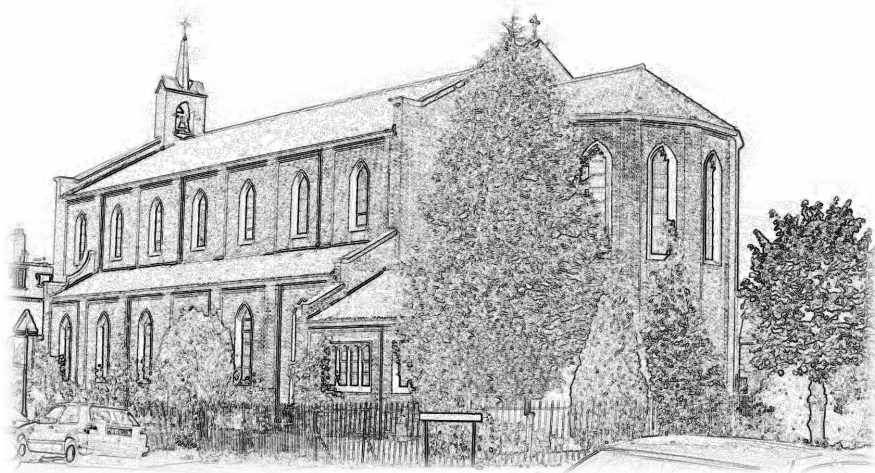


ST MATTHEW'S REVIEW



Autumn 2011

St Matthew's since Easter

The end of Lent marked the arrival of our new priest-in-charge, Revd Dr Helen Orchard. Helen's Licensing service was celebrated in true St Matthew's style, with a full church and a sumptuous feast to follow. Splendid music was provided by temporary director of music Jonathan Turton and by our own choir joined by many friends of Helen and of the church. Among the congregation were members of Merrow Church where Helen had served her curacy, and students (fans?) from Exeter College Oxford where she had been chaplain. Bishop Christopher told us in his sermon that Helen possesses all the qualities we looked for in our job description.

It was hoped to reproduce that sermon in REVIEW, but when approached afterwards and asked for a copy the Bishop shook his head; all he had had before him in the pulpit were the job description and the Collect for the day.



Helen has quickly made her mark at St Matthew's with the quality of her sermons, the breadth of her ministry and the practices she has introduced. Morning Prayer is now said on four weekday mornings. This has been appreciated by the children of the Nursery next door; when she says the Angelus and rings the bell at 8.30am, they rush outside and shout and jump and cheer.

At Helen's suggestion the floor of the church has been cleaned and polished. Gwyneth Llewellyn writes: "There was a surprising number of people outside St Matthew's, a buzz of conversation, some slipping-on of Mafia-style sunglasses as they peered in at the door of the church. Then all was revealed – a blaze of light, a dazzleness of the eyes, as we gazed at the sight of our unfamiliar clean and shining floor. For years our eyes had followed the marks made by restless worshippers, the prints of sticky fingers, the muddy traces of the past despite the valiant efforts of generations of volunteer cleaners. Now the newly polished floor shone

white, the sun reflected its lights and the pink and gold of the chancel glowed in sympathy. We were all moved by the effort that had been made on our behalf, especially by Bernie Mole, the caretaker of St Matthew's School, which gave new light to our beloved church – and woe betide any careless coffee spiller. Look but don't touch is our new motto”.

In August congregation members took advantage of Helen's invitation to join her at Westminster Abbey, where for one week each summer she serves as duty chaplain. It was good to be shown parts of the Abbey not usually available to visitors (and for one fortunate visitor, good to have access to a splendid toilet refurbished for the Royal Wedding). Those of us who stayed for midday Mass in the Nave were surprised to find that it was possible to be reverent, still and focused even when surrounded by tourists.

