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NEWS

No 7 Winter 2018

news and features from St Margaret's

EPIPHANY

In the Western churches, the Epiphany ('manifestation') became a celebration of one element of Christ's birth, the visit of the far-travelled magi, understood as the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles. Matthew's account speaks simply of 'wise men from the east'; later tradition fixed their number at three, made

them kings and recalled their resonant names – Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar. In this perspective, Epiphany is an apt season to pray for the worldwide mission of the Church, and for the feast of the Conversion of St Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles. In the Eastern churches, the Epiphany is the celebration of Christ's baptism by John, when the heavens opened and a voice declared Jesus to be

God's beloved Son. The miracle of Cana in Galilee, where Jesus 'first manifested his glory', follows immediately:

*Manifest at Jordan's stream,
Prophet, Priest, and King supreme;
and at Cana wedding-guest
in thy Godhead manifest.*

~ Christopher Wordsworth

SLAVERY

Pioneers of abolition from St Margaret's history

The abhorrent phenomenon of modern slavery continues to make headlines in the UK and around the world. It is sobering to imagine what the abolitionist pioneers might have made of this revival of practices they had fought to see outlawed more than 200 years ago. The lives of two figures associated with St Margaret's demonstrate only too clearly what contributions to society, change and culture might be made by those still being lost to slavery.



Ignatius Sancho (portrait near left by Gainsborough) was born c. 1729 on a slave ship bound for New Grenada, where his mother died and his father committed suicide rather than live as a slave. After his owners sent him to England, he worked for three sisters in Greenwich before gaining the patronage of their neighbour the 2nd

Duke of Montagu, who recognised his potential and oversaw his education. With the Montagus' help, Ignatius became a cultured composer, actor and writer, speaking out against slavery, and corresponding with a sympathetic Laurence Sterne who included a passage on slavery in *Tristram Shandy*. Ignatius married Anne Osborne, a West Indian, at St Margaret's and they set up a shop in Mayfair with a legacy left them by Montagu's widow. As an independent property holder, Ignatius became the first man of African descent to vote in parliamentary elections in England, and was also the first to have an obituary in the mainstream press after his death in 1780. He was buried in St Margaret's churchyard, and the Sanchos' seven children were all baptised in the church.

Near the font is a plaque unveiled by the Archbishop of York in 2009 to Olaudo Equiano (left), whose memoirs have informed many plays and films dealing with slavery's abolition. Olaudo was enslaved, aged 11, by a succession of African traders before being sold on many times in several states, most notably the American colonies. On his conversion to Christianity one of his owners allowed him to be baptised at St Margaret's in his slave name, Gustavus Vasa, in 1759. Having acquired some education from British sailors, and having been sold to a Quaker merchant, he was able to make enough money trading on voyages with his owner to buy his freedom in 1768. Over the next 20 years he joined further expeditions, including one with Horiatio Nelson to the Arctic.

His outstanding achievement, though, was to communicate the barbarity of slavery and its dehumanising effect on slaves, traders and owners alike, both in his book, '*The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African*', first published in 1789, and his many speeches as a member of the black abolitionist group 'Sons of Africa'. He became a wealthy man, married, had two daughters, and settled in Cambridgeshire. Even long after his death in 1797, his writing remained essential evidence in the abolition of the slave trade in 1820.

Inside...

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 - Priest Vicar profile
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 - Did you know...?
 - Meeting in Jerusalem
 - Stewardship and legacy
- ...and more

TOWER REPAIRS

The Portland stone used to reface the church in the 18th century is failing badly because the iron cramps, used to hold it in place, expand as they rust. A survey of the tower's damaged stonework has now been completed, and repair work will be undertaken from April to December 2018.



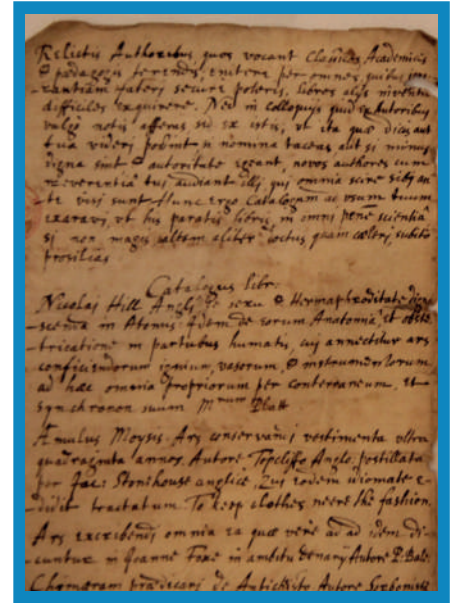
REMEMBRANCE

Prince Harry opened the Field of Remembrance in St Margaret's churchyard on Thursday 9th November as Big Ben chimed for the first time in many months. After visiting servicemen and women in the scores of plots, he was welcomed into St Margaret's to sign the visitors' book.



