

ST. OLAVE'S CHURCH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND RELATED EVENTS

We are now in the midst of our 29th season of special events, directed as usual by St. Olave's Rector, the **Reverend Canon Robert Mitchell**.

The calendar year began with our **Epiphany Eve** service on Friday 5th January at 7, followed by light refreshments at 7.30 and **Debbie Cowling's** illustrated feature talk about *The Beauty of Dutch Art*. She presented colourful slides from her recent visit to Amsterdam, Leiden, Haarlem and The Hague, including the glorious art of Rembrandt, Vermeer, Van Gogh and more; plus the Rijksmuseum, Anne Frank's House, several other museums, the Grote Kerk in Haarlem, canals and other charming Dutch architecture.

Choral Evensong for Candlemas (moved to Sunday 4th February) was followed by *Isaac Watts 350*. To mark this major anniversary year, our music director **Jeremy Tingle** discussed the history of Anglican hymns, focusing on Watts's 18th-century paraphrases of the psalms.

Our six-part **Lenten Series** on *Images of Pilgrimage* was co-produced with St. Bartholomew's Church, featuring their Rector, **Dr. Walter Hannam**. His discussions were based on a newly published book of six essays by the late Robert Crouse entitled *Images of Pilgrimage: Paradise and Wilderness in Christian Spirituality*. Each event opened with a light supper at 6.30 downstairs, followed by a discussion upstairs at 7, plus a short Compline service at about 8. We were delighted that Addus was able to provide hot casseroles for all our light suppers, for the first time since the start of the pandemic.

Choral Evensong for St. George was on 28th April (moved from 23rd) followed by *Best of the Bard*, with the words and music of William Shakespeare presented by **St. Olave's Arts Guild**. Their guest musicians were pianists Jiayi Liu and Dune Pompa, who added some delightful short pieces (with Shakespearean connections) by Bach, Beethoven, Chopin and Rachmaninoff.

This year's **Ascensiontide** service was a day later than usual, on Friday 10th May (to accommodate some other Thursday bookings), at 6. It was followed by a wonderful Irish stew supper, prepared by Addus, plus an illustrated hour-long feature talk about **Sally and Noel Lien's** Yacht Trip from Ireland to Canada. They presented many colourful slides from their summer 2023 tour from south-east Ireland via Scotland, crossing through the sound of Barra to Iceland, then from Halifax up the St. Lawrence River to Toronto. Most compelling were their dramatic descriptions of the complexity of launching and sailing such a small boat across the enormous Atlantic Ocean, overcoming so many obstacles to arrive safely at each port.

Choral Evensong for Charles III was held on Sunday 9th June. It was followed by a delicious **Royal Afternoon Tea**, prepared by Debbie Cowling, which included an illustrated feature talk, *Our King's Life and Interests*, presented by historian **Reverend Dr. Jim Leatch** (who was our Deacon, as well as being Chaplain at Royal St. George's College), about His Majesty's long period as the former Prince of Wales.

The 2023/24 season ended with our popular **Patronal Festival** on Sunday 28th July, with **Choral Evensong for St. Olave's Eve** followed directly by the Patronal Barbecue at about 5 p.m.

Choral Evensong for St. Luke on Sunday 20th October was followed by an illustrated music feature on *Stanford's Centenary: Victoriana Revisited*, in which **Robert Busiakiewicz** examined the life, music and Victorian influences of the famous Anglo-Irish composer and conductor Sir Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924). Robert had presented two talks for us in 2023, on Vaughan Williams and William Byrd.

The **All Saints** service on Friday 1st November at 6 was followed by another light supper prepared by Addus. The feature talk was *Choir Tour of Portugal and Spain*, when the **Reverend Dr. Jim Leatch** presented slides from his trip last June with Royal St. George's College.

The Arts Guild's pre-Christmas event was on Sunday 24th November. **Choral Evensong** with St. Anne's Choir was followed by *Let in the Light*, with a dramatic reading of *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* co-ordinated by **Donna Morrison-Reed** plus some improvised piano music played by **Peter Tiefenbach**.

As always, we cannot overstate our appreciation for the generous help of our leaders and volunteers, without whom there are no events. In particular:

- Our speakers for their feature talks and discussion series throughout the year.
- Rector **Reverend Canon Robert Mitchell** and Music Director **Jeremy Tingle** for Choral Evensongs.
- **St. Olave's Arts Guild** and their guests, led by **Annis Tebbutt** and later **Donna Morrison-Reed**, for their wonderful words-and-music events.
- **Judy Beal** for advertising and publicity and **Janice Douglas** for website content and video broadcasts.
- **Sheila Tait, Bette Birmingham, Margaret Roze** and **Judy Sher** and others for assisting with suppers.
- The many members of the congregation who read Lessons from the Bible and thoughtful Meditations.

*William Cowling
Religious Education Co-ordinator
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