



St James the Less – Friends’ Newsletter – January 2024

One Year On: SJtL has had many Friends over many years and the current Committee was set up in December 2022 to focus on the ambitious Restoration Project to return the church to its original splendour [eg. see smog-blackened ceiling painting – left].



Friends make Friends: Friends give a modest annual subscription, and every penny is important. If you’re not already signed up, please support this project and pass it on to *your* friends! To help with our recruiting, we invite all our Friends to bring a friend to a New Year’s

Drinks Evening on Monday 22nd Jan 2024, from 6.00pm at the Church

Work so far: the Thomas Earp pulpit was conserved and stabilised in 2015-17, while the chancel wall and railings were spectacularly restored last year (*right*). With support from the Diocese, we are now surveying and assessing the overall needs, including structural and decorative works.



Eco-Church: when the heating boilers were condemned last summer, we explored ecological improvements. SJtL is already at bronze standard, as recognised by Eco-Church, a charity supporting churches to become as close as possible to carbon neutral, while also preserving their distinctive heritage. An energy audit in October showed that use of modern technology is limited in this complex and highly decorated historic building, but clever solutions can be found – eg. photo-voltaic cells on some roof slopes. While talks, visits, tours and other events regularly raise small donations, this emphasis on sustainability will also lead to vital grants and trust funding, to help meet the major costs involved.

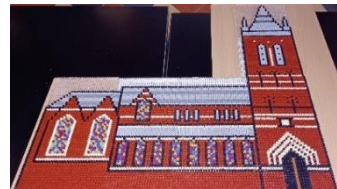
G. E. Street bicentenary June 2024: working with the Victorian Society, the Friends are very excited to offer a programme of events over 2024, celebrating the 200th birthday of George Edmund Street, the remarkable architect of this extraordinary church. **Save the Dates** for: a Gala Dinner on his birthday – Thursday 20th June – and a day’s Symposium on Friday 21st June.

Meanwhile, Neil Jackson reports on the Geoff Brandwood Memorial Lecture, held on 22nd November in the Church Centre, which gave a fascinating taste of how St James the Less demonstrates the brilliance of George Edmund Street’s eye for design:

The Geoff Brandwood Memorial Lecture: Peter Howell presented the Ecclesiological Society’s first Memorial Lecture dedicated to Geoff Brandwood, who had been a member of SJtL Friends Committee before his unexpected death two years ago. Geoff had been writing a book on the church’s architect, George Edmund Street, and it was Peter Howell who, with the late Peter Taylor, took on the challenge of bringing Geoff’s manuscript to publication. It’s due to be on the shelves from February 2024 – watch this space!

Using Geoff’s excellent photographs and a selection of nineteenth-century prints, Peter led his audience through a long list of Street’s work from his very first building, St Mary’s church at Par, Cornwall (built 1849), to his last and best known, the Royal Courts of Justice on the Strand, London, completed in 1882, a year after Street’s death. Peter also showed stained glass, metalwork, church plate and needlework, all made to Street’s designs. Street was the consummate designer, as can be seen at St James the Less, perhaps the first and greatest church of his maturity.

Hama Bead Church: This clever image of St James the Less, brilliantly designed by Ben and Amabel Ealovega, will be on display shortly, with an invitation to guess how many beads were used to make it!



Committee needs more hands: If you have the enthusiasm, energy and time to contribute to the Restoration Committee, please contact us using details below! We were sorry to say Good-bye to Selina Hermer, our lovely Art History student, who needs to concentrate on her studies. Thank you, Selina, for giving us your time and ideas up to now.

Community Activities

While St James the Less is an important building architecturally and historically, the church is also at the heart of the parish, offering activities that reach well beyond the regular congregation, to support families, schools, young people and the homeless community. The Reverend Lis Goddard reviews a number of successful Christmas activities from 2023:

Christmas Trail: at the end of November, we welcomed local primary school classes to the Church Centre, where an interactive Christmas trail taught the essential elements of the Christmas story in an exciting and accessible way.



Carols on the Move: on the evening of 17th December, ably assisted by the SW Community Choir, SJTL took to the pavements to sing carols around the parish. Parishioners and neighbours joined in, both on foot and from their windows and balconies throughout the local estate and streets.



Christmas Day Lunch: the church family welcomed 50 individuals to celebrate Christmas Day together. A full Christmas lunch, prepared the day before by Lis and numerous willing helpers, was served in the Church Centre, creating a joyful gathering for everyone on this important day.



Open Door Meal: Every second Friday, Lis leads an army of volunteers to gather ingredients, peel and chop veg and produce an amazing meal for homeless and vulnerably-housed people in the area. The Christmas Open Door Meal is always extra special, with carol-singing and gifts, and was attended last month by about 120 guests.

January Events – see website for more details: www.sjtl.org

Mondays 3.30-5pm, from 8 Jan: Pause, a group for Parents, Carers and children up to the age of 7

12 & 26 Jan 7-9 pm: Open Door Meal for homeless and vulnerably-housed people

9 Jan 2.30pm: Memory Café for people with early-stage memory loss

22 Jan 6.0pm: Friends' New Year Drinks - bring a new friend

28 Jan 2.0pm: Silver Screen, followed by Cream Tea for people over 50

Plus: The Pimlico Foundation activities for young people: <https://outbreak.org.uk/>

Church Centre offers full catering facilities - available for events, conferences, rehearsals, classes etc.

For information on Services and all other activities, see our website at: www.sjtl.org

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