DONNE MANUSCRIPT

An unknown manuscript copy of a rather scurrilous early publication by John Donne was found recently by the Abbey's Keeper of Muniments, Matthew Payne. It was on display at St Margaret's in November, and is destined to feature in the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Galleries in the Abbey.



RECTOR'S REFLECTIONS: SPLASH OF WORDS

'If I knew where poems came from, I'd go there.'
Michael Longley

Thus begins Mark Oakley's wonderful anthology 'The Splash of Words: Believing in Poetry'. It is a book which is designed to intrigue, encourage, question and to enrich our faith in God, and ranges across poetry dating from the 14th century to the present day. Oakley speaks of 'the splash of words' as a good description of poetry. 'When you read a poem there is an initial splash like a pebble thrown into a lake. The words disturb your surface and have their impact. Then, as the poem begins to do its work, the ripples of meaning head out towards your shore...and you realize that these words are shifting your perception... and even transforming who you are....A poem's ultimate meaning is found not in the words but in us, in our response to the words.' (p xv)

One of the poems in Oakley's anthology is by the fourteenth century poet, Hafiz, or more properly Shams-ud-din Muhammad: the title 'Hafiz' is normally used to describe someone who knows the entire Quran by heart. Hafiz is nowadays a well-known and much loved Persian poet, reflecting the Sufi tradition of Islam. He was a contemporary of Geoffrey Chaucer, and was born into a poor family, so had to work hard to gain an education. A quick learner, Hafiz soon gained a name for himself as a poet at court and around his home city of Shiraz. But Hafiz fell out of favour with the ruling regime, was imprisoned and then exiled some time, until a change of local leadership enabled him to return home. Reflecting his experience of personal vulnerability and dependence on God, Hafiz wrote this beautiful poem – an encouragement, and perhaps a warning, to us all as we embark on 2018 together.

Tripping Over Joy

Hafiz (c. 1320 – 89) translated by Daniel Ladinsky

What is the difference
Between your experiences of Existence
And that of a saint?

The saint knows
That the spiritual path
Is a sublime chess game with God

And that the Beloved
Has just made such a Fantastic Move

That the saint is now continually
Tripping over Joy
And bursting out in Laughter
And saying, 'I Surrender!'

Whereas, my dear,
I am afraid you still think

You have a thousand serious moves.

[Mark Oakley, *The Splash of Words: Believing in Poetry*,
Canterbury Press, 2016, p 28]

CONTACTS AND CONGREGATIONAL MILESTONES

Contacts for St Margaret's

Vestry / Senior Verger, Nigel Harris:
t: 020 7654 4840

e: nigel.harris@westminster-abbey.org

Rector's Secretary, Pamela Carrington:
t: 020 7654 4847

e: pamela.carrington@westminster-abbey.org

Newsletter: queries, suggestions and
distribution list matters to Becky Wallower:
e: becky.wallower@dial.pipex.com

Funeral

Wednesday 29th November 2017:

Heartfelt thanks and appreciation were given for the life of Pam Powell at her funeral. A member of the congregation for many years, Pam was affectionately remembered for her kindness, hospitality, sense of fun and devotion to her husband Enoch.

Birth and birthdays

Wednesday 6th December: Polly Catherine, a new granddaughter for Abbey and Stephen Wright, was born to Abbey's son Jonny and daughter-in-law Lucy

Saturday 6th January: Rowan Horbury, 2nd birthday

Sunday 25th March: Freddie Livingstone, 3rd birthday

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Explorations in Faith

Sundays 11th, 18th, 25th February, 4th March, 12.30 – 1.45pm: Sessions held regularly after the service on the topic of the Gospel of Mark. You're invited to bring and share some lunch.

Westminster City School

Friday 12th January, 2.15pm: A service of welcome at St Margaret's for the school's new headmaster.

St Margaret's Congregational Forum meetings

Monday 15th January, 6pm
Friday 23rd March, away day 9am – 3pm

St Margaret's Poetry and Arts Group

Saturdays 27th January, 24th February, 24th March: details of these sociable meetings can be found in weekly service sheets, or from Alan Stourton. All are welcome.

Science and religion conference

Thursday 7th February, 10am: Annual conference for sixth form students at St Margaret's.

