was that regular giving is essential to our church and that the payment by standing order to the bank is the easiest way to achieve this. I know some of us feel odd when the collection is made and we sit in our chairs and pass the bag without making a contribution. My suggestion is that those of us who feel this way should drop a coin in the bag as a token of our giving – some people already do this and use envelopes so that we can reclaim tax on the donation. If this appeals to you, please ask me for envelopes.

I came away from each house party with a feeling of optimism and a conviction that the plans the Vestry has made for the future will be realised because, as a congregation, we are willing to finance them. Thank you, everyone, for the wine and cakes!

Margaret Aspen is the OSP Stewardship Recorder



FULFILLING OUR PROMISES

MICHELLE BROWN PROVIDES A GLIMPSE OF THE WORSHIP ACTIVITIES PROVIDED FOR OUR YOUNG MEMBERS ON A SUNDAY MORNING AND SHARES HER VISION FOR THE CHILDREN'S MINISTRY AT OLD SAINT PAUL'S

In just a month on staff, I have found Old St. Paul's to be a welcoming and loving Christian community. I give thanks for this and am also thankful the congregation has provided me the opportunity to work with your children; a task that brings great joy and great responsibility as they are the future of your church.

The vision for children's ministry here is essentially to connect children to God through faith in Christ by providing opportunities to learn about God through Bible stories, providing for Christian connection within the full church community and through opportunities to learn about and be a part of worship (both in Godly Play and in High Mass). The Sunday School Committee, volunteers, parents and I are working together with the Clergy and the congregation to provide spiritual nurture, Christian community and opportunities to grow in faith.

To explain further, I should first emphasize that children's ministry is not the equivalent of childcare. When the children leave the sanctuary and head downstairs to the children's worship/Godly Play alcove in the church hall or to the crèche, our volunteers are providing much more than supervision for the children while the congregation continues on in Mass upstairs.

For the children aged four and up Godly Play runs on two Sundays a month. This includes a greeting time, sharing a Bible story told with simple figures, a wondering time (time to think of questions related to the story), an artwork/story response time and then closing, before heading upstairs with parents. On the non-Godly Play Sundays, volunteers provide a greeting time, Bible lesson (read or acted out by the children), a song time, arts and crafts, and a closing time. These Sundays the readings and crafts are based on the same readings in the Mass.

Meanwhile, in the crèche, the infants, toddlers and three year olds are enjoying some playtime, stories, and colouring. Again, this is much more than meets the eye. Our volunteers in the crèche are the young one's first introduction to Christian care in the community. Ivy Beckwith explains this well when she writes, "...by loving, holding, feeding, and changing these babies, they are putting bricks in the foundation of trust ... That coupled

with consistent, loving caregivers who sing songs about Jesus or who tell the young child how God made her toes will build a foundation of trust the young child can transfer to the person of God." (see footnote below)

This is currently where we are with children's ministry, but where we are heading will require further support from the congregation. First off, we need your prayer! All things are possible through prayer. Please pray for our children: for them to feel welcome in our community and in our worship time. Please pray for them to have the opportunity to know and grow closer to God.

Secondly, we require help to provide safe, secure and child friendly facilities. In the next year or so we are planning to redecorate the crèche and alcove. We are also looking for donations of toys (used or new), a crib, a swing, a baby bouncer, and a rocking chair. Maybe you enjoy cleaning? If so, we would love your help with sterilizing the crèche toys, washing stuffed animals, etc.

Sunday School and Godly Play at Old St Paul's



Thirdly, volunteers are a resource we could always use more of! Do you enjoy comforting the young ones? Perhaps volunteering once a month or every two months in the crèche would suit you. Do you love to lead arts and crafts or sing songs? Then perhaps you would like to be part of the Sunday School Rota. Maybe you would like to join us as a guest speaker for the children?

Maybe your heart is pulling you closer to the young people in the church. The young people who have aged out of children's ministry are also in our care. The Sunday School Committee is making a continued commitment to them as we plan to start a youth group in 2008. We are looking for interested volunteers to help with this group which will meet on Sunday mornings prior to High Mass each week and then worship together at High Mass (on the Sundays when the youth are not busy singing in the choir or serving that is). There are many other ways to lend a hand in children's ministry so if you wish to share your time and talents, please do not hesitate to speak to me.

By working together for our children we are showing the children that the full community truly cares for them and welcomes them. We are also working towards fulfilling the vows we all made to God, the children and each other at their baptisms to care and nurture the faith of His children. What a tremendous calling God has entrusted us with.

Michelle Brown is Old Saint Paul's Children's Worker

Footnote:

Ivy Beckwith, *Postmodern Children's Ministry: Ministry to Children in the 21st Century*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2004.

'Dreaming spires', Oxford



OXFORD THOUGHTS

ROWAN GUTHRIE REFLECTS
ON THE PLACE OF OLD ST
PAUL'S IN HER JOURNEY

I first started going to Old Saint Paul's infrequently sometime during 2001/2. I was finishing up my studies as an undergraduate at Edinburgh and came along to OSP with my uni friends, Katy and Mark. Many of you will remember them as the extra madly in love couple, who got married and set off to Istanbul together on pilgrimage. They got as far as the South of France, but that was a pretty long walk from Norwich, so we'll let them off.

In this way I was introduced to Old Saint Paul's, unbaptised but intrigued. The inspiration, community (Young Adult's Group!) and just plain holiness of OSP soon lead me to Father Ian's door to discuss becoming Christian. I was baptised on Epiphany 2004. I left Edinburgh for Oxford in the same year to begin an MPhil in Social Anthropology. Though it stretched me further than was entirely comfortable for my brain, I thoroughly enjoyed this course of study. I am now working for the University Museum of Natural History on the education team.

At first I was extremely homesick for my dear friends and the life I'd carved out in Edinburgh. OSP was often at the forefront of my mind. I found Mary Magdalene's Church in the centre of Oxford. Of course it couldn't fill the OSP sized gap! Different incense, and a severe lack of Scottish accents in the responses. But I have come to cherish and become part of Mary Mag's too.

They are a friendly church, which welcomed me at a time of anxiety and transition. They are used to new students arriving in the city and they know how to look after them. I have stayed with them for (wow!) three years now and I have come to feel at home and part of the community here. Our priest, Father Peter Groves, guides us and looks after us all very well, though, as is often the case in Oxford, his sermons sometimes stretch my brain capacity to its limits.

Every time I come through Edinburgh I visit OSP, and it has become something of a pilgrimage site for me, to which I feel the need to return from time to time for renewal. Something extremely special and fundamental to my life was born there in the cool, dark interior. To enter the church on these rare visits, is to relive these beginnings again and remind me what sent me off on this path which I try to follow.

MONEY, MONEY, MONEY

NICK ADAMS ARGUES THAT
MONEY AND SPIRITUALITY
SHOULD NOT BE SEPARATED

Christians in Britain rarely discuss money. Deep down, we know that spending money is a spiritual issue. We know this because Jesus happily talked about money, and it's not too wild to imagine that money might have come up in conversation with the tax collectors with whom he dined. Indeed Jesus was notorious for dining with people whose sources of income were deeply unrespectable.

But if we know it deep down, we live in a world which casually misleads us about money. The surrounding culture believes in 'spirituality', to be sure. People might be a bit woolly about what this is. They might be rather irritated at the suggestion that it has something to do with God, rather than more manageable things like self-actualisation or getting in touch with one's inner self. But they would find it utterly preposterous that spirituality has anything to do with money. No, no, they say, shaking their heads vigorously. Money is bound up with *materialism*, silly! Spirituality, they insist, is the opposite of all that...

Well, the trouble with Christians is that we know about the Incarnation. It is difficult to imagine God being more materialist than that. And nearly all Jesus' teachings about the Kingdom of God are outrageously opulent: it's a matter of feasting, drinking and celebrating. Because of the incarnation, everything material potentially has the highest spiritual significance. 'You cannot serve both God and money' (Matt 6.24). This is not because serving God is spiritual, and serving money is material. It is because both are spiritual *and* material. Money is a spiritual issue for Christians, and how we use it expresses not primarily our relation to earthly goods, but our relation to God. This is a great relief. Our lives, so entangled with money, would be very confusing if money had nothing to do with worship.

Stewardship expresses the Incarnation. It reflects our life together as the body of Christ. Like the world, Jesus is a gift to us. We are part of that gift, because we are part of the body of Christ. We are gifts to each other, and to the world. We give these gifts back to God, not

because we don't want them, but because they are all that we have and all that we are. That's why it is important that our giving represents us.

Old Saint Paul's is blessed with many gifts. We have received very generously from past generations, who built our church, developed our liturgy, and bequeathed our financial endowments. We continue to give to and receive from each other in the work we do for our church, fulfilling duties before, during and after services, serving on committees, encouraging each other in our life together. We want to continue that tradition of generosity, so that future generations will receive our gifts in turn, by investing in the things we do well.

The Vestry has identified four areas where money we spend now will build a firm foundation for the future of Old Saint Paul's. They are ministry, music, children and buildings. Ministry is at the heart of our tradition, and recent increases in pension costs mean we need to raise our income in order to fulfil our financial duties. Music is one of the most attractive features of our church, and



already we have benefited from our new organ scholar. Children are vital to any organisation that looks towards future generations. Not only are we already seeing a renewal of energy made possible by our new children's worker, but the children's choir is growing. It is excellent to see that the flourishing of children's work and the choir are linked. Our buildings have had their five-yearly inspection, and we want to be eligible for grants towards their upkeep. If we can show we have taken good care of our buildings, we may receive grants towards more costly work.

Our costs have risen. Our income has fallen. Pensions, insurance, utilities: all have risen in the last few years. Gift-Aid is dropping: we'll lose 3p in every pound given by tax-payers. Congregational giving has in many cases remained static for the last seven years, or even longer. At the moment, we're making ends meet by using our financial reserves. That's money given by previous generations of our congregation, and we should surely be using this money to invest in projects, not plug the shortfall in income.

Now is the time to renew our commitment to the future of our common work.

Nick Adams is Senior Lecturer in Theology and Ethics at New College and the Convenor of the Stewardship Group

STEWARDSHIP AND VOCATION

MATT REES EXPLORES THE CONNECTION BETWEEN STEWARDSHIP AND VOCATION IN HIS JOURNEY TO BECOME A PRIEST

Although I was only part of the Old St Paul's community for a relatively short length of time (compared to some of you!), my time with you left a lasting impression on me. It was during that time that I began seriously to explore my vocation to the priesthood and I was (and am!) appreciative of the support of the church and of Father Ian particularly.