A number of joyful occasions happened during the summer months. We rejoiced at the birth of Laura Bickerstaffe. On 3rd July Will and Helena Smith were baptised. On 13th July Hollie and Liam O'Sullivan were married and on 19th July the marriage of Charlie and Pamela Thompson was blessed. Charlie, Pamela and Joshua have been regular worshippers at St Matthew's for some years, and Charlie has served as a warden here. On a sunny June afternoon the Vicarage blessing involved incense, cake and a trampoline. At our annual Leavers' Service we welcomed the children who are leaving St Matthew's School to move to the next stage of their education. The children are obviously affected by the significance of the service. Below is a reflection by Matthew Nicholls, one of the leavers. For Nicholas Hands-Heart, not yet a leaver, it was a chance to say goodbye to his older friends and a reminder that one day he too will be moving on to pastures new.

Tulo Raistrick, who used to worship at our 8am Mass and later spent part of his training for ordination with us, was recently ordained Deacon at Southwark Cathedral. We wish him and his family well.

On 5th March Douglas Lee repeated his success of last year when he led a performance of Handel's 'Israel in Egypt' at St Matthew's. The church and the Marie Curie Cancer Fund benefited from the proceeds. The popularity of this concert has led to plans for another, to be held in December.

On a golden October day the Scouts joined us for our Harvest Thanksgiving Mass. We gave suitably packaged food and useful clothing to Merton's homeless people, at the same time decorating the church with

traditional harvest fare. Diana Ovens' harvest loaf (complete with church mouse) was a triumph.

Since the death of Malcolm Barron on New Year's Day left us without a Director of Music, Jonathan Turton and the choir have worked tirelessly to continue the tradition of great music at St Matthew's. Jonathan took up the baton at a moment's notice and has proved himself more than equal to the challenge. He already has a demanding day job, so his commitment to the choir and playing the organ has left him with little time for anything else.



We are very very grateful to him, and were pleased to present him with gifts which we know he will enjoy.

Now we – and especially Jonathan - look forward to the arrival of our new Director of Music. His name is Mr Barry Williams and he is a lawyer working for the civil service. Barry is an experienced organist and choirmaster and the author of 'Everything Else an Organist Should Know'. He joins us, with his wife June, in October.

Leavers' Service 2011

I loved my leaver's service. It was great to see so many people there from St Matthew's school and from the church. We felt very supported. I felt as if I was part of a community where people knew each other and cared for each other. This is something that I have missed since starting secondary school.

My favourite part of the service was the last song. It was 'Don't Worry' by Bob Marley. Everyone sang along and a lot of the mums cried. It summed up how we felt. We weren't worried about starting secondary school but we felt honoured to be part of a great community and sorry to be leaving it.

Matthew Nicholls

A Sermon preached by Mthr Helen at the Patronal Festival Mass

It has been lovely to have the opportunity, in preparing for today, to get to know St Matthew a little bit better. Matthew is not a saint with whom I have spent a great deal of time in the past, and I suspect that some of you, who have been here for many years and had the opportunity to hear a considerable number of sermons about him, know Matthew far better than I.

He seems a particularly appropriate patron saint for this church because his story encapsulates the overwhelmingly inclusive nature of the call of Christ. Everyone is accepted, everyone is loved, everyone is wanted – even despised tax collectors and sinners, those on the margins of society – and we at St Matthew’s place high importance on welcoming and accepting *all* people. Although I do wonder whether St Matthew is appropriate for us because we are inclusive, or whether it is the other way round: we are inclusive because a little of the spirit of St Matthew influences our ways and our worship.

Whichever, I have decided not to focus today on the theme of the inclusive acceptance of God for all, made manifest in Matthew’s story; not because I suspect you may have heard that sermon before, but rather because there was something else which struck me when I read the Gospel text.

What struck me was the very straightforward, basic way in which he is called to discipleship. It happens in just one verse: “As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, ‘Follow me’. And he got up and followed him.” That’s it. It is the most pared down, rudimentary call narrative in the Gospel.

Remember the call of the two pairs of brothers, Simon and Andrew, James and John? Jesus is watching them cast out their nets into the Sea of Galilee and says, ‘Follow me and I will make you fishers of men’, (or rather, fishers of people, as we say these days, in the interests of inclusivity!). Matthew doesn’t even get this, admittedly perplexing, incentive – ‘Follow me and I will.... give/do/make something of you’.

