

# THE WHITE ROSE

The Parish Newsletter of Old Saint Paul's Dec 2013 & Jan 2014

## Hungry for Hope



This is the time of year when we reflect on what we've done during the last year and where we hope to go in the New Year. As 1st January approaches, the media will offer us many reviews of 2013 - a new Pope with a different style and message, a new Archbishop of Canterbury, many tragedies such as the Philippines typhoon, continuing suffering in Syria and other places. And predictions for 2014 - the World Cup in Brazil, the 1st World War centenary, the independence referendum in Scotland, and, maybe, hopes for peace and justice

in war-torn places. 2014 will itself be a time of memory and of change.

Human beings have an instinctive desire for renewal and new beginnings. S. Benedict in his Rule for monks says, "always we begin again." This impulse is the heart of what makes both Advent and New Year kindle all of our longings for a richer way of being in the world. There is something so very hopeful for humanity in this fundamental impulse. As Christian faith can teach us, there should always be new beginnings, new hopes, new chances.

Advent Sunday is on 1 December. It is the beginning of a new church year when the liturgical cycle begins once again with Advent, the season of anticipation and hope. It's about preparation for Christmas, yes, but more than that, it's about living in expectation of God's kingdom of justice, love and peace, looking for its signs here and now, and learning to live by them. This is why many of us love the season of Advent and its haunting readings and hymns - because it makes us look forward rather than backward, and tells us that forward is the direction in which we always find God looking.

New Year isn't in the Christian calendar, of course, but, like Advent, it's about looking forward. At its best it has become a secular festival of hope. In Edinburgh, the Hogmanay festival is one of many large-scale celebrations around the world. Any doubts people had about such a secular festival might have been modified last year when OSP's participation as a venue saw people queuing down the stairs to take part in the contemplative and prayerful space which had been prepared in the church. In 2014 OSP will again be used as a prayerful and welcoming space for people during the day on 1st January. What will they be looking for when they come?

*Continued on page 2*

# Advent & Christmas at OSP



Sunday 1 December at 6.30pm

**Advent Carol Service**

Scripture, music and poetry for the start of Advent  
*by candlelight*

**Sundays during Advent**

10.30am High Mass

6.30pm Blessing of the Light, Evensong & Benediction  
*by candlelight*

Sunday 22 December at 6.30pm

**Nine Lessons & Carols**

*by candlelight*

**Christmas Eve**

Tuesday 24 December at 4.00pm

**Crib Service**

*for families and children*

Tuesday 24 December at 11.30pm

**Midnight Mass of Christmas**

*by candlelight*

**Christmas Day**

Wednesday 25 December at 10.30am

**Mass of Christmas Day**

People are hungering for more depth to the time of transition represented by New Year. They are recognizing the opportunity of a threshold. 1st January brings out our fervent desires for the future and our commitments to change, whatever that change entails. 2014 will bring change to all of us – in our public life and our personal lives too. New Year is our opportunity to reflect and prepare for that future, and to ask God to guide us into it.

Our inclination is usually expressed in our “resolutions,”

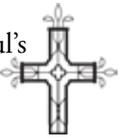
aimed at working harder for whatever it is we want or fixing our faults and weaknesses. There is nothing wrong with making resolutions, except when they are so much about ‘me’ that they simply reinforce the illusion that I am the centre of my own universe. However even our less self-centred resolutions often aim very high, but without first cultivating the change of heart necessary to prepare space for these new possibilities to take root.

Yet, as Christians, we do have such a space - the season of Advent

- which I think we should all begin to use, and to share with others, as preparation not only for the joyful time of Christmas, but also for the hope-filled time of New Year.

*Fr Ian*

Front page image: ‘The Dalit Madonna’ by Jyoti Sahi (© 2000). From the Methodist Modern Art Collection. More information about the painting can be found at <http://www.methodist.org.uk/static/artcollection/image37.htm>



# Bible Plants: The Wise Men's Gifts

**W**e all know about Gold: it's expensive, it's a symbol of royalty, and it's not a plant! Which leaves us with Frankincense and Myrrh, both of which are of plant origin.