I left Edinburgh in 2001 to begin my training for ordination in Oxford. I was ordained Deacon in 2003 and priested the following year. Before I was ordained I met with my sponsoring Bishop (the Bishop of Oxford) to discuss the possibility of starting what has come to be called a 'fresh expression' of church in the city. To cut a long story short this was eventually agreed and whilst serving my title I also began 'Home' - a new Christian community that is looking to create patterns of prayer and spiritual formation in such a way as to serve and connect with those who are spiritually seeking but not able to connect with church as they know it. Four years have now passed and I am still leading this new church in Oxford.

I believe this story relates directly to the theme of stewardship, the need to use wisely what we have been given by God - time, talents or money. In so doing we not only glorify God but become most fully alive - we become who we are meant to be. This goes not just for individuals but for communities as well.

People have often asked me about my 'call' to the ministry. Normally they expect some sort of dramatic story involving an angelic visitation or something! But it wasn't like that for me (and I suspect it's not often like that for many people).

The key thing for me was reading the parable of the talents and looking at it with new eyes. What's interesting to note about the story is that the master didn't leave detailed instructions with the servants as to how they were to use or invest their talents or as it is sometimes translated 'bags of gold'. He simply invests in them and goes on his journey.

To me this says something very important about stewardship and vocation. God has invested in us and he expects us to use our imagination and creativity to multiply his investment. God doesn't normally leave us with detailed instruc-



Matt Rees with his wife Pippa and his daughter Lily-Anne

tions as to what he wants us to do. We need to look within ourselves to discover prayerfully who we are and what gifts, dreams, abilities and resources God has invested in us. What makes us tick? What excites us and makes our hearts beat faster?

For me, as I began to ask these questions, I started to see a real passion for God's church and a desire to discover ways to make it accessible to the world around us. This led me to explore ordination as a way to express this passion. It all seemed very logical and 'uninspired'! There was no writing on the wall or angelic visitation. I simply wanted to work out what God had worked in.

I pray for the Old St Paul's community as you engage with the same task - seeking to invest what God has given you as a church to gain the maximum return for his praise and the benefit of others.

A former member of OSP, Matt is a priest in the Diocese of Oxford, where he leads a church initiative called 'Home'



CANTERBURY TALES

DUNCAN PATON TELLS US HIS EXPERIENCES OF PALESTRINA, LIFE AS A LAY CLERK AT CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL AND WHAT HE MISSES ABOUT OSP

The Italian city of Palestrina was the destination for my first tour with Canterbury Cathedral choir just six weeks after joining the choir. We were invited there to take part in the two-week long Palestrina Early Music Festival in a programme that included prestigious choirs based in England such as the Gabrieli Consort and the Tallis Scholars.

Palestrina itself is a beautiful city near Rome famous as the birthplace of the peerless 16th century composer, home to some amazing Roman ruins, and so soaked in history that at times it was like visiting the past. In particular, the hotel we stayed in seemed preserved in the aspic of the 1970s – complete with rude staff, unappetising food (in Italy!) and garish interior design! The programme for our concert, in ‘coals to Newcastle’ fashion, was all works by Palestrina in the first half before unleashing the full range and diversity of 16th century polyphony in the second half with works by the other great masters: Byrd, Tallis, Victoria and Lassus. Scholarly applause from the cognoscenti was swelled with the typically Italian warmth and generosity of the rest of the sell-out crowd in repeated requests for encores and even a standing ovation!

Life as a lay clerk in Canterbury Cathedral is not all concert tours and horrid hotels however – normal service has resumed this week after our half term break. My duties are to sing evensong every day (except Thursday which is sung by the boys alone) as well as the Cathedral Eucharist on Sunday. The volume of music that we sing is huge: music is never repeated during a term (except for the responses which change every week) and the majority of repertoire so far has been new to me. The choir also sings the appointed psalms for the day which means that often there can be 70 or more verses to lots of different chants. It is all the more remarkable that this volume of music is rehearsed by Dr Flood with the full choir for only ten minutes before evensong on most days of the week.

The standard of the boys is particularly high this year (it was announced on Sunday that one of our trebles has just won Choirboy of the Year 2007) and that is testament to the dedication, enthusiasm and expert training that Dr Flood gives the boys. It is a great pleasure and privilege to sing with the choir and humbling to remember that previous Alto lay clerks in Canterbury Cathedral include Alfred Deller and Thomas Tallis.



Canterbury itself is an attractive medieval town with many ancient buildings and narrow, winding streets lending it an old-fashioned charm. Despite this slightly dusty description, it also has youthful vibrancy thanks to the many thousands of students who study at the University of Kent and Canterbury Christ Church University. Because of this, perhaps the best Scottish comparison for Canterbury would be St Andrews – although it can't compete with the biting North Sea wind St Andrews has to offer!

Since I have arrived here, I have been renting a flat just outside precincts with a stunning view of the West front of the Cathedral and I have also recently started working for the University of Kent during the day. After moving around so much in the past two years, I hope that I will be able to settle here in the medium term but I know I am a big city person at heart. I really miss the grandeur, scale and importance of Edinburgh and have a sense of being transplanted from Scotland into this far-flung corner of England.

The other things I really miss are the people, music and worship at Old Saint Paul's which was my home for ten years and will always have a massive place in my heart. You can all be assured that OSP is often in my prayers in the Mother Church (especially given the opportunities when one is contractually obliged to attend church seven times a week!).

The style of worship at Canterbury Cathedral strikes a very good balance between being welcoming to the large number of visitors and setting a 'gold standard' of Cathedral worship but I do find myself craving real Anglo-Catholic worship. When I was a lay clerk at Peterborough Cathedral, I managed to slip away to London once a term for High Mass and E&B in All Saints, Margaret Street and I hope to continue this tradition. After all, it's the second best thing to coming back to OSP!

SOUNDS OF MUSIC

JOHN KITCHEN REPORTS ON THE CHALLENGES AND REWARDS OF BEING DIRECTOR OF MUSIC AT OLD SAINT PAUL'S

In my experience, most church musicians undertake their duties seriously and conscientiously, and so it is disheartening when one hears all-too-common stories of choirs being disbanded or disintegrating when clergy and congregations don't appreciate the music they are being offered. Not so in Old Saint Paul's! One of the great joys of working as a musician here is the sure knowledge that one's efforts are truly valued. Never a Sunday passes but people come up to me and say that they liked this or that piece of music or how much the music adds to the entire liturgical experience; and people listen properly to the organ music, not treating it merely as aural wallpaper during which to chat and gossip.

However, keeping a church choir together these days is no mean feat, and we are all aware that our choir is at times smaller than we would like. When choir members move away from Edinburgh, as some did around Easter this year, it is becoming increasingly difficult, despite one's best efforts, to replace them. Potential singers are always extremely busy people; changing work patterns, particularly on Sundays, further complicate the issue. Also, as far as children and younger singers are concerned, I believe that the growth of youth choirs – a very good thing in itself – is a factor. Whereas 15–20 years ago eager young singers joined church choirs, now they tend to join youth or junior choirs. A weekly rehearsal (perhaps on Saturday mornings when their parents go off to the supermarket) followed by a series of concerts is less of a commitment, and superficially more of an attraction, than turning up week in, week out, for evening rehearsals and two Sunday services.

Over the past couple of years our choir has been boosted for Evensong by a number of singers, mostly students, who are happy to commit themselves to attend on Sunday evenings because they love the music and liturgy. (If you don't attend Evensong, and Benediction, you should try it; it is very beautiful.) However, these singers have paid Sunday morning duties in other churches, either as organists or singers, and so cannot sing for us regularly at Mass. We habitually have a larger choir for Evensong than for Mass.

Recently, the number of Edinburgh city-centre churches offering organ and choral scholarships has increased quite considerably. With this in mind and in an attempt to maintain the standard and nature of the music to which we have become accustomed, the Vestry of OSP



OSP Director of Music
John Kitchen and Organ
Scholar Calum Robertson



decided to follow suit and generously voted to fund an organ scholarship and four choral scholarships. Readers will know that our organ scholar, Calum Robertson, joined us in July, and he has already contributed much to the musical life of the church. (His hymn-accompaniments, I might add, are already reflecting something of the characteristic OSP 'house style'.)

At the time of writing we have awarded two choral scholarships: to Laura Reading (soprano) and to Alan Campbell (bass). The appointment of a tenor choral scholar is a pressing matter, because James Hutchinson (the longest-serving member of the choir) is often our sole tenor, and if he has to miss a service for any reason, we simply have no tenors. Recruiting tenors is always difficult, but we are not alone here; apparently Winchester Cathedral recently advertised for a tenor lay-clerk and received no applications at all. We continue to seek a suitable candidate.

When it became clear some years ago that maintaining an adequate treble line of boys and girls had become almost impossible, we included female sopranos for the first time, but we also made a commitment to retain children's voices, at least for some services. Since then, Kath Jourdan has done excellent work in her role as Junior Chorister trainer. At present the Junior Choristers take their place in the choir every few weeks, and it is hoped over time to increase the frequency of these appearances. Training young singers requires a large investment of time and commitment (something which Les spent untold hours doing over many years); but we feel that is essential to train young singers, who we hope will become future adult members.

All in all, then, the choir is in good spirits and recruitment of new members is happening slowly but surely. It is always pleasant too when former members return to sing from time to time, as they are welcome to do. I would like to record my thanks to our choir members, junior and senior, to Kath and to Calum, for their commitment and dedication; without it, there's not much I can do. We are privileged to be making music in Old Saint Paul's!

John Kitchen is Director of Music at OSP



NOTES FROM IRELAND

FORMER CHOIR MEMBER RICHARD BLOOMFIELD GIVES AN UPDATE ON HIS NEW PLACE IN THE CHOIR AT DUBLIN'S CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL



Greetings from across the Irish Sea. It's been about six months now since I packed up my life in boxes and moved to live in Dublin. Fresh from enjoying my 12th Easter Sunday at Old Saint Paul's, I arrived here in Ireland's capital in mid April with little more than a suitcase of clothes, and the promise of a part-time singing job in Christ Church Cathedral. I knew almost nobody, had nowhere to live, and (most distressingly) no means of supporting myself. The €120 a week stipend from the cathedral was not going to keep me in house and home for very long - not with the cost of housing in Dublin being about 30-40% more expensive than Edinburgh.

Luckily, however, I was able to get myself sorted quite quickly. And after only 3 nights in a cheap hotel, I had found a room in a shared house, and had also been offered the first of many job interviews. The cathedral people also rallied around with offers of friendship and support, and as such, I quickly felt welcome in my new adoptive home.

