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# NEWS

No 12 Spring 2019

news and features from St Margaret's

## PASSIONTIDE

Through participation in the sequence of Passiontide services, the Christian shares in Christ's own journey, from the triumphant entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday to the empty tomb on Easter morning. The procession with palms, already observed in Jerusalem in the fourth century, is accompanied by the Passion Narrative.

Maundy Thursday contains a rich complex of themes: humble Christian service expressed through Christ's washing of his disciples' feet, the institution of the Eucharist, the perfection of Christ's loving obedience through the agony of Gethsemane. After keeping vigil ('Could you not watch with me one hour?') Thursday passes into Good Friday. The Eucharist is not celebrated on Good Friday, and the church remains bare, stripped of decoration through the following day, a day without a liturgy: only silence and desolation can recall the being dead of the Son of God, But within the silence there grows a sense of peace and completion, and then rising excitement as the Easter Vigil draws near.

This solemn season preserves some of the oldest texts still in use, and rehearses the deepest and most fundamental Christian memories.

## A NEW SONG FROM ST MARGARET'S CHOIR

Legacy and fundraising enable new recording to be produced

St Margaret's choir and organist Thomas Trotter completed the recording of their new CD, to be released later this year, at St John the Evangelist in Islington on 8<sup>th</sup> March. As our Director of Music, Aidan Oliver, tweeted that day: 'pipe dream fulfilled'.

Entitled *A New Song*, the CD's playlist draws from two golden ages of music in which our choir particularly excels: magnificent Tudor polyphony is juxtaposed with superb contemporary music, much of it closely associated with St Margaret's.

The early works, by Thomas Tomkins (*O sing unto the Lord a new song*), Thomas Weelkes, Orlando Gibbons, Peter Phillips, William Byrd and Thomas Tallis, are all from the century directly after the completion of the current St Margaret's Church in 1523.

The title theme is carried through to the later works with James Macmillan's *A New Song*. Two new pieces, composed by choir members Alastair Putt and Gareth Treseder – who are also published composers of high repute – receive world premieres. A piece written by Matthew Martin for the baptism in St Margaret's of Xander Quinney – early Sunday School pupil, and son of former Abbey Sub-Organist Robert – is also included. The elegant composition by Bob Chilcott – based on Sir Walter Raleigh's prayer *Even such is time* and made famous by the King Singers – was a



centrepiece of our commemoration of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Raleigh's death last year.

The organ at St John the Evangelist where the recording was made, is a 1963 JW Walker & Sons instrument. Considered to be one of the finest of its era, it has featured on numerous recordings and BBC broadcasts. Coincidentally, Thomas Trotter will be giving a celebrity organ recital (free of charge with collection) at St John's on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> April. If you'd like to hear for yourself, see details at: [www.st-johns-islington.org/2019/03/2019-organ-series.html](http://www.st-johns-islington.org/2019/03/2019-organ-series.html).

The up-front cost of the recording sessions have been covered by a legacy from Raymond Jones, a long-standing sidesman, reader and member of St Margaret's congregation who died in 2017. A further £7000 is being raised for the professional singers' fees and production costs. Cheques (with a note directing funds to the St Margaret's recording) can be sent to Harry Hainstock, Development Coordinator, Westminster Abbey, The Chapter Office, 20 Dean's Yard, London SW1P 3PA. Gift Aid forms, enabling an extra 25% to be raised from UK taxpayers' donations, are available from Pamela Carrington (see contact details left) or from the vestry. Your support is very much welcome in creating this major landmark in music making at St Margaret's, and celebrating Aidan Oliver's contribution to the church over the past 16 years (see p2).

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## AIDAN OLIVER

St Margaret's will say farewell to Aidan Oliver, our Director of Music since 2003, at the reception following the Easter Day service. Aidan has been appointed Choral Director of Edinburgh Festival, and will also be following other choral and operatic interests in London and around Britain.



## PANORAMA ON SHOW

The 20 ft long Prévost Panorama (see the Winter issue of the News), painted from St Margaret's tower in 1815, will be on display at the Museum of London until the autumn. It reveals amazing detail of a largely vanished landscape, complemented by contemporary plans and artworks, and an annotated copy.



## WHITEHALL SERVICES

The Rector, with Sir Stephen Wright, our Warden for Parliament Square and Visitor Experience, has initiated a new series of Holy Communion services, preceded by breakfast, for local civil servants. The first one in March having been well received, they will be repeated twice more this year.