Day of Prayer

Saturday 17th March, 10am – 3pm: to be led by the Reverend Canon Andrew Mayes, Rector of East Blatchington (see the Abbey website for further information: www.westminster-abbey.org/events)

St Margaret's Annual General Meeting

at One Great George Street
Wednesday 14th March: 6pm

Pilgrimage to Rochester

Saturday 18th August: Led by Reverend Canon Ralph Godsall, former Precentor at Rochester Cathedral

Lent and Holy Week at St Margaret's and the Abbey

Wednesday 14th February: 8am, 12.30pm, 5pm Eucharist and Imposition of Ashes, Westminster Abbey

Sunday 25th March: 11.15am: Palm Sunday Eucharist and procession, in the Abbey

Thursday 29th March: 5pm Choral Eucharist with washing of feet in the Abbey, with Watch at St Margaret's until 9pm

Friday 30th March: 10.30am Good Friday Matins and Litany, St Margaret's

Saturday 31st March: 8pm Vigil and First Eucharist of Easter, in the Abbey

Easter Sunday 1st April: 11am Festal Eucharist, St Margaret's

SIDESMEN AND READERS GO TO JERUSALEM

Annual meeting in a new venue

Thanks to a serendipitous oversight, St Margaret's was double booked on the evening scheduled for the annual meeting of the church's sidesmen and readers. Instead, on 20th November and by kind permission of The Dean, the group met in the historic Jerusalem Chamber of Westminster Abbey.



The rector, Jane Sinclair, explained that the ceiling was virtually original, featuring the initials 'NL', for Abbot Nicholas Litlyngton who commissioned the Chamber, and 'R' for Richard II in whose reign it was built in the 14th century. In 1413 Henry IV, having taken ill at the start of a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, had been laid before the fire. When he was told that he was 'in Jerusalem', he died, it having been prophesied that he would die in Jerusalem. His son took the crown, becoming Henry V. The Chamber, which has also seen the initiation of several new versions of the Bible, including the Authorised Version in 1611, and many historic meetings, is now part of the private rooms of the Deanery.

BAPTISMS

Three new members of the church



St Margaret's celebrated baptisms with two families in November.

On the 5th, Alexander – or Sasha, as we all know him – smiled through the service alongside his parents Marina Pronina and Ramon Varela (top). The congregation was generously treated to champagne, chocolates and macarons to mark a very joyful day, and all three, and Marina's mother continue to attend regularly.



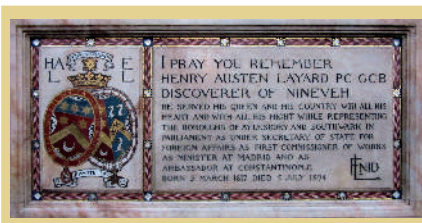
Twin sisters Florence and Charlotte, baptised on 19th November, are daughters of Lauren and Thomas Weatherill, who were also married at St Margaret's (bottom). A twin himself, the girls' great-grandfather was Bernard Weatherill, Speaker of the House of Commons, 1983–1992. His successful efforts to raise funds for the church's restoration in the 1980s and '90s, are recorded in a plaque, appropriately located at the font.

DID YOU KNOW...?

Sir Henry Austen Layard

"I PRAY YOU REMEMBER HENRY AUSTEN LAYARD PC GCB DISCOVERER OF NINEVEH."

So reads the memorial tablet in the south aisle – at sight of which a visitor was once heard to remark, 'Oh - I didn't know it was a real place,' apparently thinking instead of Narnia.



Of Huguenot descent, Layard was born in Paris to a diplomatic family, and lived in Italy before settling and marrying in England. En route to Ceylon for the Royal Geographical Institute in 1842, he was employed on unofficial diplomatic work for the British Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Sir Stratford Canning. Having spent time in Mosul, he began to search there for Ninevah, depicted in the book of Jonah as a wicked city spared by God from destruction. He discovered Nimrud (Biblical Calah) first, and excavated 9th to 7th century BC palaces, as well as important artworks, including the famous winged bull now in the British Museum. He then located Ninevah, across the Tigris river, where he excavated large numbers of cuneiform tablets that were to provide key evidence of Assyrian and Babylonian culture. He wrote comprehensively about the Biblical cities. Sadly, the important remains of Nimrud and Ninevah were largely bulldozed by IS in the past few years.

Layard continued to excavate for Canning and the British Museum before taking up a political career, serving as MP for Aylesbury and Southwark, under secretary of foreign affairs, chief commissioner of works and privy councillor, minister at Madrid and ambassador at Istanbul.

PRIEST VICAR PROFILE

The Reverend Dr Fiona Stewart-Darling

Fiona Stewart-Darling is one in a line of clergy to come to St Margaret's having served in Portsmouth. As Chaplain at the university and cathedral there from 1997, she got to know both our two previous Rectors, who had also worked in the diocese, and it was The Very Reverend Andrew Tremlett who suggested in 2013 that she would make a good candidate for Priest Vicar.