Life now is hectic but very enjoyable. The Christ Church choir sing five services each week: Evensong on Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday; and Eucharist and Evensong on Sunday. And while that's fewer services than some other cathedrals, it's still quite a large commitment. Once you sum up all the time taken for rehearsals, services, and an hour or two at home learning notes, it works out at about 15 hours effort a week. That's quite a lot, on top of a regular day job, so it's a rather fortuitous that I enjoy singing so much.

"The cathedral people also rallied around with offers of friendship and support, and as such, I quickly felt welcome in my new adoptive home."

The cathedral has two choirs: the regular cathedral choir of 20 adult 'Lay Vicars Choral', and a separate girls choir who mainly sing on Wednesdays. And on top of our regular weekly duties, we also do quite a few concerts, as well as occasional broadcasts and tours. Indeed, on Sunday 9th December we're due to be singing Choral Evensong at 4.00pm on BBC Radio 3.

Also this term, still to come before Christmas, we have three extra services, two concerts, five carol services, and the release of a brand-new DVD of music for Advent. Sadly I don't appear on it, as it was filmed some time ago before I arrived, but I believe they've left in a bit where one of the acolytes falls over during the procession, so I'm rather looking forward to seeing it.

Quite apart from the singing, I've also been really lucky in getting a good 'day job', working in the IT department of the local electricity company. The work's interesting, the people are great, and the office is only 10 minutes walk from the cathedral (so it's handy for getting to Evensong). I'm also getting to know more people in the city (albeit mostly church music people), and have recently started deputising at Dublin's other Anglican cathedral, St Patrick's, on the odd occasion when they need an extra singer.

Of course, even with things going so well over here, I still miss Edinburgh and Old Saint Paul's very much. And I look forward to being able to visit just after Christmas, when my former colleague in the tenor line James is due to get married. But until then, take care and "go mbeannaí Dia duit".

TRAVELS IN CHRISTIAN ASIA

ELIZABETH KOEPPING SHARES SOME OF HER EXPERIENCES MEETING WITH CHRISTIANS IN KOREA, BURMA, THAILAND AND TAIWAN



“It has been a brilliant year to see just what the churches in Asia are doing.”

This year, various things have kept me away from regular OSP attendance: laziness, respiratory problems, writing. But there is a more pious reason I'd like to share – might as well make use of a decent excuse! – in that I've been travelling to Christian communities, seminaries and so on in various countries of East and SE Asia, and not my usual trips to critique the activities of the Anglican church in Malaysia. As I teach and research on Christianity in Asia and have up to fifteen students from there each year, the visits were all facilitated by former students.

March found me in Seoul, Korea, where around 30% are Christian, the majority of Protestants being Presbyterian. Lecturing in two universities and several Presbyterian seminaries representing some of the 120 different version of Korean Presbyterianism was a really interesting experience, especially as three former students translated my lectures, and I could spend fun time with one of them. Preaching to two English languages congregations in a conservative Presbyterian church (North Uist might give you an idea) was challenging beforehand and enjoyable to do, the experience being rather tarnished afterwards by the aggressive demand from the Southern Baptist pastor to produce my 'Statement of Faith' and defend my orthodoxy. Visiting the Anglican University there, Sungkonghae, was a relaxing pleasure, and it was a delight to attend Communion in the Italianate Anglican Cathedral!

June meant Myanmar-Burma and Thailand. Another former student is in Yangon, so I was able through him to teach in the Myanmar Institute of Theology, an interdenominational though largely Baptist centre for all Protestant trainees who have done basic theology elsewhere. I also went to the fledgling and hand-built seminary which serves mainly Chin students starting off their theological studies – arriving in their first week meant I was dragooned into giving their start of year lecture. Apart from the paucity of their library and the calm passion for study of all the students there, the aroma of the freshly grown and milled rice for lunch remains with me!

The Anglican seminary then claimed me for two days of talking and, again, really exciting work with the students. Holy Cross wants to upgrade the training of two teaching staff to replace two soon to retire, and would like to send them to Edinburgh. Money is the problem in a country where even before the price hikes of this summer, the cost of a bag of rice was \$27 and the average income of the waged \$20 a month. I had planned to do the second part of the teaching for the Anglicans at the beginning of December, and while I've finally had an email from there, I still have to see if it is feasible and useful.

Thailand, apart from a conference in Chiang Mai, took me to two Church of Thailand missions with another former student. The medical mission on the Burmese border, with a hospital and village outreach, has an increasing



stream of refugees through the porous border. In the other community I visited most are Christian, the women being rather more involved in day to day running of the church than the men. As in Burma, a majority of Thai Christians come from minorities.

Taiwan in August meant a trip round the island, which earns its former name of Formosa, to visit the Aboriginal Seminary (2% of Taiwan's people are non-Chinese aboriginal) and then a social service community started by the church but now independent which runs a hotel and hot springs and gives meaningful employment and training to aboriginal people who, as elsewhere, are currently plagued with problems stemming from alcohol, serious family breakdown and drugs.

A visit to the southern port of Kailiung enabled me to attend a march celebrating the Presbyterian church's part in opposing the KMT dictatorship in 1977. Time in Tainan, the core of Chinese custom which has faded on the mainland, also enabled a visit to Pastor Rachel Hsui, running the most amazingly integrated 'church without walls' Christian congregation I have come across anywhere. Back in Taipei, I spent one day working with pastors and mission workers and another running a 'Women and the Church' day which turned into a fascinating discussion during the afternoon on violence against women. Interestingly, ministers are always sacked for adultery but never for hitting their wives. Taipei too allows me to make contact with the Anglican Church, here represented by the American Episcopal Church.

Add all this to teaching, a good deal of supervising students here, and two teaching trips to Pittsburg and Calgary, and I guess spending some Sunday mornings doing nothing (or rolling from bed at 7.50 for 8am at Christ Church Morningside) is rather reasonable! But it has been a brilliant year to see just what the churches in Asia are doing, and I would be glad to share more.

Elizabeth Koeppling is Lecturer in World Christianity at New College



OLIVE ORISSA



JAGAT SANTRA SENDS AN UPDATE FROM THE OLIVE BRANCH PROJECT IN INDIA

I am happy to write that OLIVE's new home, a small centre to facilitate camps, training classes and our office work, is complete. This building has one big room and two small rooms. It will be ideal for small training classes, meetings, workshops and for our office.

We all are really very pleased that we have got this facility but we still have to furnish it and build a boundary wall to secure it. We are also trying to buy a second-hand tractor to help a large number of small farmers and at the same time earn some income to pay for our operational costs; we do not have any regular funding. Small and marginal farmers who use bullocks for farming now find that to maintain two bullocks for the whole year is becoming increasingly costly and counter productive.

Two girls are teaching their own village children. Without our help these children will not attend school regularly and their parents will use them to work in the field. We want to hold awareness and training programmes on the harmful effects of chewing tobacco (Pan and tobacco-toothpaste) and about HIV infection. Malaria and malnutrition are other two big problems in this part of India. We want to teach people its causes and what solutions are available. In the last four years with the money sent from Old St Paul's Church we have been providing doctors' help, medicine, preventive health care and counselling to thousands of people in villages.

Soon behalf of OLIVE and our beneficiaries we send our heartfelt thanks to you. Over the last ten months our trust Secretary was busy in the building work, the well and marking of the boundary. We are hoping that some of our donor friends from Old St Paul's will visit Orissa, see the new centre and meet many of our members and beneficiaries. Though Orissa is a backward and poor state there are many beautiful places to see. We will be happy to know when you can come.

BOOK REVIEWS

FIND OUT WHAT MEMBERS OF OLD SAINT PAUL'S HAVE BEEN READING...

Sovereign by CJ Sanson

Blood in the Water by Gillian Galbraith

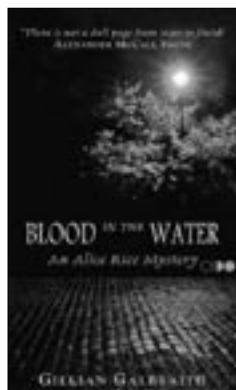
Evening in the Palace of Reason by James Gaines

Reviewed by Alastair Learmont

Sovereign is the third in CJ Sanson's excellent Shardrake series. It is 1541 and Mathew Shardrake, barrister of Lincoln's Inn, is sent to York on the personal instructions of Archbishop Cranmer. In his legal capacity, Shardrake is to attend on the King's Progress and assist with the processing of petitions by his humble subjects. It is not so long since the rebellion in the North – the so called Pilgrimage of Grace – and Henry is anxious to stamp out any embers of revolt for good. But Cranmer, as mighty a patron as Cromwell before him, charges Shardrake with a special mission, to return a political prisoner from York Castle to the Tower Of London, alive. Sanson brilliantly evokes a bustling medieval York, rent with suspicion, fear and treason (shh!).

To the Shardrake series, he brings both historical passion and legal interest. And as a history scholar and former solicitor he is admirably qualified to do so. Such is his passion for his subject that he quickly draws the reader in – it really doesn't matter that you didn't "do" the Tudors at school. Yes, there *was* complicated faction fighting in the court of Henry VIII but this is the stuff of drama and an ideal backdrop for a detective story. The reader soon discovers who seeks to gain and by how much. This is a story about tyranny, dynastic succession and adultery - although we never know for sure. It is far more than a conventional crime novel.

Gillian Galbraith also brings her legal knowledge to her debut crime novel *Blood in the Water*. Bravely, she introduces us to DS Alice Rice, in an Edinburgh already populated by Rebus and Skinner. There is no shortage of murders here. The locations are familiar (to us): the Dean Bridge, Muirhouse, Merchiston, the New Town. The list of victims is endless, almost. Independent Alice – pretty, independent, unhappy in love – has to work out the common link. Whilst Sanson so successfully – through his passion for history – draws the reader in, I fear that Galbraith may exclude. To some of us legal terminology may be painfully, boringly familiar, to others it is a foreign country. And what of the setting? For we live in a magical city. Other crime writers have successfully exploited Edinburgh, Venice, Florence, indeed



York. A real test here is whether the non-native can make sense of and enjoy the location. A map (cf the Shardrake books) and a glossary are not such bad ideas. As a heroine, Alice is low key. Perhaps we'll get to know her more – there are more novels planned. But a good read.