No, Matthew just gets a very brief, ‘drive by’ equivalent. I imagine it like this: Jesus is walking past, he turns his head, say, ‘Follow me’, and up Matthew gets and does just that. His response is immediate. He leaves his extremely lucrative career which, while it meant he was ostracized by

respectable Jewish society and considered unclean because he had to collaborate with the Romans in collecting taxes, *also* ensured he was extremely wealthy. After all, he had a house he could throw a good party in, and plenty of mates to invite – we know that because this is what he does in the next verse.

He is no slouch, Matthew, he is clever and resourceful. But he gets up, without a word, and leaves that life and the source of his income because Jesus has said two words to him: ‘Follow me’. Jesus does not say, ‘Look Matthew, I’ve got this group going, we meet together regularly to talk about the important things in life, God and stuff, and we have a bit of a laugh together. Why don’t you join us, if you fancy it and you’ve got nothing better to do, you just need to turn up once every few weeks’.

No, he says, ‘Follow me’. It is an urgent and serious call. ‘Follow me – come and be part of something that is special, indeed essential, which will make you whole as a person, which you actually can’t live without but you just don’t realise it yet’. There are no incentives, no promises for Matthew. Just the one invitation, an opportunity to respond, as Jesus walks by and calls out, ‘Follow me’.

And so this is the aspect of Matthew’s life I want us to focus on and learn from, not just today, but over the coming weeks and months. We are people called to follow Christ in the manner of our patron, Matthew. Matthew is a serious disciple. He is someone who hears the call of Jesus, re-orders his priorities and in doing so re-orders his life. He knows that this involves change and commitment, and sometimes struggle, but in just that one moment he recognises the call of his creator, and responds to the one who, through love, makes us whole.

Let us pledge ourselves to do the same. Amen.

May Fair 2011

After a really hectic April with Mthr Helen’s licensing and all the Easter celebrations, the May Fair crept up on us with alarming speed. The moral of this year’s Fair is you need more than four weeks to organise everything! However as usual the St Matthew’s crew knuckled down and turned up the pace to ensure all was ready. The committee, friends and families did more than their fair share of the work, in fact Diana Ovens has become queen of the Pound Shop in New Malden, finding bargain after bargain for us.

Recently the social committee tried to write a list of all the essential jobs to do before and after the Fair. We came up with a list of about forty-five items – quite a daunting prospect unless you have a great team of helpers who willingly give their time and energy to the cause.

This year Mthr Helen immediately rolled up her sleeves and was very keen to get stuck in, inviting friends to come along too and even persuading Hannah that there was no better way of spending a Saturday than painting countless faces!

A new venture this year was the wonderful food stall provided by the Korean Church families, with delicious food and a very generous donation of all their takings. Our grateful thanks go to Angela and her team.

Of course the stars of the show this year were the children from Caroline Sewell's ballet school. According to Caroline they were very keen performers. The audience loved watching the children who were totally charming. What a great idea from Caroline and we hope that she will want her pupils to perform again for us – please!

The weather was wonderfully kind on the day, and the Pimms and beer stalls were well patronised. The welcoming café area was very busy throughout the afternoon, where hungry shoppers could sample the filled rolls, Indian food, Korean food and ploughman's lunches together with drinks and cakes.

The high spots on the bric-a-brac stall were three chamber pots and a huge snooker table, a challenge for our stallholders to sell but they succeeded – round of applause! As always the home baking, books and gift stalls were very busy, and the bottle tombola tempted those with a taste for a liquid prize. The children were persuaded to part with their pocket money at the toys and dressing up stalls, while the children's raffle and Lucy's group kept the children busy with various activities.

Everyone helped to make the day go incredibly well, from the main raffle to the 'back room' staff. Even the clearing up afterwards wasn't too onerous; our late afternoon furniture removers were cheered by the news that we had taken £2,600 on the day – a remarkable total. So a huge thank you to all who helped in any way to make the day a great success and a super social occasion. Only a few weeks to go to the next one folks!

Janet McDonough

Introducing Fr Mark Budden

I am very grateful to Jean for giving me the opportunity to introduce myself properly, since you may have heard the news that I am looking forward to being licensed as NSM Associate Priest at St Matthew's on Sunday 6 November at the 9.30 am service. I have been an occasional, but regular, member of the St Matthew's congregation for about two and a half years, and it will be very good to join St Matthew's formally.