The Frankincense tree, *Boswellia sacra*, sometimes known as *B. thurifera*, - the thurifer carries the incense burner in our services - resembles a large Rowan but belongs to a different plant family many species of which yield scented resins when tapped or burnt. The Frankincense tree grows in southern Arabia through into Ethiopia and Somalia; slashing the bark yields a gummy resin that dries hard, is strongly scented and easily lit, burning with a characteristic fragrance. Frankincense is referred to more than 20 times in the Bible usually in relation to religious worship and holiness. This gift from the Wise Men recognises the holiness of the babe and would have been a very expensive present.



*Boswellia sacra* and *Commiphora myrrha*

What about Myrrh? Here is confusion! Two Hebrew words have been translated as Myrrh. The 'true' Myrrh (the Hebrew *môr*) as offered by the Magi to the infant Jesus comes from a straggly, spiny bush found in Yemen and Somalia through to Ethiopia. This is *Commiphora myrrha*. Piercing the bark yields an aromatic gum that hardens in time to a pleasantly scented resin. The Wise Men's gift was a symbol of sorrow and suffering and it was Myrrh that Nicodemus brought 'as is the manner of the Jews' (John 19.39-40) to add to the linen clothes used to wrap the dead body of Jesus on the night following his crucifixion. In this, Nicodemus was following a tradition dating back at least three thousand years when Myrrh, even more expensive than Frankincense, was used in the embalming process for dead Pharaohs. In Egyptian and Roman times Myrrh was often

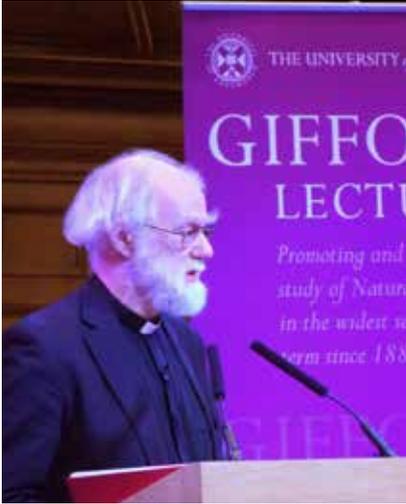
burnt during funeral rites. The resin is sometimes incorporated into the Paschal Candle as a symbol of Christ's suffering and death.

The other 'myrrh' is a mistranslation of the Hebrew word *lôt* and refers to the gum from a species of rockrose, *Cistus creticus*. Joseph was sold by his brothers to Ishmaelite traders whose camels bore 'spicery and balm and (*Cistus*) myrrh, carrying it down to Egypt' (Genesis 37.25-27). The sweet smelling gum is sometimes referred to as labdanum on the assumption that it comes from *Cistus ladanifera*, a Mediterranean shrub with attractive large white flowers, widely grown in Britain but not found in Palestine. Just to complete the confusion, the Latin name of the garden herb Sweet Cicely is *Myrrhis odorata*!

John Dale

# Making Representations

## Rowan Williams' Gifford Lectures



**M**y daughter Rebecca is learning to talk. On many theories of language one would expect her to start by learning words to ask for things. The basic functions of language on these theories are asking for things, or telling people things. But – with a couple of exceptions – words for things Rebecca wants are not the words she's started off saying. Most conversations with Rebecca go something like this:

We are looking out the window at the traffic going past.

Rebecca: Bus.

Parent: Yes, it's a bus.

Rebecca: Bye bye bus.

Parent: Goodbye bus.

Rebecca isn't asking for the bus. Nor is she passing on information that there's a bus, since the bus is pretty obvious even to parents.

Rowan Williams in his Gifford Lectures argued that the fundamental function of language is not asking or describing, passing on information, but representing a

shared world between the speakers. Thus, in his fourth lecture, on language as something that happens in the material world, Williams talked about a therapist working with people on the autistic spectrum with learning disabilities. The therapist establishes rapport by imitating the bodily movements they make to establish control over over-stimulating environments. In a similar way, I take it that what Rebecca is doing with her first words is establishing that the buses and ducks and other objects she sees exist in a world that she shares with her parents and other grown-ups around.

Given that the basic root of language is not informing or describing or asking, Williams explores the implications for talking about God. Talking about God, theology, is not about describing God or passing on information about God. Theology operates at the level of representation, not of information and description.