Evening in the Palace of Reason by James Gaines is a detective book, in a way. In 1747, the young Frederick the Great, challenges the sixty two year old JS Bach ("old Bach") to compose a three part, then a six part fugue on an almost impossible theme. The latter proved an immense task but has come down to us in what we know as the Musical Offering. What exactly was Bach up to? This is the question that Gaines seeks to answer. Nobody can doubt Gaines' passion, indeed reverence for Bach but much of the book is by way of scene setting (at least half of it). This is a popular history and Gaines self consciously sets out to make things "accessible" for the reader. Simple passion alone, which can say everything, without patronising the reader, is not enough. His matey- "this-is-boring-but-I've-almost-finished-folks" - tone grates but in the end the story is compelling. If a measure of a popular book is to make the reader read further, then Gaines succeeds.

Gravity by Tess Gerritsen

Reviewd by Ginger Franklin

Well, I set myself to read a serious book: *China, a New History* by John King Fairbank and Merle Goldman- a "rich and fascinating" telling of China's "turbulent, 4,000-year story in a single volume".

I'm sure it is – or will be – but before I started it I picked up *Gravity* by Tess Gerritsen. This is not a weighty physics tome, but an absolutely gripping thriller. Somebody remarked recently that I looked tired – perhaps nothing new – but I had to admit to having been up most of the night reading this book. No stranger to lack of discipline, I am at my worst with a good book...

The author, a successful internist, retired to raise her children and concentrate on her writing. I, for one, am glad she did. Gerritsen writes fantastic stories of medical suspense and science fiction. Look out also for *Harvest*, *Bloodstream* and *Life Support* or any of her more recent books. Earlier books than these are fine (isn't that a damning word?) – quick reads, with little or no impact,

MORE BOOK REVIEWS...

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

but once Gerritsen got the hang of it she started and has continued to write absolutely convincing books that scare you for all the right reasons!

Gravity? The adventure of a lifetime, to study living beings in space on the International Space Station, turns into a nightmare beyond imagining for a young doctor, when a culture of single-celled organisms begin to regenerate out of control and infect the space station crew with agonising and deadly results.

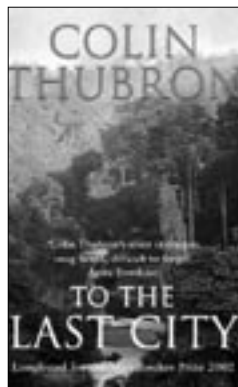
Don't waste time looking for more in this review – go buy the book and read it. Be sure to calculate the price of electricity in its purchase – you will be unable to put this book down. It is, as you might have guessed, a real 'red-eye' book.

The Mists of Avalon by Marion Zimmer Bradley

Reviewed by Mhairiad Robertson

The *Mists of Avalon*, a sustained evocation of the Arthurian myth, is something of a masterpiece and an impressive achievement. To read it is to be spellbound. A vast novel, at just over 1000 pages, it retells the story of Arthur with the focus on the women, particularly Morgaine, Arthur's half-sister. More commonly demonized as a wicked sorceress, she is portrayed as a complex woman and dedicated priestess of the Goddess of Avalon, possessor of the Sight, protector of the Pattern, but destined to play a tragic role in the unfolding events. The old religion, defended and served by the high priestess and maidens of Avalon and by druidic tradition, venerates the cycles of the seasons, birth and death, growth and fruition, and protects the High King of Camelot, his people and the land. All this is under threat from the hostile new religion of the Christ with its emphasis on sin and personal salvation and its determination to destroy the cult of the Goddess. Christianity holds sway in Glastonbury, but on another level of reality Avalon occupies the same space. To cross to Avalon can only be accomplished by parting the 'mists' which now engulf it, and this requires the old magic.

Arthur, the young king, stands between the two worlds. He comes from a long line of high priestesses, but now must also live in the world of



power, battle, treachery and the new Christianity, if he is to survive as king. The two worlds collide when, in the Beltane Rites, Arthur, as Horned King of the Forest, is unwittingly mated in the Sacred Marriage with his half-sister Morgaine. The issue of this union brings ruin to Camelot.

Marion Bradley's extraordinary achievement is to flesh out these characters of myth with new life and to evoke the archaic beauty and vitality of the Old Religion and the tragic destiny of those caught between the two ways of understanding the world. It is a deeply absorbing and intensely wrought novel, but never trite or sentimental. The quality of narrative and description, especially the evocation of the magical elements, are both enchanting and yet convincing, and we are left with a desolate wish that something of the Goddess could have survived to embody and protect the green world.

Not a book to dip into. Beware, if it casts its spell you will have to retreat from the mundane 21st century world until reluctantly you are released from the enchantment on the final page.

To the Last City by Colin Thubron

Reviewed by Maisie Orr

Colin Thubron is a travel writer whose writing I admire. I recently discovered that he also writes novels. This book I would call a Travel-Novel. It takes place in the Land of the Incas.

A group of people unknown to each other set off with a guide and with porters who look after the luggage, the horses, pitch tents and cook. Easy going, you might think. Not a bit of it. The going can be uphill, downhill, flat marshy land, one minute on horse, the next on foot. A few couples, a few singles and one young man, a Spaniard studying for the priesthood. Most of the group are there on holiday but the young Spaniard is there to atone to a race now dead for what his forebears carried out long ago. The stealing and killing that the Spanish did haunt him daily.

The others don't have this burden to carry but things do happen to remind all of the bits of history they may have heard and which perhaps brought them on this journey to see for themselves.

I cannot promise you a laugh but it is a wonderful tale of human beings and how they cope, or not, with the unexpected. Colin Thubron does not forget to bring alive the country of the Incas which surrounds them as they travel.



The Big House by Helena McEwen

Reviewed by Carrie Upton

In a few short months, Elizabeth experiences the deaths of her brother James and her sister Kitty. She returns to the family mansion where the physicality of the house and its gardens enable her to remember her childhood. This is not a sentimental novel, but a poignant account of life in a privileged family where the children see through the pretence and demands of social etiquette to the realities of love, loneliness and the sheer beauty of being alive together in the same place at the same time. It is more than the retelling of family truths: McEwen enables her readers to reconnect with irrational dark monsters and awesome delights of her own childhood.

George Mackay Brown - A Life by Maggie Fergusson

Reviewed by Margot Alexander

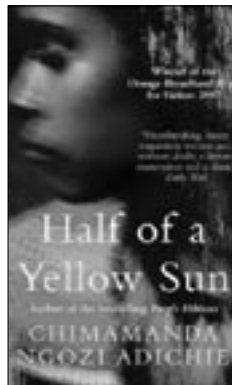
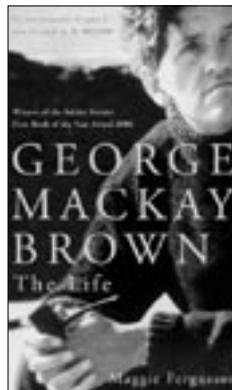
Looking over my list of books read so far this year I hear a voice saying, "What was THAT about?" However, among the forgettable bling, three semi-precious stones and one pearl stand out. The three are *Landscape and Memory* by Simon Schama, *White Mughals* and *The Last Mughals* both by William Dalrymple. No, I'm not going to review all of them, but only the pearl – the biography of the Orcadian author and poet, George Mackay Brown.

I could cheat and quote all thirteen literary reviews on the flyleaf, but one shall suffice – that of Margaret Drabble in *The Times Literary Supplement*: "The poet and his landscape are evoked with dignity and grace, as are his depressions, his drinking pattern and his literary friendships. The sense of place in this book, as in Mackay Brown's work, is very strong and strangely uplifting." This, more or less, says it all.

The book is about Brown's childhood, his schooldays, his six years in Edinburgh where he found himself unable to write, and his return to Orkney where he remained, a poet rooted in his landscape, letting his imagination travel in time and space – only one visit to London, no book signings or public performances of his work.

However, there is more. Even the Index reads like a "Who's Who?" of Scottish literature. One revelation, in Edinburgh University Library after his death, was the opening of a sealed package containing twenty years' worth of letters from Brown to Stella Cartwright, ("Rose Street Muse") telling an extraordinary love story. One nugget – an ambiguous sign in one of Rose Street's thirteen pubs – "Women Not Supplied".

Even if you do not read this biography, try to read some of Mackay Brown's own works.

**Half a Yellow Sun** by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

By Pam Gilchrist

Half a yellow sun is an amazing novel, and it is no wonder that it won the Orange Broadband Prize for Fiction 2007.

The book, based on the Nigeria-Biafra War of 1967-70, illuminates conflict in Africa in a new and compelling way. Its author is young (born 1977), Nigerian, and committed to living in Africa. She grew up in Nsukka, one of the main locations in the novel. She describes African university life from the inside, through her characters Odenigbo, his beautiful partner Olanna, and the expatriate Briton Richard, who aspires to identify himself completely with Biafran nationhood. Odenigbo's house is the meeting place where lecturers and professors discuss politics, observed through the eyes of his new houseboy Ugwu. The humour which pervades the book is first displayed in Ugwu's attempts, as a village boy, to adapt to the well-appointed house.

When questioned what led her to write this novel, Adichie replied that she wanted to write a book about love and war, because she grew up in the shadow of Biafra, because she lost both grandfathers in the Nigeria-Biafra War, because many of the issues which led to the war remain unresolved in Nigeria today, and because she never wants to forget. The book is memorable in that it portrays politics and the brutality of war through characters who engage our emotions and come across as complex and entirely credible.

Istanbul, Memories of a City by Orhan Pamuk translated from Turkish by Maureen Freely

Reviewed by Jennifer Scarce

Constantinople and Istanbul – names of the glittering metropolis which strategically and dramatically bestrides the Bosphorus to link European and Asian Turkey - former capital of the two empires of the Byzantines and Ottoman Turks from the 4th to early 20th centuries. The great city still dominates the economic, commercial and cultural life of modern Turkey. Incomparable historical monuments - the great church of



MORE BOOK REVIEWS...

Aghia Sophia, the Topkapi Palace of the Ottoman sultans, the minarets and domes of the Blue mosque, are great tourist attractions. Fortified and nourished by excellent hotels and restaurants, the visitor is also overwhelmed by guidebooks of varying degrees of erudition, maps, plans, post-cards all to ensure that no stone is left unseen.

