Friends of St Martin-in-the-Fields
Winter Newsletter 2021

A Bridge to Belonging
Friends of St Martin-in-the-Fields

President

Revd Dr Sam Wells, Vicar of St Martin-in-the-Fields

Committee

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Please remember to notify us if you change your address or contact details.
Chairman’s Introduction

Dear Friends,

*Reflections 2020*

A very happy and healthy 2021 to all members following a year we will all never forget. It was unfortunate that we were unable to celebrate our annual Festival and while understandable it meant that we were not able to offer the opportunity for social fellowship which is such a big part of being a Friend of St Martin.

Despite this it is important to recognise that there were no shortage of opportunities in 2020 to help others in less fortunate circumstances and we are very grateful as an association to have been able to play a small part on behalf of all those who have contributed to the Friends of St Martin-in-the-Fields.

These resources have enabled us to guarantee that the Sunday International Group will have the resources to provide hot meals for all their guests throughout 2021.

There have also been many other positive responses by the church in an effort to continue to fulfil its ministry and I have taken this opportunity to highlight one or two examples from 2020 of what makes SMITF such a special community starting with the wise words contained in Sam’s message on Palm Sunday.

The Friends of St Martin provides a bridge to belonging for all our members throughout the world and our wish is for everyone to enjoy a safe and uplifting 2021.

*Bob Demming*

*Chairman*
A Message from Sam Wells
Palm Sunday 2020

Dear Friends, Colleagues and Supporters,

I hope this finds you well and safe, and that you are finding forms of community to uphold you in the face of isolation and anxiety.

I’ve started to think of this pandemic season in terms of the Noah story. It started to rain, and Noah and companions built the ark. Then the ark took to water, and the rain continued for 40 days. Then Noah sent out a raven, but there was no land. Then he sent out a dove, and eventually the dove brought back a twig; and Noah knew the flood was over.

It’s a story in three parts – the building, the sailing and the landing; and right now we’re still in the building period. Ally’s letter below describes the momentous experience this has been as 112 people are now on furlough. Right now we’re in the middle of calculations and conversations about what measures we can take to get us through the ‘flood.’ I anticipate there’ll be a period when we’re afloat but will still feel powerless. And at some stage we’ll send out the dove.

I’m not going to pretend any of this is easy or welcome, or that anyone has a secret telescope to see months ahead how it will pan out. Nonetheless it’s been a significant time for our online ministry, with worship, discussion, fellowship and song all flourishing on Facebook. We’ve continued to try to be present with the most vulnerable among us and around us. Necessity is the mother of invention – and there’s been a lot of healthy invention this last two or three weeks.

I hope as you read this you know like never before that you are St Martin’s. We’re not just a building, not just a church, not just a dynamic institution – we’re a spirit, animated by a holy spirit: and you make up a vital part of that spirit, perhaps more vital now than in the normal times we so recently and so suddenly left behind. These are tough – for some, terrible – times. But if we emerge from them wiser, more grateful for one another, and clearer in our purpose, they will not have been wasted.

Sincerely,
Sam
Juliet Stevenson reads the Passion Gospel

*The Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew, read by Juliet Stevenson from her home for the Palm Sunday service at St Martin-in-the-Fields on 5 April.*

It has become a tradition at St Martin's that Palm Sunday sees the performance of The Passion Play by members of the Sunday International Group and wider community. As that wasn't possible this year, Revd Richard Carter arranged an alternative: The Passion Gospel read by Juliet Stevenson. This beautiful film includes music from St Martin's Voices and scenes from inside our church.

To view head to https://youtu.be/Vy7pYcKosyU

**St Martin-in-the-Fields – Online**

One of the wonderful things we have discovered in this time is how many of the public around the world want to join us as we worship.

Each morning prayer currently attracts over 4000 people viewing our service with over 700 people interacting by clicking like or leaving a comment.