Jean suggested that this would be an opportunity to say something about myself. I was born and brought up near Salisbury, in Wiltshire, on the border with Hampshire. I read Scandinavian Studies at the University of East Anglia (UEA) and when I graduated, which was a very long time ago, I was fluent in Swedish, but sadly no longer. At UEA I was very involved with the Anglican Chaplaincy and decided to test my vocation to the ordained ministry just a few weeks before I took my final exams. I was successful and then spent 15 months working for the then Mission to Seamen, 3 months in Rotterdam and 12 in New Orleans, where I still have very good and dear friends. I began training at Lincoln Theological College but after a year felt it wasn't what God or I wanted me to be doing, so I joined the Home Office, where I have been working for 23 years, currently in Immigration in Croydon. I moved to South Wimbledon with the work and not long after started worshipping at Holy Trinity on the Broadway, where I was on Deanery Synod and Church Warden for a couple of terms. After a significant event, I felt nudged by God and decided to test my vocation again. I began training on the SEITE part-time ordination course in 2001, 10 years ago this week. It was a very good experience training for ministry while still immersed in the world, holding down a job etc. I was ordained Deacon in 2004 and served my title as Non Stipendiary (Voluntary) Honorary Assistant Curate at St Barnabas Church in Mitcham, a lovely place to be working with a super bunch of people. I was assigned there for 4 years until October 2008 and then, because of wishing to spend more time with my very elderly parents and the family, I was licensed with Permission to Officiate (PTO) from the Bishop of Southwark. During the 3 years since then I have very much enjoyed assisting at a good number of parishes and churches, primarily when they have been in an interregnum, not least of course St Matthew's.

I live in South Wimbledon, or Colliers Wood, or Merton, or Nelson's Fields, depending on which estate agent you refer to, and feel very much

that Wimbledon is home and where my friends are. I enjoy reading and belong to a Book Group, films and the theatre, eating out and entertaining with good conversation at home.

I am delighted to be coming to work with Mother Helen, I can't think of a better colleague and very much look forward to getting to know you better, but please bear with me if I don't remember names immediately.

With love and prayers,

Mark Budden (Father)

Celebrating the Korean War Veterans Day
by a member of the Korean Church at St Matthew's

Historical background

The Korean War (1950-53) began on 25 June 1950 when North Korea, supported by the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union, launched an invasion of South Korea. British soldiers fought as part of the United Nations multinational force, defending South Korea from the communist regime of North Korea.

The War was a result of the physical division of Korea by an agreement of the victorious Allies at the conclusion of the Pacific War at the end of World War 2. Following the surrender of Japan in 1945, American administrators divided the peninsula along the 38th parallel, with the UN troops occupying the southern part and the Soviet troops occupying the north. Despite attempts at reunification negotiations preceding the War, tensions intensified and cross border skirmishes and raids at the 38th parallel persisted. The situation escalated into open warfare when North Korean forces invaded South Korea in early morning of 25th of June 1950. To commemorate this forgotten war we, as migrant Koreans, invite war veterans to our church to participate in our annual Sunday Service on the anniversary of the Korean War.

Who are the War Veterans?

In total, 63,000 British soldiers and support officers took part in the Korean War. Out of this number, 1,078 were killed in action, 2,674 were wounded, while 1,060 were left missing or became prisoners of war.

Why War Veterans Day is celebrated in England and in other countries

Every year in Korea, we mark 25 June as our national memorial day. This is to reinforce to our generation as well as future generations, that there

should never again be a war in Korea, and to honor and respect all the war veterans who gave up their youth and life for our nation.

We, as Koreans living in UK, believe that we should also mark this day. We invite the British Korean War Veterans for a special Sunday Service and treat them to authentic Korean food. Since establishing our church 7 years ago, we have conducted this annual Korean War Veteran Service for the past 6 years on the last Sunday of every June. We are blessed to have the opportunity to meet the veterans who have fought for our nation and to thank them in person. It is enriching for all who attend, and is truly an honor for Koreans to meet them every year and hear their stories about their time in Korea.