## RECTOR'S REFLECTIONS: BEYOND CONFLICT?

Since 24<sup>th</sup> June 2016, I have lived with conflict on my doorstep. Protestors have been present on College Green virtually every day, making their views known at maximum volume. And as the Brexit arguments drag on, the divisions over Brexit seem to be deepening. Photos of Remainers and Brexiteers screaming abuse at each other are easily found on social media as well as in the press. Headlines are couched in apocalyptic terms; MPs are vilified in very un-parliamentary language; professional political commentators are struggling to explain to the rest of us what is going on; our future is looking more uncertain than ever.

Living with prolonged conflict is exhausting, challenging, and demanding – for individuals, for communities, and for the nation as a whole. We

are undeniably divided, bewildered, and many are simply angry, at what seems like a complete lack of progress on the part of our politicians. Yet politicians themselves are caught in a terrible dilemma. The referendum vote was in favour of Brexit; but many MPs are Remainers at heart. How are our elected representatives to deliver what those who voted to leave want, whilst keeping a degree of personal integrity? Some take their stand on uncompromising principle; others wearily argue for a pragmatic approach. All want this nation to flourish, but we struggle to find an agreed way forward.

I wonder whether there is an alternative to a seemingly endless conflict revolving around principle versus pragmatism: compromise with integrity? This compromise has nothing to do

with dumbing down, but is an active search for the truths which underlie our disagreement, with a willingness to listen well, and to act with respect towards those with whom we disagree.

None of this is easily won. It does not suggest the political solution to a binary conflict: as a nation will be either in or out of the European Union in due course. But we can help to ensure that the debate is couched in more constructive, value-led terms.

Might this be good news for Easter? St Paul argues that in Christ, all things can be made new. My prayer is that this may prove true in the life of the nation and among our European neighbours.

Canon Jane Sinclair

## SEASONAL SERVICES AND CONGREGATIONAL MILESTONES

### Passiontide and Holy Week services at St Margaret's and the Abbey

#### Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> April: assemble before 10.30am

Palm Sunday procession from St Margaret's, followed by Sung Eucharist in the Abbey

#### Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> April: 5pm

Sung Eucharist with washing of feet in the Abbey, with Watch at St Margaret's until 9pm

#### Friday 19<sup>th</sup> April: 10.30am

Good Friday Matins and Litany, with sermon, St Margaret's

#### Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> April: 8pm

Vigil and First Eucharist of Easter, in the Abbey

#### Easter Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> April: 11am

Festal Eucharist, St Margaret's, followed by Rector's reception with a celebration of the contribution of Aidan Oliver to the musical life of the church over the past 16 years.

### Thanksgiving service

**Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June:** Service of Thanksgiving for the life of Baroness Trumpington of Sandwich: socialite, Bletchley Park code breaker, Conservative politician and minister, she regularly attended Parliamentary Carols and other services at St Margaret's. Tickets will be available at [www.westminster-abbey.org](http://www.westminster-abbey.org).



## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### Explorations in Faith

**Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> April**  
12.45pm – 1.45pm

With bring and share lunch after the service. All are welcome for the last in the series exploring Rowan Williams' book *Being Disciples – essentials of the Christian life* (SPCK, 2016).

**Next series on Sundays 23<sup>rd</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> June, and 7<sup>th</sup> July**

### St Margaret's Congregational Forum meetings

**Monday 8<sup>th</sup> May, Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> July; Mondays 16<sup>th</sup> September and 11<sup>th</sup> November; all 6pm**

### St Margaret's Poetry and Arts Group

**Saturdays 27<sup>th</sup> April, 20<sup>th</sup> May at 7pm**

Details of these sociable meetings can be found in weekly service sheets, or from Alan Stourton. All are welcome.

### St Margaret's lunchtime recitals

The popular spring recital series returns, with performances by ourstanding young artists from Park Lane Group Music Trust  
**12.45 pm Mondays 13<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> May, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> June.**

### Abbey community lunch

**Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> June, 12pm to 3pm**

Watch for details to book for the annual community lunch in the Abbey garden.

### Concert by Max Raabe

**7pm Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> June**

In aid of the new stained glass window in St Margaret's: tickets and concert details from 15<sup>th</sup> April at [www.westminster-abbey.org](http://www.westminster-abbey.org)

## WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

### Slovenia takes the lead for WDP 2019

The annual World Day of Prayer for the Westminster area was held at St Margaret's on Friday, 1<sup>st</sup> March. This year it was the turn of Slovenia to prepare the service. It is a country which has only



recently gained its independence and the British Slovene Society gave valuable assistance. At the core of the theme for WDP 2019, was an invitation – 'Come'. And to encourage a response – 'Everything is ready. Come to praise, thank, and proclaim the kingdom of love.'

