

A Week is a Long Time in Church!

Reflections on Holy Week, 2011

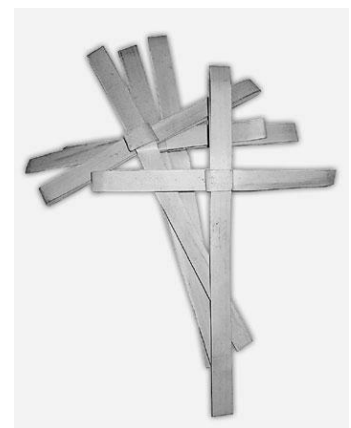


The Holy Cross Outdoor Easter Garden, 2011

Neil Richardson writes...

It started on Saturday 16th April, as we gathered at 9pm in the Old Church for Compline, in anticipation of participating in Holy Week, the culmination of the season of Lent, and the expression in liturgy, music and prayer of the church's faith in Jesus Christ.

It ended on Sunday 24th April, at 12.45pm, as we held the service of Baptism in the Old Church. This year, the celebration of Holy Week, despite a few accidental liturgical mistakes, was really good. It was good in that so many people co-operated in the preparation and presentation of the services and associated social activities. So many things just seem to happen or appear in church at the right time, in the right place! From the equipment needed for the Palm Sunday to the equipment needed to light the brazier for the Service of new Fire and lighting the Paschal candle, to the floral decorations, it all came together, somehow, mysteriously, but securely and without fuss.



Several people mentioned that the singing of the choir this year was better than average and the choice of music was really appropriate and suited to the small forces to hand in the choir. The singing of the Passion Gospel on Good Friday was well-received. Nobody complained about the hymns (a most unusual state of affairs!) and the readers all turned up at the right time and read the right readings.

Rehearsals and planning are obviously a key to success. The choir rehearse regularly of course, and on the Saturday before Palm Sunday, the servers rehearsed the main events and revised their role in them. From any perspective, the capacity to get things wrong is large! These are things we do only once a year and we can't be expected to remember them. From the point of view of the clergy, the responsibility to get things right produces an anxiety and that drives a deep study of the whole Holy Week production well in advance.

Numbers were not particularly higher than in previous years, but they were up, and to some extent, this could be put down to the serious emphasis given the subject during Lent. Not only did the Lent groups look at Holy Week in detail, but the sermons for the first 4 Sundays also presented the issues in anticipation of the study, so even if you were not in a Lent Group, you heard something about Holy Week in Church, co-ordinated to enhance your experience of this tremendous series of services.

The start of the Walk of Witness started at 10am, rather than 10.30am, and that took quite a lot of people by surprise, but next year it will be the same, so now you know! I still feel a little awkward about the Walk of Witness. Especially as we walked down Oldfield Lane South, it did feel that we were squeezing people off the pavement and on to the road, or pushed up against the wall. It must have seemed intimidating for some, or even rude for others? What sort of witness is that? Christians behaving selfishly? Perhaps we ought to apply for police permission to walk on the carriageway, but that only annoys motorists. How can our witness be a witness to the Cross of Christ rather than a witness to our insensitivity to other people's normal activities?

One of the highlights is the office of Tenebrae, a dramatic re-telling of the passion story as one by one, candles are snuffed out, eventually leaving the church in total darkness. As the congregation sit in the dark, suddenly there is a clattering crash of percussion, making them jump out of their skin. This is a very special service and if you missed it, make sure to be there next year.

The Easter Vigil is the start of the first Mass of Easter. The Vigil is essentially a series of readings from the Jewish Scriptures which bring to our mind the major acts of God as we read them. These are interspersed with psalms and collects. Sounds boring? Maybe to some. But it is remarkably good to just sit and listen, mark, learn and inwardly digest these ancient stories which are the foundation of so much of our civilisation in the West. It is easy to forget details. It is easier to gloss over difficulties and remember only the congenial. Just sitting and listening to it all has a salutary effect and refreshes the whole Easter celebration. This Vigil can take up to 60 minutes to finish, and then we go to the New Fire and the movement from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant, sealed with the blood of Christ on the Cross of Calvary. This year, we really ought to have started at 4.30am, not 5.30am. Next time, Easter Day in 8th April, and so dawn will be later.