Format of the War Veterans Sunday Service

Our Korean War Veterans Sunday Service is divided into two programs. In the first part, either our church minister or a special guest preaches a sermon. On this occasion we asked Mother Helen to share in God's Word to the veterans and their families. They have given up their lives to protect our country so it is our turn to give them the present-Gospel. We do this every year so that we utilize this opportunity to share the gospel with the veterans.

In the second part of the program, our Sunday school children and the youth groups present their well practised worship songs and dance. We are also blessed to have very skilled church members who perform their musical talents. This year, we had Miss Eunsley Park (Rev Park's daughter) playing her beautiful violin, followed by Mr Jaewoo Kim who is a professional opera singer, singing a traditional Korean folk song and a well known opera aria "Una furtive lagrima" from "L'elisir d'amore".

Every year, we also present Korean style gifts to the veterans. On receipt of our present, one of the veterans came forward and made a very moving speech. He told us about his time during the war, and also his return back to Korea recently. He was amazed by how advanced South Korea had become.

Who attended the service

Every year, we invite Korean War Veterans from the Surrey West and Wessex Branches. This year, we had 60 veterans and their families who joined our service.

Was the service different from your usual Sunday services?

Yes, obviously it was a different service on this day. We usually have 11am Service for the Sunday school teachers and 2pm for the main Sunday service. Usually, during this 2pm service, after the worship songs, all the Sunday school children come forward and Rev Park intercedes and prays for every single child. After this, all the children go up to the next building to have their own service. And of course we run the service in Korean so that the children will not forget their mother language.

However, on this special occasion, we had a joint service, and all in English. During the first half of the service, the veterans usually have a ceremonial walk up to the front of the church with the Korean and English national flags. We had the reading of God's word, followed by Mother Helen preaching God's message to us. The first half of the service ended with hymns and prayers. The second half of the service was more like an entertainment for the veterans to enjoy. They tell us every year how much they look forward to the performances, especially our little nursery children's show. We try to make the whole service as short and concise as possible as the veterans are in their late years and find it difficult to sit for a long period of time.

The celebration meal afterwards

We were so grateful that Mother Helen enjoyed our Korean food as well as the service. On normal Sundays our congregations rotate and cook one dish meals to share in fellowship after the service. However during this special Korean War service, everyone volunteered to prepare approximately 10 authentic home cooked meals. We study the sort of dishes the veterans enjoyed most from our 6 years of experience and attempt to adapt to their tastes as much as we can. We also prepare fresh fruits and cakes for desserts, so that the veterans and their families can relax and enjoy the authentic Korean food in full course. I am proud to say that the ladies in our congregations are some of the very best cooks I have ever encountered... and as a recently turned full time mum, I am still learning immensely from them.

Latest Update on the Korean Peninsula

As you may be aware, the Korean War armistice was signed on the 27 July 1953 and effectively ended the fighting at the 38th parallel, otherwise known as the Korean Demilitarised Zone. This strip of land now divides the two countries. Even so, skirmishes, incursions, and incidents between the combatants have continued since the Armistice was signed.

The latest incident between the two nations was triggered by the firing of artillery shells on South Korea's Yeonpeon, killing two military personnel and two civilians last year.



Detail from The Korean Veterans War Memorial, Washington DC

We are forever grateful to all the war veterans who have fought for our country in their youth. Back in those days, Korea was a poverty stricken country after being colonized by Japan. And most probably the veterans had never even heard of, or knew where Korea was, when they were asked to go. We can only imagine the pain and agony the veterans have gone through, not to mention their waiting families back home.

Thankfully, our generation has not experienced war in our lifetime and it was through the veterans' sacrifice that our country was able to keep our freedom and to be transformed into a major economy(4th largest in Asia and 12th in the world), a full democracy and a member of UN, WTO, OECD and G20.

We understand organizing this event is only a mere gesture for their sacrifice. However we only hope that the veterans can enjoy this event and tell us, the new generations of Koreans, about their time during the war so that we never forget their sacrifice, thank them with our hearts and reinforce to ourselves that there should never be another war in our country or anywhere else in the world.

