

A view from The BRIDGE



'Sweet singing in the choir...'

As I travel around the Diocese visiting various churches I see lots of different varieties of church choir. From the Cathedral choir in its

many forms – men and boys, men and girls and the Greater Choir when they all come together - to the small choir struggling to exist and the really excellent large ones. Wherever I go, though, it is hard to come across a more internationally famous choir than the one at St Phillip's, Norbury where the boys form the singing group 'Libera' who have become especially popular in Japan where they are often mobbed by screaming girls!

There has been some press coverage recently of the fact that young boys are more interested in computers and football than they are in singing in Cathedral choirs. But, I know from the experiences of a child of a friend how much fun singing in a choir can be and the number of really exciting and unique experiences that choir members can have.

So, it's important then to recognise the value of our church choirs and the time and energy invested in them because, as well as helping the congregations to worship God they can also help those involved – especially the young people – to grow and develop.

Featuring 'Libera' - and the work that they are doing (see the centrespread) - is a way of featuring the great work that many of our choirs do. But, not everyone can, or wants to, sing and so it is important too that we as churches continue to invest in other youth work and provide opportunities for young people to grow and develop through their interactions with the Church.

This might be through uniformed organisations, drama, the youth group work, week by week, and visits or weekends away. But whatever is appropriate in your part of Southwark Diocese, it's well worth remembering that those good experiences when young can help to ensure that our youth of today continue to stick to church and become the adults of the church of tomorrow.

Wendy S Robins

Cathedral's 'Big Ring' goes wrong!

Southwark Cathedral bellringers' attempt to ring a record peal of 14,000 changes in about 11 hours on Bank Holiday Monday (1 May) was unsuccessful - but they plan to try again at a future date to be fixed.

After ringing for approximately three and a quarter hours, two bells 'swapped over' - i.e. rang in the opposite order from the intended sequence. As a result the mathematical formula was destroyed as the bells would ultimately ring in that order again later in the attempt and so it would include a repeated sequence, making it invalid.

"That is why such peals are called 'attempts'," said the Dean, the Very Rev. Colin Slee "The ringers are to be congratulated on trying and encouraged to think of another occasion when they could suitably attempt such an audacious undertaking again.

"We still hold the world record for a peal on bells of this enormous weight!"

The aim was to mark the 1400th anniversary of the foundation of the convent on the site of Southwark Cathedral. The plan was for twelve ringers - with no substitutes allowed - to ring the Cathedral bells continuously for 14,000 changes without repeating the order in which the bells were rung. The ringers were led by Paul Mounsey. The others were Michael Moreton, Andrew Graham, Stephen Mitchell, Ian Mills, Mike Palmer, Matthew Young, Chris McCarthy, Oliver Cross, Hilary Small, Andrew Mills, and Peter Valuks.

CCTV cameras in the ringing chamber and belfry enabled visitors to watch on screens inside the Cathedral.

Flowers build community link

A flower festival at Christ Church with St Philip, Worcester Park on 20 and 21 May will coincide with unveiling of the church's plans for its Future Links building project.

Future Links involves the refurbishment of the existing halls and a new link building between the halls and church, with a new entrance lobby and coffee bar.

Flower decorations are being provided by groups associated with the church, youth organizations who meet in the halls and, hopefully, local

schools. The display will be open to the public from 10am to 5pm on Saturday 20 May and 11am to 4pm on Sunday 21.

The Under 5's will be undertaking a half mile 'Sponsored Toddle' on the Saturday from 11am to 12 noon around the old churchyard raising funds for Barnardos and for Future Links.

Bethlehem - an 'open prison' says its Mayor



THE MAYOR of Bethlehem described the city as an 'open prison' when the Rev. Charles Bradshaw met Dr Victor Bartarseh - a Syrian Christian - as part of a recent visit to understand what is happening to Christians in the Holy Land.

Charles Bradshaw told The Bridge "the Mayor described Bethlehem as an 'open prison' - surrounded by the great 'security' wall cutting off farmers from their fields and olive groves.

"To enter or leave the city requires permission from the Israeli authorities which has a devastating effect on families whose members live in the Jerusalem or the West Bank.

Christians are leaving the city in enormous numbers and emigrating to the USA as the only way that they can see a future for their children.

Charles said "We discussed the Hamas election victory which the Mayor puts down to the fact that the previous administration was corrupt and had not been working with the poor. He is not concerned that this will change his city and there is no suggestion in his mind that Sharia law would be brought in.

"The Mayor thanked us for coming to his city and begged for more visitors and pilgrims. There is mass unemployment in the town and they are desperate for visitors to stay and spend money!"

ABOVE: Charles Bradshaw (left) with the Mayor, is Parish Education Officer and a Team Vicar in Caterham Team Ministry.

£500,000 grant enables start of St Luke's Hospital refurbishment

St Luke's Hospital for the Clergy has been awarded a grant of £500,000 from the Laing Family Trusts to fund the modernisation and refurbishment of the hospital's operating theatre.

The theatre work is part of a much larger development project that the hospital has to carry out in order to comply with current care standards.

The total cost of the project is £2.7 million and the hospital has currently raised just over £1.6 million.

John Cherry, Chief Executive of St Luke's, said: "We are now able to start the most essential work. We will close the hospital and hand it over to builders on 22 May. It will be reopened again in early 2007".

St Luke's provides free medical and surgical treatment for Anglican clergy, their spouses and dependent children, from the UK and third world countries where health care is inadequate. In addition, it cares for overseas missionaries who would not be covered by the NHS.

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The Queen's 80th birthday

Prayers and worship resources to assist churches in celebrating the Queen's 80th birthday have been placed on the Church of England website. While some churches held their celebration around the actual birthday (21 April), many will be holding services in June - following the lead of the national service at St Paul's Cathedral on 15 June. The resource material can be found at: www.cofe.anglican.org/prayers

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