

Religious Education and Related Events

Respectfully submitted by William Cowling

We are now in the midst of our 30th season of special events, under the direction of St. Olave's Rector, the Reverend Canon Robert Mitchell. The first event in this series was on All Saints Day in 1996, so we are looking forward to marking this year's forthcoming anniversary on 1st November.

Last year's events opened with an Epiphany service on Monday 6th January, followed by a light supper with a Scottish theme. The feature talk was *A Tour of Edinburgh and Glasgow*, as Debbie Cowling presented her slides of art, architecture, history and street scenes of Scotland's two main cities plus Oban, the gateway to the Scottish islands.

On Sunday 26th January, Choral Evensong was followed by *The Song-Book of Anna of Cologne*. Around 1500 AD, the Beguine nun Anna of Cologne cherished a pocket-sized song-book, full of touching devotional texts, popular tunes and Gregorian chant (including *In dulci jubilo*). Singer and mediæval fiddler Katherine Hill presented the book's history, including a selection of its Latin and German songs.

For our 2025 Lenten Series, Evening Prayer services were on Tuesday evenings (11th March to 8th April inclusive), followed by a light supper. Then Elizabeth Jackson Hall and the Rector presented five weekly informative discussions entitled *Grace in Every Stroke: Lenten Prayer through Calligraphy*.

On Sunday 30th March, Choral Evensong was followed by an illustrated music feature on *Bruckner 200*, in which our music director Jeremy Tingle explored the life, works and influences of Austrian composer and organist Anton Bruckner (1824-96), as we continued marking the bicentenary year of his birth.

On Sunday 11th May, Choral Evensong for the second anniversary of King Charles III's Coronation was followed by a feature on *Words and Music for Royal Occasions* co-ordinated by Donna Morrison-Reed with St. Olave's Arts Guild and several guest musicians.

The Ascension Day service on Thursday 29th May at 6 was followed by a light supper. The illustrated feature talk was *Arctic Ministry Past and Present* with Wycliffe College's Chaplain, the Very Reverend Chris Dow, who discussed his time in the north as the Rector of St Jude's Cathedral in Iqaluit and as Dean of the Diocese of the Arctic.

Our 2024/25 season concluded with our annual Patronal Festival on Sunday 27th July, opening with Choral Evensong at 4, followed by a delicious barbecue downstairs.

Our new season opened on Sunday 28th September with Choral Evensong for Michaelmas Eve, followed by an illustrated music feature entitled *Love, Music and the Bible*, presented by Dr. Mark Whale, the founder and director of the Lavinia Choral Ensemble (whose concerts take place mainly at St. Olave's).

The Rector's Autumn Book Series discussed *The Return of the Prodigal Son* by Henri Nouwen, on four Wednesdays between 29th October and 19th November inclusive.

Our event on Tuesday 4th November opened with a service marking the Octave of All Saints. It was followed by a light supper, then a feature talk on *Censorship* with our Honorary Assistant, the Reverend Dr. P.J. Carefoote. The former librarian of the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library explored literary censorship from the Renaissance to the present, based on his book *Forbidden Fruit: Banned, Censored and Challenged Books from Dante to Harry Potter*.

Our pre-Christmas event was on Sunday 23rd November, opening with Choral Evensong, followed by a special feature entitled *Putting the Garden to Bed*, with seasonal stories, poems and music presented by St. Olave's Arts Guild, co-ordinated by Donna Morrison-Reed.

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 Donna Morrison-Reed, for their wonderful words-and-music events.
- Judy Beal and Lisa Tait for advertising and publicity, as well as Janice Douglas for website content and video broadcasts.
- Sheila Tait and many others for assisting with all the delicious weeknight suppers prepared by Addus.
- The many members of the congregation who read Lessons from the Bible and thoughtful Meditations.