Mrs Angela Bae

Finding Silence

Last week on the tube I saw these words on a poster advertising a new book:

“We've learnt to hurry
We've learnt to jostle
We've learnt to mind the closing doors
Won't someone Teach Us to Sit Still?”

How true! As I glanced at the poster I was walking quickly along the platform with several hundred other people who had just stepped off the

train at Bank station. It was another busy day and I was in a rush. Somehow, if I let them, my days can easily disappear into a haze of motion and noise. Sitting still and being quiet sometimes seems little more than a good idea.

The Finding Silence group is there to facilitate just that: sitting still together in silence. It offers a time to come together and be quiet. An opportunity to sit with each other, before God, for a period of time (typically 20 to 30 minutes) without engaging in conversation, reading or fiddling with mobile telephones. The best way to describe the silence is “silent prayer”. No specific technique or method is taught although the time is useful to practice a method if you have one. The time of silence is often introduced with a Psalm or other text and afterwards there is time for a short discussion.

If you are curious about exploring silence in this way, or would just like to experience what it’s like sitting quietly in the Lady Chapel after the sun sets and the last commuters make their way up Durham Road, come along. There is no commitment to attend on a regular basis so you are free to come whenever you can make it.

Finding Silence meets at 8pm in the Lady Chapel on the first and third Thursdays of each month. The notice sheet gives details of the next meeting.

John Carruthers



‘It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.’

The grainy, wobbly images taken on a hidden video camera will haunt me forever: a woman in a blue burka is helped off the back of a truck and stumbles, disorientated, into the centre of a packed football stadium in Kabul. She is made to kneel down then, before she has a chance to work

out what is happening, she is shot in the head and slumps to the ground. The crowd cheers.

In 2001, before the collapse of the Twin Towers, I watched a documentary entitled 'Beneath the Veil', which gave an horrific insight into life in Afghanistan under the Taliban. Whilst I, like most people, had always been deeply affected by news of human suffering in the world, this documentary led me to a new and chilling realisation; that human rights abuses and injustices are all too often state-sanctioned. Something else had struck me about 'Beneath the Veil': the journalist who had made the film had risked her life going undercover in Afghanistan to bring these stories of extreme fear and oppression into our safe, cosy living rooms in Britain. She had felt passionately enough about the plight of the Afghan people to act decisively and proactively.

But, not being an exceptional and brave journalist, what could *I* do in response to my own passionate feelings about the plight of the Afghan people? In fact, what could I do in response to the stories I'd been reading of human rights abuses in Burma, China, Iran, Mexico.... The list was endless and I felt powerless to help, other than to fill out the odd donation form that I could ill afford at the time. Then a leaflet fell out of my Saturday newspaper that grabbed my attention. It was for Amnesty International. I can't remember the exact wording, but it spoke of the issues in the world that were troubling me so deeply and also implied that I could actually do something about them. I decided immediately to join.

Amnesty International is celebrating its 50th birthday this year. The world's largest voluntary human rights organisation was initially born out of a newspaper article, 'The Forgotten Prisoners'. The article's author, lawyer Peter Benenson, was so outraged by the case of a group of Portuguese students who had been jailed simply for raising their glasses in a toast to freedom, that he called upon members of the public to register their disapproval. 1000 people initially responded to the article and the prisoners were eventually released. Within twelve months Amnesty International had supporters' branches in seven countries and had taken on 210 new cases of human rights violations across the world. Today, Amnesty, with over 3 million members across 150 countries, remains independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest or religion.

The aspect of Amnesty International that has held my own focus for the past decade has been its promotion of the role of the individual being a

powerful force for change in the world. Each bi-monthly magazine is full of different appeals and urgent actions for members to pursue. There are petitions to sign, letters to write and events to attend. Each issue also focuses on a handful of individual cases for our immediate attention. These usually include political prisoners who have been jailed simply for expressing their views in public, human rights activists who have been threatened, ordinary communities living in fear of violence or persecution, and those facing torture or the death penalty, which Amnesty remains strongly opposed to. I usually choose one or two cases to focus on per issue, depending on how much free time I have. This month I have chosen to write to the Iranian Ambassador in London about the case of a journalist and human rights activist who is currently serving a twelve year sentence, in poor conditions, for ‘contacts with enemy states, talking to foreign media and membership of an illegal organisation’. He was arrested during the wave of anti-government protests in the period following the disputed Iranian Presidential election and is considered by Amnesty International to be one of many prisoners of conscience in Iran. I will also be writing to the Mexican Government, calling for an urgent investigation into a report of the rapes and beatings of 27 women, following their arrests at a peasant farmers’ protest.