So Williams' lectures describe features of daily language. He is particularly interested in the way in which language invites response and creates responsibility. Our language is responsible to the things we talk about – we can get things wrong, or try to represent the world more clearly or insightfully. Shared meanings are not projected by spirit or mind onto matter, but arise out of matter. Our language arises out of the material world and in speaking or writing we respond to and are responsible to that world. Likewise, there can never be such a thing as a speech to which no response can

be made. There can never be a final word. And so no person can issue a definitive ideology that shuts down debate. Williams goes on to argue that this points us beyond language towards a God who cannot be captured in language. The material world is meaningful because it originates in a God who means it, and our language as a whole is collectively responsible to and seeking a response from God who lies outside language as a whole.

Having talked about the depths of daily language in the early lectures, in the fifth lecture, Williams talked about language that is pushed beyond its everyday usages in poetry or fiction. Finally, after talking about language being pushed to extremes, Williams talked about silence, in which language points beyond those extremes to what cannot be said even by metaphor. He here made a distinction between involuntary silence forced upon less privileged groups, and a voluntary silence that means by refusing to speak.

I am going to read the book with interest to revisit the arguments and follow them more carefully. It was not always easy to follow such dense arguments as they were delivered. However, perhaps the best parts of each evening were listening to the questions and Williams' answers. As Williams argued, there can be no such thing as lecture after which there can be no questions or debate.

*David Anderson*



# Living Voices

The Living Voices project is designed to enrich the lives of people living in care homes through interactive sessions of poetry, storytelling and singing. Professional facilitators, who are poets, storytellers or musicians, are supported by volunteers to deliver sessions.

The project is a joint venture between the Scottish Poetry Library and the Scottish Storytelling Centre. It is a national project currently in its pilot phase, with plans being made, and funds being sought, to develop it more widely. The pilot began in January 2013 and is due to run to mid-year 2014. It is funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, The Baring Foundation, The Gannochy Trust, and Creative Scotland.

Each facilitator is paired with one volunteer for the duration of the project, and the pair visits the same care home each month. The facilitator I support in my volunteer role is Ken Cockburn, a professional poet.

Sessions last for around 90 minutes: around 20 minutes for gathering; 40 minutes for the session; and around 30 minutes for tea afterwards. Each session is themed, and there is a resource pack with some initial ideas for material to use. The facilitator then identifies further material and shapes the sessions, with support and ideas from the volunteer, to suit their own expertise and the charisma of the care home. We also take along objects related to the themes, for handing round and for prompting discussion. And we often partially enact the material we are using. It was great



fun, for example, to dress up for 'Dancing Days.' My swirly dress drew delighted comments, while Ken, who had put on a jacket and tie with his trousers, was light-heartedly told 'you should have been wearing your kilt!'

Younger relatives have told us what they see in the responses of residents. They noticed that one of the residents they had seen be aggressive at other times seemed different during sessions. They thought they saw light return to his eyes when he heard the singing; and childhood rhymes that he may have known. Others raise and sway their hands during songs. And depending on the nature of the poem or story being read, they may smile; or be rapt and calm; or laugh.

Over tea afterwards, Ken and I move round to each person, sometimes just sitting by them to share the experience of drinking tea together; or we may chat to

them or hold their hand, even if they are unable to reply in speech. At the most recent session, one of the residents leaned over to me and whispered, indicating towards the Ken: 'I like it when he comes.' Others have spoken quietly during that time about more painful things. Sometimes I can't understand their words, but their emotions are clear.

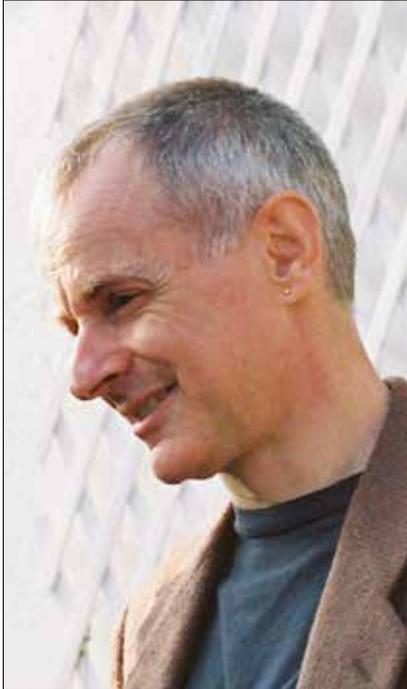
I would encourage anyone drawn to the idea to support or get involved in the project because of its mutually life-enhancing benefits. In Living Voices, I find communion, community, and sacredness:

love.