Resurrection by Daniel Bonnell

Easter Sunday went on to include 6 baptisms at 9.30am, with lots of fun, of course. Then we came to the end of the week with a final baptism at noon. We wouldn't have had room at the 9.30am for the 90 people who attended at noon because it was standing room only!

The addition of children's work on Good Friday and Easter Day was very useful and I was really grateful to the members of the congregation who volunteered to lead it. This work allowed adults to attend the church services without worrying about children and also provided good age-appropriate activity and learning.

The flowers this year were really excellent, especially the Garden of Gethsemane in the Old Church for the Maundy Thursday Vigil. There is something exciting about an interior being made to look and feel like an exterior. I thought that this was a really good feature of the interior of Westminster Abbey at the royal wedding on 29th April. Next year, perhaps we will even have a water feature? (Only joking!)

Well done, everyone involved in Holy Week. It was one of the best ever during my time at Holy Cross!

Malcolm Ede's take on the subject!

I have listed my comments in the order of importance, as I see it, as follows:-

1) The Annual Parochial Church Meeting.

I see this meeting as very important as it's the culmination of our activities as Christian people here in Holy Cross, Greenford over the previous year.

Having said this, I think the attendance of just 25 people at the meeting on Thursday 28th April was lamentable considering that we have an Electoral Roll of 234 people. Last year the APCM attracted 45 people. However, even offering some cheese and wine after the meeting this time was not enough to encourage more people to attend.

I would like to see the APCM given more prominence next year such that the meeting takes place in the middle of Holy Week. I know that there will be considerable resistance to such a proposal but, in my view, the business that we transacted over the previous year should be seen as an integral part of our worship as a Church. People will say that to have the APCM in the middle of Holy Week would disturb their "devotions" but how we use our money and resources should be seen as our offering to God too and a major part of our devotions.

2) Having the Hot Cross Buns in the Parish Room after the 3pm Good Friday Service.

This proposal was put forward in order to have the main body of the New Church reserved for people to enjoy the quiet after the 3pm Good Friday Service. However, very few, if any, people seemed to stay behind in the New Church after the Service whilst the rest of us went into the Parish Room to enjoy Hot Cross Buns and Tea or Coffee. I would ask that, next year, we revert to the original situation of having refreshments in the main body of the New Church as has happened in the past.

As an overall point, I would not welcome Holy Cross Church sliding into "religiosity" and I think that some aspects of the course that we are currently pursuing are in danger of this.

Jenny Quick's response

WHERE WERE YOU? THE APCM

There was a poor turnout at the APCM on 28 April 2011. Only 28 parishioners against 226 names on the Electoral Roll. SO WHERE WERE YOU?

It is obvious that you care because you have helped to raise a staggering £250k over the past 8 years which is phenomenal. So you can imagine how disappointing it is not to have seen you on a most important night of the year, the business. We missed you. SO WHERE WERE YOU?

We voted new members of the PCC and the Edward Betham Trust. It could have been you. SO WHERE WERE YOU?

All the various committees are doing an amazing job. If you are new or an existing member at Holy Cross, don't be shy. Please come and join in. We are looking for new ideas, new ways to raise money and new friends. We need you. Go on, you know you want to get involved. I have been coming to Holy Cross for the past three years and I am in awe of the hard work that goes on behind the scenes. There is a very dedicated band of workers and fund raisers at Holy Cross. Speak to a Warden or Neil the rector if you feel that you have something to offer and come along and join in.

At next year's APCM you will be able to say **I WAS THERE!**