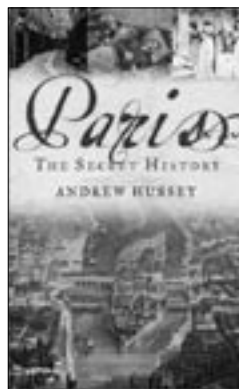
A refreshing antidote to all this worthy literature is Orhan Pamuk's (Nobel Prizewinner for Literature 2006) meticulously researched and sensitive interpretation of his city through Turkish eyes. Here he moves from childhood through school and university to adulthood gradually revealing the intricacies of Turkish family life, wandering through little known streets full of the decayed mansions of the former Ottoman elite all the time aware of the dilemma of Istanbul caught between its imperial past and the challenge of finding a role in modern Turkey. Read his book from cover to cover or browse at will – you will not be disappointed.

Paris: The Secret History by Andrew Hussey

Reviewed by John Dale

Paris - City of Light, magical, romantic, glamorous... and sordid, dirty, with a history of bloodshed and violence that few, if any, other European capital city can come close to matching. Hussey paints a picture of this wonderful city, warts and all, from pre-Roman times to the car-burning riots of 2005. Starting with the early aspiration of medieval Paris to overtake Rome as the centre of Western civilisation, he traces the repeated declines and resurgence of a city steeped in culture and mayhem – the St Bartholomew's Day massacre, the artistic excesses of the Sun King's reign, the horrors of the Revolution and of the Commune, the glories of Belle Epoque, Picasso and the vibrant Left Bank culture of the inter-war years, the bloody aftermath of liberation in 1945 and the terror of 1961 when scores of slaughtered Algerians were thrown into the Seine.

Now in artistic decline, with the banlieus seething with the discontent of the dispossessed, Paris remains an enigma and this book, at times scurrilous, always entertaining, will appeal to anyone with an interest in our nearest European neighbour.



JESUS FOR THE NON-RELIGIOUS

BISHOP JACK SPONG VISITED EDINBURGH IN OCTOBER TO PRESENT HIS CONTROVERSIAL VIEWS ON THE HISTORICAL JESUS. JUSTIN REYNOLDS OFFERS HIS THOUGHTS.

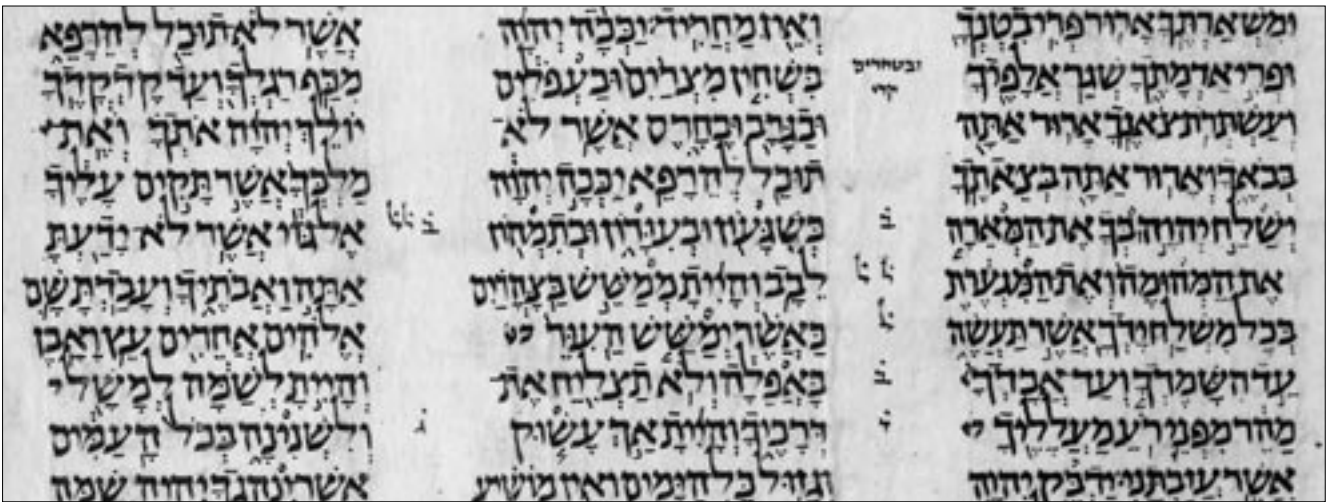
It isn't often that I'm handed a Biblical tract warning of my perilous standing before God when I'm about to enter a meeting held in a church, which is to be addressed by a Bishop. But Jack Spong is no ordinary Bishop. Over the past couple of decades he has written a series of books and globetrotted continents arguing for wholesale revision of the most fundamental tenets of the Christian faith. The provocative nature of his message for many Christians is reflected in his books' titles, which include 'The Sins of Scripture', 'Resurrection: Myth or Reality' and 'Born of a Woman: A Bishop Rethinks the Virgin Birth'. On Thursday 18th October Kate and I went along to St Mark's Unitarian Church, Edinburgh, to hear Bishop Jack discuss his most recent publication, 'Jesus for the Non-Religious', picking up the tract as we entered.

Introduced by his good friend and fellow iconoclast, Richard Holloway, the Bishop spoke on a theme central to much of his work: the importance of our understanding correctly the historical context in which the Gospel narratives were written. Only then can we make sense of who Jesus really was, and why he should matter to us.

Bishop Jack stressed that the first century Jewish worldview was in many respects alien to our own. It was steeped in the history, stories, poetry and prophecies of the Hebrew scriptures, and an apocalyptic sense of the imminence of the coming of a Messiah who would drive out the Roman occupiers and reunite Israel.

The Jews invested contemporary events with meaning by interpreting them in the light of scripture. An action was significant to the extent that it had a scriptural precedent and pointed forward to a fulfillment of prophecy. So when the followers of Jesus came to reflect on the meaning that his life held for them, they instinctively looked to the scriptures to provide them with the





imagery and language they needed to express its significance.

In the decades that followed Jesus' death the narrative of his life was embellished with mythological images and tropes drawn from the stories of the patriarchs and the prophets, and the poetry of the Psalms. For example, the Bishop argued, Jesus wasn't really born in Bethlehem, but his birth story was situated there because scripture said that Messiah would come from the city of David. The virgin birth was a misinterpretation of verses drawn from Isaiah 7. The feeding of the 5,000 was a story inspired by falling of manna from heaven recounted in the Torah. The empty tomb tradition had its precedent in Jonah's emergence after three days in the belly of the whale. And so on.

For Bishop Spong very little in the Gospels can be taken as straightforward history, in the sense of reporting what really happened. The early Jesus movement wasn't interested in that: they just wanted to communicate the significance of Jesus to their fellow Jews, and the accepted way of doing that was to cloak their hero's life in the garb of scriptural precedent. It was only late in the first century when Gentiles, with a different view of the value of myth, became dominant within the Jesus movement that the Gospels were interpreted as literal history.

All of this was described by Bishop Spong with eloquence and passion, and not a little dry humour. Speaking without notes for well over an hour he demonstrated a deep love and knowledge of scripture, and contemporary Biblical scholarship. However, as the pattern of the questions that the Bishop invited from the audience made clear, I wasn't the only one left wondering, if the Gospels are wholly mythological, precisely what it was about Jesus that inspired his followers to describe him in such exalted terms, and in many cases sacrifice their lives in his name. What exactly was the Good News they were trying to convey?

Here I thought the Bishop was unconvincing. He argued that Jesus was a 'God-intoxicated'

Using the Old Testament to decipher the meaning of the historical Jesus

prophet whose life embodied a fresh image of God, a compassionate, non-judgemental God more interested in people's hearts than their commitment to received dogmas.

To be fair to Spong, there was more to his conception of Jesus than I've space to relate here, but I thought his conception of Jesus seemed incommensurate to the movement that arose in his name. Many charismatic holy men walked the hills of Palestine in Jesus's day, and none had anywhere near his impact. And unfortunately for the Bishop the prevailing trend within the most recent New Testament scholarship favours the essential trustworthiness of the Gospel narratives as history. There are strong currents in favour of the view that, contra Spong, Jesus himself ensured that his life could be interpreted in the light of scripture by consciously drawing parallels with and fulfilling scriptural precedents in the course of his ministry. Certainly some mythologising took place after his death, but Jesus himself planted the seeds.

However, one doesn't need to agree with Bishop Spong's conclusions to learn from him and find his enthusiasm for the fascinating world of first century Palestine infectious.

Jack Spong, former Bishop of Newark

Justin Reynolds is a former OSP member now living in the Borders. He and his wife Kate still visit occasionally.



WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS...

OSP TREASURER NIGEL COOK DISCUSSES THE CHURCH'S FINANCES

At the Annual Meeting in 2006, I observed that annual reports were fine for explaining the preceding 12 months. And it can be more than tempting to push anything unusual to one side. "Oh, well, it's a one-off, without that we're okay". However, there are at least two fallacies there: first, unusual events have a habit of re-appearing with regularity; and second, it's possible shifting relationships won't be detected until too late.

So, I suggested that, in addition to doing our legal duty, we should also cast an eye over the longer-term trends. This might sound the alarm before any lasting damage results. It's like investigating whiffs of smoke to avoid waking up without a roof.

The graph demonstrates this very clearly. But, first a word about where our money comes from and what we do with it. The primary source of income should be the regular, committed giving of the congregation. After all, they're the members and supporters of the club, and ought to have an interest in preserving it. But, it should be about more than meeting the bills.

In recent years, giving by the congregation has hovered around 60% of total income (and for the last 5 years has been static). To keep things going, we are able to raise significant sums by letting out space when we don't require it; and our predecessors have left substantial reserves which provide a steady income from their investment.

The two largest demands on our resources are our clergy and our property. Each now accounts for close to 30% of total expenditure. Maintaining our clergy (and that's one only) involves stipend, pension contributions and housing; maintaining our property involves the cost of power, water, cleaning, maintenance, and insurance.

Next, each accounting for about 10% of expenditure, come the costs of our worship (choir, candles and incense, bread and wine, maintaining the organ and liturgical gear), and the quota payments we make to help with running the diocese and paying for the Bishop.

In the financial year just ended, the congregation contributed nearly £80,000; the four cost areas identified above consumed nearly £97,000. Our remaining expenditure (office, tithing, and other activities) came to a further £25,000. So,



the congregation paid for about two-thirds of its costs.

Now, to the interesting, and important, bit! The graph - please see Figure 1 - gives an overview of our finances for the last 10 years. The solid line records total expenditure, and the dashed line total income. The dash-dotted line shows congregational giving (included in the total income line). Not included is income or expenditure of our restricted funds, which were given for specific purposes. Two peaks in expenditure will be observed: re-wiring the church and damp-proofing in 2000, and repairs to Lauder House roof in 2004.