The comments we have received are often from people who don’t normally attend church but have now found us to be an essential part of their daily routine and a source of kindness and hope.

If you would like to join us in our daily or weekly public worship you can find them at www.facebook.com/stmartininthefields/

Please share this link with any friends who might find it helpful.
Because of the danger of spreading the virus special arrangements were made to ensure that the Sunday International Group continued to serve their guests. These protocols included outside- sanitising hands, getting the guests to spread out and observe two metres distance, individually packing paper carrier bags with hot food and fruit with small bottles of hand gel and packets of paper handkerchiefs. The food had been beautifully and carefully prepared by Jeff Claxton. More people than ever were hungry and in need and Richard and Sophie Tyler fed as carefully and safely as they possibly could about 75 people. The problem all churches have faced whether it be foodbanks, day centres, hot meals, or night shelters is how to go on caring without abandoning and yet making sure most importantly of all that the virus did not spread.

The Friends were able to give the Sunday International Group an additional grant to help one of the guests into hotel accommodation to keep them safe during this crisis. The accommodation included a self-contained room and individual small kitchens for £40 a night for up to 3 months.

Examples of those in need were as follows:

One 74 year old who had a placement with a refugee host but who in the light of the crisis was asked to leave as his host was elderly and her family and doctor thought she needed to be isolated. This meant that a member of our Sunday International Group since its beginning, a steward, regular member of our church was left without a home.

Another is an international student who is doing his MA in London but has run out of money months ago and has been sleeping on buses and
walking the streets, using libraries to try and do his assignments until they were closed. He has been a regular member of our International Group in order to get a hot meal, shower and his clothes washed.

Another an asylum seeker and member of our International Group who has been waiting for months for a response from the Home Office. He has been sleeping at Heathrow airport but that has been closed and he reckons more than 120 homeless people who slept there moved on. In the cold he didn’t have anywhere to go.

These were desperate situations, especially in a pandemic and it is wonderful to see guests beaming from ear to ear. “For the first time in weeks I feel at peace and have slept without fear and no longer forced to be constantly on the move”

Father Richard writes:

Dear Bob,

I am writing on behalf of our Sunday International Group to thank the Friends of St Martin’s so very much for this incredibly generous contribution to the work and expenses of our Sunday International Group which will make our work possible in the coming year. I would be very grateful Bob if you could convey our deep gratitude to all the members of the Friends. As I wrote in my request the needs of SIG are greater than ever but your unanimous generous contribution has made this work possible.

Yesterday we held our third group since lock-down and it was wonderful to see people returning and being able to get showers, laundry done and a hot meal. Most of all it is important to continue to build relationships of trust and support with people who have so often felt lost and with no recourse. I wish you could have seen how grateful everyone was yesterday- with a choice of chicken or vegetarian curry, Jeff Claxton’s Shepherd’s Pie and a real sense of community and care, though socially distanced. So many expressed their gratitude as they left last night.

I am so grateful to the Friends for continuing to help us in this really wonderful way. We will endeavour to keep you up to date with the work of this International Group. I am copying in Sophie Tyler who has helped so much in the organisation of our response for the SIG during COVID and our ongoing plans.

With very best and much gratitude

Richard
St Martin’s Voices

SMV were privileged to provide the music for the Archbishop of Canterbury’s special service for Mothering Sunday from Lambeth Palace, which was broadcast on BBC Radio 4 and 39 BBC local radio stations, as well as on the Church of England and Lambeth Palace social media channels.

St Martin’s Voices have also been working with the Archbishop of Canterbury and his Chaplain, Isabelle Hamley, in recording Prayer during the Day and Night Prayer from Lambeth Palace. Following the lockdown, the music recordings for these continued with members of St Martin’s Voices from their living rooms!