Writing letters on behalf of the oppressed has rarely proven difficult with a large organisation like Amnesty standing by me. It provides all the information I need and will even include template letters on its website to help me if I need them. Whereas I once felt overwhelmed and powerless at the evils of this world, I now feel empowered to make a difference, however small it may be. My solitary letter may not make a huge impact as it arrives at the Mexican presidential palace, but if thousands, perhaps even tens of thousands, of letters arrive at the same time, it is possible that someone may hear our collective voice and will act upon it.

My favourite time of year as an Amnesty International member has to be between November and January, when the annual Greetings Card Campaign is held. This is a chance for members and non-members alike to make contact with individuals and groups across the world, who have been subjected to human rights abuses, or who live in constant fear of them. The cases are varied, but all are deeply troubling. It can make a huge difference to a person’s wellbeing and morale to receive a message of solidarity and hope when everything else feels lost and desperate. Where appropriate a prayer can also be offered, although Amnesty offers very strict guidelines

regarding the safety of sending religious or political messages, depending on the country and the case.

For a few years now I have been sending a Christmas message to a man in Nigeria, who was arrested aged 14 and sentenced to death for armed robbery. This man is now in his late 20s and he has frequently spoken of the comfort and strength he has drawn from the thousands of cards he has received. His sentence was subsequently reduced to life, then to fourteen years imprisonment, and he may now be released within the year. The show of solidarity from around the world for his case will have undoubtedly made a difference here.

I often include a nod to victims of human rights abuses in my intercessions when my time comes around on the rota. If you feel unable to do anything else for the millions of individuals out there whose lives are blighted by fear and violence, please do consider sparing them a moment of quiet reflection and prayer. A few months ago I received a lovely card from Troy Davis*, who I had sent a message of solidarity during the last Greetings Card Campaign. Troy is currently facing the death penalty in the USA and has lived on death row for over 20 years, in spite of extreme doubts cast over his conviction. His handwritten reply to me included the following: 'Thank you so much for all your encouraging words. Having so many wonderful people like yourself in my life keeps my fight strong. God bless you...' This simple message from across the world was enough to give me the strength to continue my own fight for those who do not enjoy the same freedoms and safety that I do.

Life changed dramatically for the Afghan people not long after 'Beneath the Veil' was screened. The events of September 11th 2001 led to the U.N invasion of Afghanistan and the collapse of the Taliban. However, the Afghan people continue to face an uncertain future and I will continue to do what I can from my safe, cosy living room to help them, however small that contribution may be.



If anyone is interested in joining me for this year's Greetings Card Campaign, please contact sonja_timpson@yahoo.co.uk .

Sonja Timpson

**Troy Davis was executed at 4am on 22nd September 2011.*

Growing enjoyment at the Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability

The Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability is the large building on the A3 near Tibbet's Corner. Some members of the congregation know it well as they work as volunteers and help with fund raising, thank you very much. The hospital is a national medical charity, addressing rehabilitation and longer term needs of adults with complex neuro-disability, including those with Huntington's disease, multiple sclerosis, stroke and brain injuries. I am a biologist working in the research department, qualified in horticulture and nutrition.

Huntington's disease Residents of Goodman House suffer from Huntington's disease (HD), an hereditary condition that develops at about the age of 40 and causes physical (loss of balance and locomotion, speech, swallowing, and involuntary movements), and cognitive (changes in thought) symptoms like apathy and challenging behaviour. The disease is incurable but treatment is available for symptoms.

Civic stimulus: It all began with one of the regular visits of Wandsworth's mayor to Goodman House garden. At the time the garden was a weed ridden jungle – as the relatives who used to look after it had moved on. So I struck a deal. I would hack things back into shape if I could develop research related to the garden.