These aside, our expenditure level has increased from £108k in 1998 to £136k in 2007. How did that happen? There are several causes, all beyond our control:

- clergy stipends (set by General Synod) had progressively been falling behind, and now match those of the Church of England
- in 2004 pension costs more than doubled, to cope with a stock market crisis and increasing life expectancy
- over a similar period insurance premiums have risen by more than 50%
- the cost of power and water have increased at a similar rate

Over the same 10-year period, total income has increased from £108k to £132k. At 2% per year, the rate of growth is slower than for expenditure (2.7%). This is mainly due to giving not rising and lower investment income, partly through using reserves, partly because investment returns have generally been lower.

Putting all this together is very revealing. In the period up to 2003, total income generally

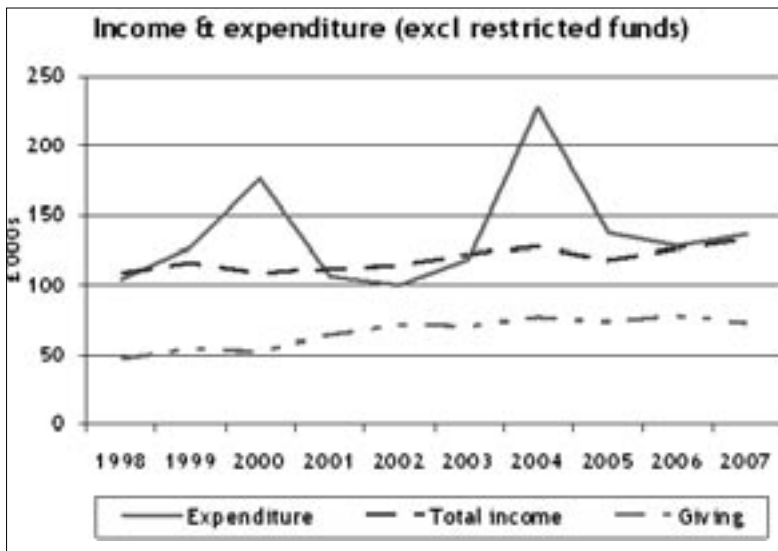


Figure 1

	2002	2007	ANNUAL RATE OF INCREASE
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	99,276	136,743	6.6%
TOTAL INCOME	113,355	132,061	3.1%
GIVING INCOME	70,615	72,260	0.5%

Figure 2

exceeded expenditure. This was aided by the last stewardship programme in 2001 – between 2000 and 2002 giving increased by 36%. Since then, expenditure has progressively exceeded income, giving has increased little, and the gap between expenditure and income is increasing: please see Figure 2.

This shows that over the last five years our expenditure is increasing at a rate more than twice that of our income, and our giving has hardly moved at all. The 0.5% annual rate of increase in giving compares with an annual inflation rate over the same period of 3.2%. The congregation has not made any contribution to increasing costs.

What’s the message? The Vestry is committed to its understanding that trimming costs to match static giving is not an option. This would mean ceasing or curtailing activities, but there is nothing which can be reduced without seriously endangering what Old Saint Paul’s represents to its members and to the wider community.

But the Vestry is also committed to its understanding that standing still is not an option either. No less a figure than Archbishop Rowan Williams recently expressed the view on television that if the Church stands still it will wither and die. This is why the Vestry has made the decisions to invest more in children’s ministry, to invest more in our music, to invest in maintenance and development of our buildings. By directing resources to where they are needed, we are sowing seeds in our future, and we shall flourish.

The choice for the Vestry and the congregation is: do we fund these important developments by drawing on our reserves, with a progressive reduction in our income from these reserves, until they run out; or do we all carefully examine our giving so that it is a fulsome response to God’s gifts, and thereby declare that we support the future flourishing of Old Saint Paul’s and the church’s ministry?

Nigel Cook is OSP’s Treasurer



NORTH GRAY'S CLOSE: A BRIEF HISTORY

SHEILA BROCK LOOKS AT THE HISTORY OF NORTH GRAY'S CLOSE AND HIGHLIGHTS THE REMARKABLE STORY OF BISHOP SYDSERFF

It requires a real exercise of the imagination to picture the centre of Edinburgh in the 17th century. The High Street more or less resembled a large haggis with a narrow neck at both ends, the top disappearing up the narrow wynd to the Castle, the foot closed off at the Netherbow, beyond which the 'gait of the canons', dropped down to Holyrood Abbey. The main portion of the Street bulged with life, containing the government and the High Kirk, the law and the Luckenbooths, manufacturers and sellers, the whole lined by the houses and lands of the merchants, the rich and the poor.

The Closes as we see them today, running like so many ribs off the High Street's spine, did not exist. Early maps show that there were spaces between the houses but they were very narrow, leading to the back lands and beyond that in many instances to what can only be called the midden. There were no street numbers; only the name of the owner or the proprietor of different properties provided identification and these names frequently changed with changes in ownership. Although in the 18th century some Closes were widened to give access to north and south, it was not until 1790 that the Town Council gave the order for names to be painted above the entrance and identification became more permanent.

So who was Gray of Gray's Close? Records suggest that it was Robert Gray, son of Alexander Gray whose business was near the College of the Holy Trinity. The Close has been described as undistinguished and the same could be said of the man after whom it is named. The 'North' is simply to differentiate it from South Gray's Close, named after another Gray.

And yet at the top of North Gray's Close there are the ruins of a 17th century building, known as Bishop Sydserff's house. So why did this more eminent gentleman not give his name to the Close? In the High Street, if you look at the line of the houses (the original was destroyed by fire in 1814) from Carubber's Close to North Gray's Close there is another entry between the two called Bishop's Close. (It is now mainly a pub and fittingly enough the back land is used as a midden in the shape of one of our City's monstrous rubbish containers). In the early 17th century it would seem that Bishop Thomas Sydserff inherited this land, demolished the existing building and built



Bishop's land incorporating land to the north, i.e. in what we call North Gray's Close, that had lain 'an unoccupied waste' for nearly 30 years. And they say that history does not repeat itself!

'The building plots conform to the medieval town plan and although in a derelict state, are a rare survival. There is a strong link between Thomas Sydserff and this building or at least the land extending from the High Street. The date carved over the façade is 1581, the date of his birth. Bishop Sydserff is said to have resided at Bishop's Land, the substantial dwelling fronting the High Street' (Historic Scotland)

Thomas Sydserff (1581-1663) – the name is a corruption of Saint Serf – was the son of an Edinburgh merchant. He graduated from the University of Edinburgh in 1602 before travelling to the continent to study at the University of Heidelberg. After returning to Scotland he began his ministry in St Giles Cathedral in 1611, went to Trinity College Church in 1626 and was admitted as Dean of the Diocese of Edinburgh in 1634. In that same year on the recommendation William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, he was consecrated as Bishop of Brechin. A year later he became Bishop of Galloway.

All this happened at a time when Scotland was undergoing religious and political upheaval. One of the last countries to adopt the Reformed faith in 1560, Scotland had adapted to the change in such a way that although Calvinist in doctrine it remained Erastian in practise – that is to say the



State still exercised some control in the church. Indeed some bishops were largely responsible for reforming their parishes, introducing the new organisation and new liturgies.

If Scotland had retained her monarchy, the history of the church would almost certainly have been different. But James VI went south in 1603 and over the next three decades the power vacuum left by the departing court clamoured to be filled. By the time that Thomas Sydserff became Bishop of Galloway, the battle lines had been drawn; bishops with their apparent power and possessions had become a target especially for Presbyterian nobles and landowners who wished to increase their wealth and extend their territory. Bishop Sydserff was pro-royalist, pro-episcopacy and sympathetic to Arminianism. In Galloway he used his episcopal powers to crush his ideological opponents, including Samuel Rutherford who was shortly to become the voice of the Covenanters. When Laud attempted to enforce the use of an English style Book of Common Prayer in Scotland in 1637, Sydserff supported him. Angry mobs attacked him with shouts of 'Papist loon, Jesuit loon and betrayer of religion' and chased him to his door. He was finally deposed, along with all Bishops, by the Glasgow General Assembly in 1638.

But Sydserff was a survivor. He escaped to England, then to the Continent and managed to avoid what John Nicol described as the 'daylie hanging, skurging, nailing of luggis and binding of peppil to the Trone and booring of tongues'. As a result Sydserff was the only pre-1638 Bishop still alive at the Restoration in 1660. He was rewarded by being consecrated Bishop of Orkney.

And if you are wondering what all this has to do with Stewardship, go to the top of North Gray's Close and look at the inscription high up on the west wall. It once graced the main entrance to the Bishop's residence and reads: 'Blisst be ye lord for all his gifts'

Sheila Brock is the Rector's Warden at Old Saint Paul's



THOUGHTS ON CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP

When we give money to God's work in stewardship, we are not giving anything to God, but returning a little of the resources life has given to us. *Ian Paton*

It is important that we hold in our mind, explicitly value and review our contribution to the 'time and talents' aspect of stewardship, not in an either/or way, because the urgency of the financial situation makes it appropriate that we focus on monetary giving, but as an essential complementary part of the picture. *Judith Brearley*

My preferred way of church giving is through direct debit but I feel badly if I have nothing to put in the collection when it comes around. I think it would be nice to have some kind of token to put in so I feel I am still contributing and others can see that others are giving. *Kimberley Moore Ede*



TRUST ME, I'M A JOURNALIST!

REFLECTIONS ON A CAREER IN JOURNALISM BY ANDY COLLIER



Looking back on the last of my school years always incites romantic memory. I learned a great deal during that time, nearly all of it related to playing bridge and poker. Unfortunately, I didn't devote quite as much attention to my academic studies.

I was forced to drop A-level history after being caught delivering someone else's lecture, bought for a fiver ten minutes previously. I'd have got away with it if I'd bothered to check I could read my fellow pupil's writing before I stood up at the lectern.

English was an equally dismal failure. It somehow never quite connected that if I'd wanted to pass the exam in literature, it might have been helpful to read the course books. My essay featuring the Ancient Mariner ripping the bodice off Eustacia Vye in the middle of a Sassoonesque Somme battlefield might have won prizes for creative surrealism, but it probably drove the marking examiner to shell shock.

My only real achievement was a pass in geography, based largely on the fact that I spent my Sunday mornings eating bacon rolls and watching Open University programmes on the telly. Miraculously, one of the episodes about transport systems in urban Chicago somehow tallied with the main exam question. By the skin of my teeth, I scraped home.

So I achieved a reputation for trickery, sloth, cunning and ruthless gambling skills alongside lamentable academic failure and total intellectual

"Still, life truly paints a rich and varied tapestry, and being a journalist has allowed me to run my fingers over the weave."

vacuity. In short, my future as a journalist was assured.