The Slovene Society provided excellent readers who brought some beautiful objects from Slovenia for the service and for a small exhibition, and a celebratory cake. Canon Jane Sinclair led the service, during which scarlet carnations, the national flower of Slovenia, were distributed to everyone. The

music was played by Thomas Trotter and the children's choir of St Matthew's School took part. Our sidesmen officiated and volunteers from St Margaret's congregation hosted the tea.

World Day of Prayer is a global ecumenical movement led by Christian women who welcome everyone to join in prayer and action for peace and justice. ~ Celia Scott

## NEXT STEPS FOR NORTH AISLE WINDOW?

### Ideas and designs under discussion

As we described in the last News, a project is underway to consider, design and fund a colourful new window for the north side of St Margaret's. An initiative of Gillian Perry in the first instance, many members of the church, as well as official Abbey committees are now involved in taking this forward.



At Gill's suggestion, and with funding from a legacy, initial design ideas were commissioned from Alan Davis, whose work she had seen at St Mary's church in Richmond, North Yorkshire (detail, left). After receiving comments about the design and concept from St Margaret's congregation, the Fabric Committee of the Abbey (WAFC) has considered the project, and has asked Alan Davis to prepare new designs along the lines of one of his schemes.

It is hoped to have Alan's revised design ideas available for consultation and comment sometime in May/June 2019. Gill Perry is marshalling ideas and views from the congregation at St Margaret's and will feed them to the Rector and to members of WAFC. Any input is welcome.

## STEWARDSHIP

The latest available figures for congregational giving and donations in the three months to end of February 2019 are:

	collections	donations
December	£2,429	£21,813
January	£816	£685
February	£1,272	£803

## STOP PRESS – NEW DIRECTOR OF MUSIC CONFIRMED

Following auditions with talented choral musicians, Westminster Abbey has announced the appointment of Greg Morris as Director of Music for St Margaret's. After 13 years as assistant director and organist at Temple Church, Greg will take up the post on 1st July. He will be conducting the adult and boys choirs as well as overseeing new initiatives, potentially including a girls' choir.

## DID YOU KNOW...?

### Sir Peter Parker, 2nd Baronet

One of the more dramatic monuments in St Margaret's combines two strands to be found in a number of our memorials: naval careers and American connections. Sir Peter Parker's memorial now in the west aisle tells the story of his own career and death as well as the lives of notable ancestors.



In 1814, fighting in the War of 1812, he was the 28 year old captain of the frigate *Menelaus*. On the Maryland coast, he landed, as the monument relates, with part of his crew, and defeated a local militia with three times the strength of his own forces (though American accounts dispute this outcome...). In the moment of victory he was mortally wounded, but continued to cheer his men until, as the relief (left) shows, he died in the arms of his companions. His body was sent first to Bermuda, and then to London.

Sir Peter was descended from generations of noted seafarers, including his grandfather, the first Baronet, who fought with Lord Howe in 1772 to seize Long Island in the Revolutionary War, and is also buried in the church. His father, Vice Admiral Christopher Parker, married Augusta Byron, making Sir Peter first cousin to Lord Byron, who wrote a poetic, if perfunctory, eulogy in 1814.

## STAFF PROFILE

### John Robinson, Verger

John Robinson is such a familiar figure around St Margaret's and the Abbey, that it seems much longer than six years ago that he first came to Westminster. It was his second church job, after St James Piccadilly, but his experience started many years before that in his home town of Wigan (he's a proud 'pie-eater'), where he was an acolyte from the age of nine.

He applied for the verger job here on a whim, having seen it advertised in Church Times, and was offered a post in either St Margaret's or the Abbey. John thought there was 'a certain feeling about St Margaret's', and chose to start here. Since the St Margaret's review, only our Senior Verger Nigel Harris, is rostered exclusively to the church, with other vergers now rotating through a spell here on a regular basis. John explains that over the eight week roster period, he will usually be in St Margaret's two Sundays and a Thursday, and occasionally for other relief shifts or services.

The vergers' jobs vary from day to day, with up to two verger tours or pilgrimage tours figuring daily, as well as an array of ceremonial duties at services. They are also normally allocated a chapel to look after, maintaining seasonal colours and ensuring all is in good order.

'It takes a good multi-tasker,' he says, 'as a multitude of sometimes difficult jobs have to be juggled.' The ceremonial aspects are probably the most nerve-wracking, as special services notes can be very detailed and particular. 'You have to get it

right, first time, every time, or it shows.'