Hack back After wielding my secateurs and uprooting several sacks of weeds, a garden began to re-emerge. I was planting some forget-me-nots and a resident was following me around like a shadow. I asked her if she would like to plant; she nodded and the residents' gardening group began.

Learning on the job I learned by trial and error. Manufacturing industry experience helped me develop a simple, ergonomic way of gardening (a gardening workstation so everything was in easy reach of a resident). Advice from an ergonomist who gardens was not to use adapted tools and we never have. The residents can manage light items, so we use potting tools and an indoor watering can. The amazing thing was that 'apathetic' residents were coming out to the garden unprompted, to plant and maintain their own garden, then sweeping and watering in my absence.

Real plants We grew robust plants like wallflowers and geraniums, so residents gained confidence. I noticed a resident watching the gardening, he came from the Northern England farming stock. We planted what he wanted: potatoes, leeks and spinach.

Harvesting potatoes grown in pots is great fun, I pull out the haulms then the residents play lucky dip for potatoes in the damp compost, tactile and mucky. Covering José in compost is very satisfying for residents.

Winter Outdoor gardening is limited due to the weather. Indoors, residents make their own calendar and wall hangings with photos of the garden.

I tried a paper garden which was a flop and residents told me in no uncertain terms they wanted real plants, soil and water. A potting tidy was purchased for indoor gardening, planting bulbs and potting on geraniums. An article on Winter gardening activities is published in a learned journal, the editor kindly describing this as 'rehabilitation in action'.



Principles:

- The residents choose what to grow.
- They do as much as they possibly can, with minimal assistance.
- The garden produce and photographs are used for: crafts, ceramics, computing and cooking. Residents eat the vegetables they grow cooked to a consistency they can swallow.

Wider usage After meeting a psychiatrist at an HD conference, I was invited to try gardening at a day centre in Stoke-on-Trent. Carrying plants and tools on the train was entertaining, the taxi marshal at Stoke grabbed my many bags and programmed me into a cab. The gardening method worked well with the HD clients. Brain injury patients in Wimbledon found this form of gardening fun too.

Research was needed to help other HD neuro-rehabilitation centres adopt gardening. This needed money. This was donated by: The Hamamelis Trust, Neuro-disability Research Trust and Suttons Seeds. Ethical approval was granted by Charing Cross Hospital Research Ethics Committee.

Study methodology: Views of residents, visitors and staff were captured with questionnaires and interviews. Residents used a specially designed

pictorial questionnaire that worked well and overcame communication problems.

Results The project has provided clear evidence that the replanted garden is valued and enjoyed by all three groups. The appearance of the garden was satisfactory, you cannot have too many flowers!

Residents enjoyed growing both flowers and vegetables, but preferred bulbs to seeds and enjoyed watering and sweeping. Labelling their plants with their name was very important and provided ownership in a communal setting. Being outside in the sun and the quiet of the garden was important. The most interesting result was preference for red and pink flowers. German research indicates the disease affects the eyes and visual parts of the brain, our residents may not see blue well.

Staff said gardening provides a sense of achievement, is a constructive, outdoor activity and promotes social interaction. Half the staff said the activity was problem free and a third used the garden for therapy. It provides an oasis for staff to regain their equilibrium when treating challenging patients.

Visitors used the garden for quite long periods (over an hour) on Summer visits to meet with residents. They were very encouraging about the activity for their relatives and made suggestions on improving the environment.

Interviews The frequency of words used by interviewees was examined. The verbs used most often were active: plant, sweep, grow and maintain. The nouns were: enjoyment, colour, flower, owner(ship), and vegetables. This is encouraging evidence that we are meeting therapy objectives and providing enjoyable leisure.

Other garden activities

The garden helped the hospital win the London Hospital Gardens Gold Award 2010. Residents were sure they would win, more than I was.... We await the verdict of the Royal Horticultural Society's Community Gardening Scheme judge. We make presentation pots of plants for relatives, staff and visitors. The residents complain to my manager if I am late for their group....but we have great fun. We receive many visitors in the garden which the residents enjoy, we have a visitor's book. The Mayor of Wandsworth has his niche in the ecology of the garden.

José Spring, R&D Co-ordinator August 2011