Four years in local newspapers taught me most of what I needed to know. I discovered the true meaning of *stewardship*. Grizzled old sub editors watched over my every diphthong and consonant. These men – always men in those days – knew everything. They could pick your copy apart like a loose seam in a curtain. Get the name of Jupiter's second moon or Henry VI's favourite falcon wrong, and they'd be down on you like a ton of bricks.

So I learned fast. I had to. My writing talent may have stayed obstinately static, but my cunning evolved in leaps and bounds. I moved to Scotland, and honed my survival skills on late news shifts in Glasgow for papers such as the Herald and Daily Record. I found out how to explain myself – and to flee from doorsteps in some of the roughest areas – very quickly.

I learned from some remarkable characters, most of whom seemed to spend so much time in the pub that I'm surprised they weren't paying non-domestic rates there. There was the legendary news editor whose face and temper in the afternoon were as red and volcanic as the wine he'd been drinking at lunchtime, and the photographer with a gammy leg and an astonishing ability to verbally re-create the noise of various Allied aircraft on bombing raids over Berlin (this remarkable gift proved something of a mixed blessing when we once had to interview the German ambassador).

Then there was the reporter who staggered into the BBC after a black tie dinner, only to fall asleep on the floor of a radio studio and to rear up hours later from under the table during the live morning news programme and say to the astonished presenters: "What are you b***** doing in my bedroom?"

I became hardened by people's cruelty and cynicism, and softened at times by their goodness and sincerity. I was moved by the outpouring of goodwill at Pope John Paul II's trip to Scotland, staggered at the scale of death and destruction during the Lockerbie bombing, and found my heart torn open by the Dunblane massacre.

All of this made me think more and more

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THE OSP CHURCH OVERSEAS FUND

HELEN TYRRELL PROVIDES AN UPDATE ON PROJECTS SUPPORTED BY THE OLD SAINT PAUL'S CHURCH OVERSEAS FUND

The Old Saint Paul's Church Overseas Fund was set up in 2003 with a £100,000 bequest from Bert Fortune, a teacher and long-standing member of OSP. While we knew of his generosity, the scale of Bert's bequest surprised and delighted us.

Bert wanted to see the work of the Church growing overseas and the Vestry appointed a group to interpret his wishes broadly and to encourage OSP members to propose specific projects for funding.

The Overseas Fund focuses on community development, education and learning, peace and reconciliation. It supports children, young people and families and those affected by AIDS, all within a broad Christian understanding of response to human need. Sustainability has been an essential feature of our support – donating small sums of money that will make a lasting difference.

Ongoing funding has been donated to two main initiatives and one-off support given to several smaller projects.

The Jenin Creative Cultural Centre, led by Yousef Awad, has developed an extensive programme - computer and language training and musical activities for young people, as well as art, dance and drama workshops for teachers and democracy awareness sessions for women. Where there is severe personal restriction and constant conflict, opportunities for release and self-expression through creative activity are vital. Many of us will remember the wonderful evening at OSP last November when we whirled away the hours to Palestinian and Scots dance tunes with Yousef and his musicians.

This year, £5,000 has been gifted to the Jenin Centre – helping to buy musical instruments, art materials and computer equipment. Yousef says: *"We are thankful for the great support of our friends at Old Saint Paul's Church, who are drawing the smile on the faces of our children...."*

OSP's Charlie Davis has twice spent time at the Centre, helping to teach English and making music with the young people.

At this time Burma is much in our thoughts and prayers, in the light of the recent peaceful protest against lack of democracy and economic hardship led by Buddhist monks which



was quickly quashed. The Lisu tribe living in the remote and ecologically fragile hill areas of Burma face constant natural and social disasters and experience ongoing oppression. Poverty is extreme and life expectancy low. Peter Swan of the Myanmar Baptist Convention writes: *"the situation here is getting more difficult, many of the Lisu community are facing many obstacles"*... adding that it is very difficult to fund-raise or publicise the work of MBC in the present political climate.

Support for the Lisu people this year has contributed to the vocational training required to generate local income and improve capacity-building. Our donation of £5,000 has funded sewing classes and equipment, fish culture, machine repair workshops and basic computer training.

For three years OSP provided ongoing support for a horticulture initiative at the **Malindi Orphan Care Project**. This has now been taken over by a larger charity but OSP provided a further small donation of £500 for the related very successful feeding programme for older and infirm members of the Malindi community.

This year, members of OSP have proposed a variety of new projects for funding consideration, enabling us to make several smaller donations from the Fund.

Through VSO, £1,500 was donated to the **SHINE Project**, a community health programme in a remote area of Cambodia, which aims to reduce maternal and child mortality through community development approaches – the money was spent on broadcasting health



promotion information and purchasing display materials, nurse uniforms and toys for antenatal centres.

ChildAid is a Christian charity seeking to improve the lives of disadvantaged children, particularly street children, children with disabilities and orphans in the former Russian Republics. £2,000 was donated from the OSP Fund to ChildAid, money that can give 25 disabled children free physiotherapy treatment, feed a street child for a year, support a young person in Khabarovsk for a year and support a nurse to look after abandoned babies.

Through Holy Cross Church in Davidson's Mains and the Diocese of Tirunelveli, Sally Mair, a specialist teacher of children with disabilities, has set up an intensive support programme for a group of children and their parents in south India. **The Sally Mair Blind Children's Trust (India)** works to promote the welfare of children and young people who are visually impaired and affected by additional disabilities. A donation of £1,000 has contributed to the costs of setting up Sally's programme.

A donation of £2,640 has been made this year through the Church of Scotland World Mission Council to the **Church of Bangladesh**, to support a project seeking to reduce human trafficking through awareness and networking and which **focuses on the needs of women.**

Finally, we have donated £2,000 through the Stourbridge Quaker Meeting to the **Rwenzori Peace Bridge of Reconciliation** in Western Uganda. RPBOR works for peace-making and conflict resolution in this war-torn country, where many children and young people are caught up in fighting. We have helped to pay for the training in conflict resolution that takes place in school and youth groups through a variety of activities.

Donations made from Bert Fortune's bequest this year have amounted to £19,640 and at the end of the fourth year of the Fund, OSP has now disbursed 55% of the original bequest. We continue to thank God for Bert's generosity and we pray for all those in ongoing need across the world.

Helen Tyrell is a member of the Old St Paul's Overseas Giving Group.

Trust Me . . . *continued from page 24*

about the presence of God in my life and in the world. He's always been there, since the days as a tiny child when I'd been introduced to Christianity via the Salvation Army, but he'd somehow become marginalised amid life's clutter. I didn't dispute his existence, but wanted to know how it fitted in a world which allowed the likes of Lockerbie and Piper Alpha.

Theology became an interest and a huge intellectual challenge. I learned about free will, explored the Gospels and found my way to Old Saint Paul's. I discovered the deep spiritual comfort and huge expectations of God's role and stewardship in my life.

Inevitably, all these elements crystallised, and I found myself writing more and more about religion. This you might think, would be a solace; an ability to think and reflect calmly and spiritually amid the frenzy of 24 hour news journalism in an increasingly selfish, hostile and materialistic world.

Sadly, the opposite is true. I have found that the world of the church can be the nastiest, most personal, most bitter and most insulting of all. Some of the things I have seen and heard have been truly shocking.

I'll quickly add that I have never, ever heard or witnessed anything like that happen at OSP, which remains my refuge against the many hypocrisies in the wider church. But if you want to see ferrets fighting in a Christian sack, you need look no further right now than our own Anglican Communion.

Still, life truly paints a rich and varied tapestry, and being a journalist has allowed me to run my fingers over the weave. So I suppose, on reflection, that I'm ultimately grateful I flunked that school history lecture. If not, I might have gone on to become an archaeologist, a librarian or an actuary. I might, God help me, have become respectable.

Andy Collier is a Freelance Writer



NOT SO MUCH AN OFFERING, MORE A WAY OF LIFE

ANDREW BARR OFFERS REFLECTIONS ON THE CONCEPT OF STEWARDSHIP



We were feeling the spiritual balm of High Mass at OSP - not exactly 'sitting comfortably', for which of us can do that on those uniquely hard and creaky chairs? Liz drew my attention to the reading from Amos chapter 6, verses neither of us remember ever having heard before, ending with the prophet's alarming warning in verse 7, 'lounging and laughter will be at an end'.

So we sat bolt upright for the Rector's Sermon on stewardship. 'What will you offer as you come forward to share the bread and the wine?' Not what would we put into the distinctive collection bags (were they once used for Canon Laurie's Christmas stockings?), but 'what do we offer of ourselves?'

Fr. Ian's sermon led us to the heart of the matter and answered the lengthy rehearsal in my head of excuses why, having heard all the things that the Gospel asks me to do week by week, I haven't started yet. In OSP, as in all good Anglican churches, the Gospeller does not stay in the Sanctuary but comes right down to where we stand waiting. The singing and incense evoke the beauty of holiness, but the Gospel, to use the vernacular, is in your face - up, close and personal.

Stewardship is the issue in every Gospel reading. Stewardship is about love, about the commitment of choir and servers, and the coffee rota,

"You begin with 'the one next to you'. That is all we can do. That is stewardship."

and all the many things the community of OSP does to make us 'fifth Sunday of the month-ers' feel welcome. It is about the health of the church building, so close to one of Scotland's busiest railway stations, and the desire to keep this place of sanctuary open to passers-by. It is about the Ark and its future. It is about strange and wonderful performances of Gilbert and Sullivan, which in turn are about financial support for the Diocese, the Province and, heaven help us, the Anglican Communion.

This is just the beginning. As I thought about Fr Ian's sermon, I remembered a morning ten years ago when, as I drove in to the BBC passing Lauder House, a bundle fell from the North Bridge on to the road below. By the time I had stopped under the Calvary on the wall of OSP, it was clear that the bundle was human; a stranger whose life had suddenly, dreadfully ended. Her possessions scattered, there was nothing to be done. We were all too late. Christ looked down from the Cross above the police cars, and I went back to work. There was no story I wanted to take to the Newsroom, other than to recite John Donne's meditation, 'No man is an island.'

We have a priest friend in the East End of London, who tells the story of returning to his vicarage in the pouring rain with two plastic bags

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STEWARDSHIP AND SCRIPTURE

OSP CLERGY TEAM MEMBER JOHN MCLUCKIE CONSIDERS WHAT SCRIPTURE HAS TO SAY ABOUT STEWARDSHIP

Having completely failed to remember to reflect on themes of stewardship in a recent sermon, I am making up for it with some reflections on the same readings (this by way of penance imposed by a normally-merciful Editor!). And these readings do provide good material for thinking about giving and stewardship.