*Martha Pollard*

# A coffee with ...

## ... Mark Gibson



I was born in London, one of four children, brought up as Roman Catholic and sent to St Benedict's school in Ealing. On the whole I disliked school because I was quite small and easily bullied. But I got a good education and several teachers were genuinely inspirational

I was good with words – which did not necessarily go down well with my classmates! My mentor and guide was Alexander Pope, a poet of outstanding generosity as well as of devastating satire. He was a hunchback, a Catholic and a dwarf – all obstacles to acceptance in 18th century society -but he used his wit to defend himself, and taught me to do likewise.

After school, I went to Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, to read English literature. At Cambridge I made nearly all of my closest friends.

For personal reasons I wanted to stay in Cambridge after I

graduated. I became a bookbinder but, as I am not very dextrous and also colour blind, this was not an obvious career choice! So I quit and joined a company that specialised in corporate communications. Alas, I quickly discovered the business was in trouble. The owner had to sell it and retire – and, at the age of 27, I found myself Managing Director of a subsidiary of Saatchi & Saatchi!

Then I was headhunted by a London-based consultancy to set up a communications business. During the Thatcher years work was plentiful, and I was involved in many of the privatisations. I was still living in Cambridge and, although my social life was lively and I met lots of interesting people – I can still see Valerie Eliot (T.S. Eliot's widow) sitting at my dining table in a white suit and white jade jewellery topping and tailing gooseberries! – commuting to London was becoming intolerable.

Eventually, I moved to London and it was there that I met Shamsu who has been my partner for more than 20 years now. He was an English literature graduate doing a second degree in Fashion Business. When that finished, he was not allowed to stay in the UK. I had always maintained that I would never live in the Far East and never start my own business. Now I found myself faced with doing both, moving with Sham to his native Malaysia where we opened a shop in Kuala Lumpur selling vintage costume jewellery imported from England!

Unfortunately for us, the day we flew to Malaysia Britain pulled out of the Exchange Rate Mechanism and we lost a fifth of the money we had set aside to begin our life in KL. Then, after four years of hard work and Spartan living, the Asian financial crisis hit, the Malaysian currency collapsed, the cost of buying stock became un-viable and we were back to square one!

In the meantime, to get a work permit, I had joined the British Council, and become a part-time teacher. I also gravitated back to my old line of work as a copywriter for large companies. There were other opportunities as well. Lifestyle magazines were very popular and Sham and I pooled our skills and set up an English-language wedding magazine! We also opened a fashion boutique, became wedding planners and organised the only royal Javanese wedding ever held in Malaysia. And we got involved in film and theatre and won an award for costume design for a movie.

As historic architecture is one of my passions, over the years I did a lot of work with the Heritage of Malaysia Trust. My last project for the Trust involved opening Suffolk House (once the home of the early governors of Penang) to the public.

Despite all this activity, I was becoming homesick both for Britain and for my family and my old friends. So we decided to move and chose to settle in Edinburgh as easily the most beautiful major city in the UK. We live in a 250 year-old flat on Calton Hill with views in one direction over the Old Town



and in the other over the Forth to the hills of Fife.

The day after I moved into the flat, just before Easter 2011, a friend pointed out that I could see Old Saint Paul's from my window and that the music there was superb. So I went to the Maundy Thursday service, returned for the Good Friday service and the Easter Vigil and then climbed Calton Hill to hear the choir sing on the National Monument.

I love the combination of the liturgically high and the theologically liberal at OSP- and have appreciated the friendly welcome - but also being left to decide when I was ready to become more involved.

I have been most influenced by people, buildings, places, books and music. To relax I read and listen to music. I am currently reading Garden of Evening Mists by Tan Twan Eng and the Memoirs

of Sir George Buchanan, British Ambassador to St Petersburg in the First World War. And thanks to John, Calum and the choir, I've started listening to music by Tomas Victoria.