You can read a review at www.telegraph.co.uk/radio/what-to-listen-to/high-praise-unique-powerful-virtual-worship

VE Day 8 May 1945

A reflective piece from St Martin's archivist, Michael Hellyer

As can be seen regularly at this time on the Newsreels repeated on our TV news & current events programmes on many channels, thousands of people thronged Trafalgar Square, including St Martin’s, on VE Day. Although the official declaration of Unconditional Surrender was broadcast on the public address speakers in Trafalgar Square and elsewhere at 3.00pm that day, the news was (officially) leaked out the day before, so people were well informed and turned up in the Square as the natural place to celebrate publicly great national events.

There was cheering and dancing, and we have a collection of pictures in the archives of the celebrations. Thousands of people (literally) also passed through St Martin’s - numbers that would have made a Billy Graham Crusade 10 years later look like a sedate afternoon tea party!

The then vicar, Eric Loveday, held both planned and improvised services of thanksgiving throughout the day in addition to the many who popped in for a quick individual prayer of thanksgiving, including many who had
never expected that they would ever enter a church, let alone sit or kneel in a pew and “give thanks”. The war experience had brought people together against a physical threat to their well being; just as the current lockdown has created a greater sense of social cohesion within many communities, despite the social distancing of 2 metres. Not for us the dancing, the physical closeness, or even the climbing of lamp posts that there was then - at least not at the moment!!!

The celebrations in 1945 heralded in many ways a new beginning and today we can celebrate the National Health Service for instance, which was established in July 1948 utilising many of the wartime regulations the Government had in place from wartime to push this revolutionary process through the political & social system. We do not know yet, whether there will be such a tremendous new beginning after lockdown, but changes undoubtedly, there will be. Maybe having just left the EU, Europe as a whole, including Britain, may well find that it needs closer co-operation to overcome the economic as well as the health issues following on from the contemporary plague we are currently experiencing.

Maybe after 75 years, we shall experience something of the magnitude of outcomes that followed that VE day in 1945? Whatever, St Martins is bound to be there on the edge of the Square, but at the heart of the issues.
More from St Martin in the Fields - Online

Weekly Sung Services by the Choral Scholars

We were delighted to welcome back our Choral Scholars in person for the autumn term. Each week they are pre-recording two choral services – **Lighten our Darkness**, a contemporary sung service of evening prayer which is broadcast on **Mondays at 6.00pm**, and **Morning Song** on **Fridays at 8.30am**.

Please do tune into the St Martin’s Facebook page to start and end the working week with thirty minutes of beautiful readings, prayers and choral music.

www.facebook.com/stmartininthefields

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**Inspired to Follow: Art and the Bible Story - Sin**

‘Inspired to Follow: Art and the Bible Story’ helps people explore the Christian faith, using paintings and Biblical story as the starting points. It’s been created by St Martin’s in partnership with the National Gallery. The course uses fine art paintings in the National Gallery’s collection, along with a theological reflection and a Biblical text, as a spring board for exploring these two questions: How can I deepen my faith in God? What does it mean to follow Jesus today?

This short series is based on paintings included in the National Gallery's 'Sin' exhibition. Bringing together works of art that span centuries – from Bruegel and Velázquez to Andy Warhol and Tracey Emin – this exhibition explores the concept of sin in art. This exhibition looks at complex theological ideas and depictions of ‘sinful’ everyday behaviour that blur the boundaries between religious and secular art.

See www.nationalgallery.org.uk/exhibitions/sin
Regular Online Services at St Martin-in-the-Fields

Thank you to everyone who continues to join us for our online worship.

We will continue live-streaming services:

**Monday-Thursday 8.30-9.00am** Morning Prayer  
**Friday 8.30-9.00am** Morning Song  
**Wednesday 6.30-7.30pm** Bread for the World (please check the link below for Thursday dates)  
**Saturday 8.00-9.00am** Contemplative Prayer  
**Sunday 10.00-11.00am** Eucharist.

www.facebook.com/stmartininthefields

St Martin’s on the Airwaves

On Tuesday 24 November, Revd Sally Hitchiner was a guest on Times Radio Breakfast.