Her route to St Margaret's – and to the priesthood – is hardly standard though. Fiona's first degree was in chemistry, and she went on to a PhD in the subject from Birkbeck. It was at uni that she came into contact with the charismatic movement and the teachings of Francis Schaeffer, and contemplation of faith not as blind, but as informed, as in Romans 12.2: 'Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect.'

Continuing her exploration of faith while working with British Gas in Solihull, someone at the Baptist church lent her a book by Helen Cunliffe, a deaconess in the Church of England. Fiona hadn't realised such a position was possible and, although she felt a calling, struggled with the idea that ordination might be right for her – not least because it would be in a different tradition from that she was used to. For the next few years she put off the possibility, first by working at Lee Abbey in Devon, and also by travelling the world. Having fought and finally embraced the idea of ordination, she was accepted for ministry and began her training for a theology degree at Trinity College Bristol. After ordination at Gloucester Cathedral in 1991 and a curacy in

Cirencester, she went into university chaplaincy at Cheltenham and Gloucester, moving to Portsmouth University after a few years.

Her current 'day job' is unique – since 2004 she's worked for the Bishop of London and the owners of Canary Wharf as full-time lead chaplain of the Canary Wharf Multifaith Team. There she collaborates with Muslim, Orthodox Jewish, and Roman Catholic colleagues, two other chaplains who work specifically with people in retail, and an office manager. The team offers pastoral care, including bereavement and marriage support, for the 120,000 people who work there. Fiona's passion, though is working in partnership with companies in the realm of corporate values and ethics, exploring issues such as faith and finance, or faith and materialism. Such is her passion that she has just published a book on the subject – *Multifaith Chaplaincy in the Workplace* – to spread the word. And such is the team's success, that they are now in the process of bidding for increased resources.

'The attraction of St Margaret's, apart from the red frock,' she grins, 'is that chaplaincy needs to be grounded in a worshipping community.' She finds St Margaret's is a good size to get to know, and returns to work after a Sunday energised by preaching, music and 'the feeling of being looked after very well'.

As for the future, she turns 60 next year, and feels she has one more job in her in which 'to love God and serve God in the world'.

And outside of work, with her partner Jenny (who is now a Minor Canon at the Abbey), she does some serious walking, enjoys cinema, theatre, friends, travel – 'the usual things'.



We selected some quick fire questions, to find out more about Fiona in the round...

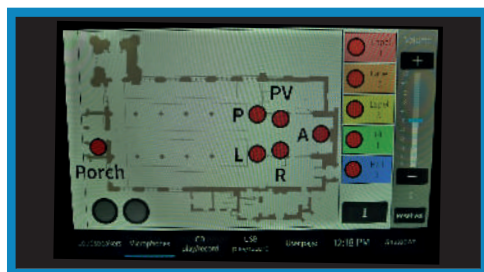
- ✦ **What's your favourite service?** Advent Carols at the Abbey. **Hymn?** Lord enthroned in heav'nly splendour – sung at Ascensiontide in 1994, when I was one of the first women to be ordained priest. **Scripture?** Ephesians 1.
- ✦ **And your favourite film?** The Lord of the Rings trilogy. **Food?** Fish. **Plant?** Agapanthus – they were spectacularly in bloom the first time I went to Australia with Jenny. **Holiday?** Sailing to Ireland or Australia's Northern Territory.
- ✦ **If you had a time machine where would you go?** I'd love to be a trusted confidant at the court of Queen Elizabeth I and find out what really went on.
- ✦ **What's top of your bucket list?** Visiting the Alhambra – soon to be fulfilled I hope.
- ✦ **What would be your superpower?** The ability to translocate in an instant, like in Star Trek, avoiding countless hours on boring airlines.
- ✦ **And your guilty pleasure?** A gin gimlet please – I'm a bit of a gin buff actually...

ALL CHANGE

Members of the adult choir have recently received new cassocks and surplices....



And the new sound system has made it easier to hear clearly in every corner of the church.



STEWARDSHIP AND LEGACY

The latest available figures for congregational giving and donations in the three months through November 2017 are:

	collections	donations
September	£1,362	£564
October	£1,050	£5,977
November	£1,393	£3,504

The leap in donations in October is due to a very welcome legacy from Raymond Jones, a faithful member of the congregation and a punctilious sidesman for many years who died in November. After growing up in Northampton, Raymond served in the Royal Navy from 1944–1947. He then trained as a solicitor and continued on the solicitors' roll for some 42 years, including ten years as a partner at Beaumont and Sons who turned out in force for his funeral. All present remembered Raymond as a generous and kind man.

SAFEGUARDING

Angie McDonald has been named Safeguarding Co-ordinator for St Margaret's. Chief of Staff at Thomas's Battersea, Angie has extensive experience of safeguarding issues. As the Rector explained in her column last quarter, you should report any concerns about potential abuse to her, whether regarding children or adults.