John's head for detail and penchant for service comes perhaps from more than 25 years working for Aer Lingus. He had loved airplanes apparently from the cradle, and enjoyed roles as a flight dispatcher and a cargo agent at Manchester. 'I've sent pigs flying and pizzas to Italy, checked dangerous goods and live animals – it was good fun,' he says. Ten years of his Aer Lingus chapter, though, were as flight crew, out of Heathrow and Gatwick – good training, no doubt, in handling an emergency, or a tricky visitor.

A keen gardener, John seriously enjoys getting his hands into the soil and producing anything from roses to broad beans – making the Abbey gardens a favourite place for lunch. He spends time off travelling and visiting friends, especially in South Wales. 'I also just love having a cup of tea, anytime, with anyone,' he says.

And what changes have struck him over his time in the Abbey community? 'The review had an impact of course, but, trivial as it may seem, I have to say that the new coffee machine at St Margaret's has been such a welcome innovation.'

To find out more about John's life beyond Westminster, we've asked him a selection of our quick-fire questions ...

- ✦ **What's your favourite hymn?** *Dear Lord and father of mankind.* **Setting?** Arvo Pärt.
- ✦ **Service?** Easter Day, for the explosion of joy.
- ✦ **And your favourite book?** Oddly, after 10



years working in a bookshop, I went off books... **Music?** Whatever they're playing on Radio 3. **Animal?** Giraffe. **Film?** *Some like it hot.* **City?** Cork. **Holiday?** Canada, so varied and vast...

✦ **In your new time machine, where and when would you travel?** Back to 28<sup>th</sup> December 1065 please, for the consecration of the Confessor's Abbey.

✦ **Who was the greatest influence on your life?** Brother Bernard SSF who I met through my uncle David, also SSF, in Plaistow; Bernard was a true friend through my life, and, I suppose, part of a rather Victorian upbringing – which isn't, by the way, a bad thing, but very nurturing.

✦ **What would you do if you never had to work again?** Cruise the world with friends, on a quirky ship with interesting crew, visiting all the places I've never been.

## ST MARGARET'S ANNUAL MEETING

### An active year reviewed, and new projects ahead

On 13<sup>th</sup> March, St Margaret's annual meeting was held once more in nearby Great George Street, thanks to the Institution of Civil Engineers.

Reports reflected the exceptionally wide range of events and interests that feature at St Margaret's. The Rector reported on behalf of the Parliamentary Warden Sir Peter Bottomley that the monthly communion for Parliament continued to be well supported and that, with additional support from Baroness Judith Wilcox, relationships between St Margaret's and both Houses were warm. For the Congregational Forum, Terry Riggs noted that the eight wardens met six times during the year. With c. 100 regular congregants, weekly services attracted about 70 to 80 and we had 250 on the mailing list. Sidesmen, readers and lay assistants now number 45 and all readers had been trained on the new sound system. The first project of a new stewardship group will be to raise funds for the new window (see p 3), and standing orders are being simplified. Complex work on the fabric of the church is progressing, but extensive repairs and works to the tower will take until October 2020. This well supported newsletter has now been published for three years. The Explorations in Faith series continue three times a year on a

range of topics and texts. Anyone interested in joining the servers' rota is encouraged to contact Greg Meyer. Angie Macdonald was effectively plugged into Abbey-wide safeguarding processes.

The Rector reported for Music Director Aidan Oliver that the new CD had been recorded the previous week (see p 1). New altos from BBC Singers had strengthened the choir, and two of the boys were singing in Magic Flute at ENO. It was hoped to recruit a girls choir for a new midweek evening service. From James White we learned that the St Margaret's Society of Change Ringers had rung on only 10 occasions due to the tower works.

Alan Stourton's report detailed the Poetry and Arts Group's nine meetings, which attracted up to 20 people for a mix of poetry and literature. With so many attendees, the group



will investigate costs for holding future meetings in the vestry. Victoria Dearborn described Churches together in Westminster's numerous visits and the community initiative 'HeartEdge'. She also reported on the Sunday School (left) for Kate Livingstone. It now has four teachers and a new table, and hopes to attract more children through the website and social media.

The Rector proposed that the meeting agree that an old Rector and Wardens' account be closed, to be replaced by a new process. This was agreed. She then gave thanks for the support and involvement of so many people in all aspects of the church. In addition to those mentioned previously, she cited the invaluable work of Pamela Carrington and Nigel Harris, and the Priests Vicar. She was pleased to have welcomed the school assemblies and services, the monthly communion for Parliament and its service to mark the centenary of the end of World War I, the Raleigh 400 events, and the There but not There Remembrance exhibition, as well as many thanksgiving and carol services. She remarked, finally, that she felt truly blessed to be part of a real, living church and suggested that we all seek to be more Christlike Christians through the coming year, and 'Rejoice in the Lord always.'