Revd Sally Hitchiner was on BBC Breakfast on Wednesday 25 November talking about Christmas services.

On Thursday 26 November, Revd Sally Hitchiner was a guest on BBC Radio 4's The Today Programme alongside Emma Mansfield (Cornish Choir) discussing carol services.

Jonathan Evens has had two interviews published with artists who are exploring identity and enabling the voices of those who are often overlooked to be heard. Jonathan's interview with Marcus Lyon about 'iDetroit' is available at:  
and with Hannah Rose Thomas about 'Tears of Gold' is available at:  
2020 has been a sad time for the flower arrangers. Lock down began before Easter and continues. We have really missed the team. Working together to enhance the beauty of our church is both therapeutic and rewarding. It will be so good to return to this if we are lucky in 2021.

In the meantime, with the continuing support of the generous donation from the Friends of St Martin it has been possible to keep going at reduced level.

Our greatest achievement so far was the creation of a very big floral cross. It served as a tribute to those who had died homeless over the past year and then to celebrate Remembrance Sunday. We wanted to focus on textures, hues and the many varied shapes as we could find for the background foliage. Our inspiration for this was following Richard and Cath on their weekly meditational walks round green spaces in London broadcast live online. It was both an adventure and a real labour of love and it took a very long time to make. Without the strength of security guard Paul and the clear directions of Richard we could never have managed to get it into place. Thank you.

For Christmas and the New Year, we continued to forage in local parks and riverbanks. It is surprising what gets flung to the ground after a high wind waiting to be rescued and then to be used to adorn the Advent wreath or the Christmas flowers.

Both Anne and myself hope you will be able to join in flower arranging with us.
Please support the 2020 BBC Radio 4 Christmas Appeal with St Martin-in-the-Fields!

We need to raise much needed funds, so we can continue to support people away from homelessness in the difficult and challenging months ahead.

Make a donation via www.smitfc.org/donate and share with others to encourage them to do the same!
Made for St Martin’s on the Online Shop

Huge thanks to everyone who has supported our new online shop since we launched and which very quickly sold more online that we did from the previous online shop in two years.

We are very grateful to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for providing the funding to enable St Martin’s to build a new online business, at a time when activity on site is so restricted.

It’s provided us with some much needed extra income at this challenging time, and has also made it far easier to sell our online concerts.

We had a fantastic response to the announcement of the Christmas Carol concerts. These concerts are wonderful things to buy for our own enjoyment but can also make fantastic gifts for friends and family - a way of being sure they can experience the beauty of St Martin’s throughout the year.

As ever, there are lots of other gift ideas on the store.

New on the site are a range of cotton canvas tote bags and other items, as well as tee shirts, using Ali’s Augur’s contemporary graphic depiction of St Martin-in-the-Fields. Available in a range of great colours, they are an eye catching way to show your support for St Martin’s.

shop.smitf.org
Church life in lockdown

We are delighted that the church is open for private prayer. If you would like to use our building for your private prayers the church will be open between **12pm - 2pm on Wednesdays**. Please give any feedback to sian.conway@smitf.org if you use this service.

The church is not closed but it is going online. We are now well practiced at enabling all of our services to be available to you in your own homes. To join us head to www.facebook.com/stmartininthefields/live_videos/

At this time it's more important than ever to care for each other. If you would like to join our confidential congregation life please email sian.conway@smitf.org.

If you would like to support the work of St Martin-in-the-Fields why not ask a friend to tune in to any of our online offerings and to consider becoming a Friend of SMITF. This is a really easy way to support the many activities physical and virtual which enable SMITF carry out its mission and ministry and it enables you to contribute to a caring and inspiring community for just £25 a year.
New Year Calendar Sale on the Online Shop

Haiku: Japanese Art and Poetry Wall Calendar

£5.50  £10.99

shop.smitf.org