The reading from Ben Sira is a powerful meditation on the merciful God who will not be swayed by our bribes. The pleadings of widows and orphans will not be ignored, but God's favour is not earned by our performance as givers. Having said that, the author is keen to remind us to give to God in the way that God has given to us; that is, as generously as we can afford. Rightly, stewardship focuses our attention on what and how we give to God, so the wisdom of Ben Sira is timely. What we give to God – our love, our worship, our resources for his work of justice and compassion – we should give without thought to the advantage it may secure for us with God. I suspect we find subtle ways of taking on this very crude perspective, which is an outlook as old as our religious impulses.

Sacrifice is not a mechanism for winning God over to our cause, but is precisely the opposite thing – a way of orienting ourselves towards the ways of God. It is for this reason that our giving of ourselves must be after the manner of God's own giving – generous (even lavish) and merciful.

However, I wonder if this helps us out much in relation to the aspect of a stewardship campaign that relates to our giving towards the life of our congregation. That aspect of giving may, in some respects, be thought of as an aspect of what we give to God, but I don't think it is at the heart of our financial (and other) support for the life of the church community. I have no doubt that that giving should be of the same character as all of our giving, and that should follow the ways of our primary giving to God, which is the gift of our selves and our love. However, I believe we are mistaken if we think that our support for our congregational life can be equated with our giving to God. I think we need to look elsewhere in scripture for words to aid our reflection on that.



'The Calling of St Matthew the Tax Collector' by Caravaggio

Unfortunately, the reading from Luke doesn't help very much. The parable is, among other things, a lovely burlesque on pathological religious behaviour, and that includes unseemly bragging about financial contributions to the Temple's operations. The tax collector's giving is much more appropriate – the gift of his humble openness to God (and this from a man who knows a thing or two about questionable financial matters!). So the parable lends support to Ben Sira's warnings about how not to give to God. In doing so, he, too, sends a powerful reminder of where our primary responsibilities lie – with the gift of our very self to God.

Is all of this evasion a biblical equivalent to our Scottish reticence about open discussion of our financial responsibilities? Is there anywhere in the Bible that can help us out when it comes to understanding what we are doing when we pool our resources to support the life of our congregation?

I would like to suggest that there is help at hand from our Patron. St Paul's ministry had, at its heart, a very powerful mission, and this was nothing to do with the conversion of unbelievers or the expansion of the church. Much of Paul's work and much of his writing was focussed on a very real financial project – the collection for the poor of the Christian community in Jerusalem.

He staked his entire apostolic credibility on this project. One central passage on this matter is at 2 Corinthians 9. Like the passages above, this chapter underlines the importance of generous giving. Unlike the other passages, this one is not about giving to God, but about sharing with each other to strengthen the bonds of affection and common life that are the mark of the Christian community.

I would suggest that this metaphor is much more useful for our thinking about our giving to support the common life of the congregation. That giving is about our nurturing of the bonds of affection and mutual encouragement that underpin a congregation's life. It is a fundamental way of expressing the ways that we belong to each other in our common pilgrimage of faith.

Unlike the church in Jerusalem, our need is not primarily one of alleviating suffering as a result of economic disadvantage, but like Paul's collection, our support for our common life is about expressing our mutuality. We need each other in this life of faith, and a common life needs support. What we give of our resources for the life of the congregation is not a subscription we pay for a service we receive, but a gift to the well-being of the Body of Christ in this place.

(Based on the readings for 28 October: Ben Sira 35:12-17 and Luke 18:9-14)

John McLuckie is one of the non-stipendary ministry team. He works for Edinburgh City Council.



Not So Much . . . *continued from page 27*

of shopping. He had just discovered that the historic church he had been so proud to have recently been living in was freezing cold and leaking, had a tiny congregation, was in drastic need of repairs, and there was no money, just huge debts. As he staggered to the door, his two sopping wet shopping bags split open and the contents rolled away in all directions. He lifted his eyes to heaven in despair, and saw, as though written in flame above his front door, the words 'It is impossible!' 'Oh!' he thought. 'I see! It's impossible!' And he immediately began to feel much better – and to cope.

My own story of meeting Mother Theresa was told in my first sermon in OSP. She and I witnessed a freak accident in which the late Trevor Huddleston became entangled and overturned a lavishly-laden table of BBC drinks (unintentionally). First to dive in, Mother Theresa led the rescue of a damp and embarrassed Anglican Bishop. Scrambling on the floor, she picked up every sliver of glass. Later I said, thinking of her extraordinary work with the dying in Calcutta, 'I would not know where to begin'. She looked directly at me, and said very softly, 'You begin with the one next to you'.

Recently, I have been working on the 2008 Service for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. The theme is 'Pray without ceasing' from Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians. It sounded like another impossible ideal. Our writers, knowing that the January Week is one of the darkest of the year, thought of struggling congregations who feel that their own prayers on a cold Sunday morning can have little effect on the problems of terrorism, war, global warming and famine, or the need to find homes for thousands of migrants arriving in Scotland. So in the 2008 Service everyone is asked to pick something 'next to them' to do and pray about. It could be as simple as promising to feed the birds, buying Fairtrade, or welcoming newcomers into their community. Each person tells their neighbour in the pew about their own personal promise so that their tasks and prayers for the year ahead can be encouraged and shared.

You begin with 'the one next to you'. That is all we can do. That is stewardship. Then the birds are fed, the Ark has a new lease of life, and students cross the North Bridge safely. But I can't help hoping there may yet be just a little time left for 'lounging and laughter'.

Andrew Barr was formerly Head of Education and Religious Broadcasting at BBC Scotland. He and Liz have other commitments but escape to OSP from time to time.

LOCATION, VOCATION AND DEDICATION

JIM WYNN-EVANS GIVES A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE BUILDING AND DISCUSSES NEW PLANS FOR REFURBISHMENT

In December 1688 Alexander Rose, newly installed as Bishop of Edinburgh the month before, did not have the benefit of choice when James II fled the country, leaving him in the moral dilemma, which led to his departure from St Giles Cathedral together with those loyal to episcopacy and their setting up shop in the disused wool store in Carrubbers Close. **Beggars can't be choosers - and we have been begging ever since!**

The present church property has gone through eight changes and the joints are getting arthritic in places! I'll show you the signs when you come to the Open Church Evening on Thursday 22nd November. The awkwardness of the site presents problems of access all too well known to those with arthritis in their own joints!

The main church building of chancel and nave was built in three stages; the Lady Chapel came later. The loss of so many lives in the First War is marked with the Memorial Chapel and the Calvary Stairs. The long ministry of Canon Laurie ended with his death in 1937. The Second War eroded the value of the funds, given to commemorate his work, and created a shortage of materials. We have a real '60s building!

The original clergy house built to hold a rector, several curates and a housekeeper, all unmarried, was divided a generation ago, on a limited budget, to provide for changed family circumstances. The surrounding area is in the early stages of redevelopment. The Caltongate scheme is likely to go ahead despite concerns of both local residents and of the Cockburn Association. The third set of proposals for the Tannery Site, next to us on North Gray's Close, are with the Planning Department. Meanwhile, the under-used, unoccupied nature of the area means that it is being used by users of alcohol and drugs. We see the evidence of this in graffiti and damage to property. Empty purses and handbags thrown into the garden and porch are signs that others are suffering more than us.

What is our vocation in the present time and how can we arrange that our buildings help us to fulfil this vocation?

Three hundred years ago the vocation of our predecessors was clear: to maintain episcopacy and to restore it with the restoration of the Stuart succession. After a long period of simply hanging on in perplexing circumstances, then the move of



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many to the New Town, and the arrival of poor migrants into the dilapidated Old Town, Old Saint Paul's found its vocation in the twin ideals of the Anglo-Catholic Movement: sacramental worship and service and ministry to the poor.

Several years ago, the Rector called together a small Vision Group to look at the life of our church and to explore the possibilities for our vocation today. The group had no doubt that an important part of our vocation continued to be the maintenance of the regular sacramental life and of high standards in music and worship. It was also agreed that more attention should be given to the place of children. The staffing requirements were considered. The problem of access continued to haunt us!

The practical consequences for fulfilment of this led to the setting up of a further group, which met over a period of two years and produced some useful practical suggestions. At the same time, with the reduction of the number of ordinands, the possibility of using the curate's flat as a base for a small community was explored. The requirements to qualify as a 'House in Mul-

title 'Occupation' indicated that it would need a lot of money. The Musical Scholarships and the appointment of a Children's Worker mark the beginning of meeting two aspects of our vocation.

So where do we start with the buildings? It is easy to go round in circles! We have agreed to face the worst by starting with the Quinquennial Inspection!

Our architect is John Sanders, a partner in Simpson & Brown a firm noted in the field of conservation. Their offices in the beautifully restored St Ninian's Manse, incorporating the former church tower at the Quayside in Leith are an encouraging example.

We have asked John to prepare an application for grant aid from Historic Scotland. There is no guarantee that the application will be successful but until we have tried, we will not make progress with any other grant making bodies and we shall have a long term programme and how much it will cost.

We have also asked him to consider the whole issue of how we present ourselves on Jeffrey St; the entrance; the possibility of cleaning the stonework on the Calvary Stair and in the Memorial Chapel; the lighting of the stair and the possibilities for disabled access. We will seek expert advice on the possibilities for geothermal heating. The Laurie Halls need a programme of insulation before any other consideration but the large south-facing roof may present solar panel opportunities. In the spirit of the times, it may be possible to get grants in these fields.

Before the arrival of Reginald Mitchell-Innes in 1884 and the beginning of the great rebuilding of Old Saint Paul's, the congregation went through 40 years 'in the wilderness'. The arrival of cranes at P & G's in York Place last year, though sudden and dramatic, was the result of many years of prayer, patience, perseverance *and pounds!*

Waiting on the will of God to be made known, asking questions, exploring possibilities can be a testing time. It will call us to patience, dedication and commitment.

Jim Wynn-Evans is Convenor of the Property Committee at Old Saint Paul's



THE NEXT EDITION OF THE WHITE ROSE...

Are you concerned about your carbon footprint, do you have thoughts on alternative energy, ideas about eco-congregation or helpful hints about saving the planet?

The next White Rose magazine, due out next year, will be a 'Green' issue. All contributions welcome. Please contact Sheila Brock for further information.