I am angered by oppression and arrogance – the two generally being linked. What gives me hope is the goodness of the people that I meet. And the converse makes me despair.

I am happiest with friends and in places that I find magical. My favourite place is home – my flat, this city, Scotland, Britain – especially Yorkshire where my parents live and Dorset where I holidayed as a child.

I would invite my closest friends to dinner but I would love to include the architect Richard Norman Shaw. To my mind, he devised the best ever house plans (an obsession of mine) and over dinner he would sketch my ideal

home on his shirt cuff. I would also invite the novelist Sylvia Townsend Warner who was down to earth, off the wall and one of the best letter-writers of the 20th century. I hope that Sham, who is a creative and instinctive cook, would provide the meal. It would be a disaster if it were left to me!

*Mark Gibson was talking to  
Sheila Brock*

### Next Issue Deadline

The deadline for the February/ March issue of the White Rose is **Monday 20th January**. Please email contributions to [media@osp.org.uk](mailto:media@osp.org.uk).

## CONTACTS

### CLERGY

Fr Ian Paton 556 3332  
[rector@osp.org.uk](mailto:rector@osp.org.uk)

Mtr Kate Reynolds 556 7702  
[curate@osp.org.uk](mailto:curate@osp.org.uk)

### PARISH OFFICE

Jean Keltie 556 3332  
[office@osp.org.uk](mailto:office@osp.org.uk)

### CHILDREN

Paul Lugton [children@osp.org.uk](mailto:children@osp.org.uk)

### WHITE ROSE

[media@osp.org.uk](mailto:media@osp.org.uk)

### WEBSITE

Jeff Dalton [media@osp.org.uk](mailto:media@osp.org.uk)

### ROTAS

Sheila Brock [readers@osp.org.uk](mailto:readers@osp.org.uk)

### CHOIR

John Kitchen [music@osp.org.uk](mailto:music@osp.org.uk)

### VESTRY CLERK

Kimberley Moore Ede [vestry@osp.org.uk](mailto:vestry@osp.org.uk)

### TREASURER

Nigel Cook [finance@osp.org.uk](mailto:finance@osp.org.uk)

### GIVING

Lynne Niven [stewardship@osp.org.uk](mailto:stewardship@osp.org.uk)

### HOLY DUSTERS

Therese Christie [cleaning@osp.org.uk](mailto:cleaning@osp.org.uk)

<p><b>1 December 1st SUNDAY OF ADVENT</b>  <i>High Mass</i>  Isaiah 2.1-5; Psalm 122; Romans 13.11-14; Matthew 24.36-44  <i>Weekday Observances</i>  Mon 2–Nicholas Ferrar, deacon at Little Gidding, 1637;  Tue 3–Francis Xavier, priest and missionary in Japan, 1552; Wed 4–Clement of Alexandria, teacher, c 210; Fri 6–Nicholas of Myra, bishop, 4th cent; Sat 7–Ambrose of Milan, bishop and teacher, 397</p>
<p><b>1 December 6.30pm Advent Carol Service</b>  Scripture, music and poetry for Advent  <i>by candlelight</i></p>
<p><b>8 December 2nd SUNDAY OF ADVENT</b>  <i>High Mass</i>  Isaiah 11.1-10; Psalm 72.1-7,18-19; Romans 15.4-13; Matthew 3.1-12  <i>Evensong</i>  Isaiah 40.1-11; Mark 1.1-8  <i>Weekday Observances</i>  Mon 9–Conception of Mary, mother of the Lord; Sat 14–John of the Cross, priest and teacher, 1591</p>
<p><b>15 December 3rd SUNDAY OF ADVENT</b>  <i>High Mass</i>  Isaiah 35.1-10; Psalm 146.5-10; James 5.7-10; Matthew 11.2-11  <i>Evensong</i>  Isaiah 61.1-4,8-11; John 1.6-8,19-28</p>
<p><b>22 December 4th SUNDAY OF ADVENT</b>  <i>High Mass</i>  Isaiah 7.10-16; Psalm 80.1-7,17-19; Romans 1.1-7; Matthew 1.18-25</p>
<p><b>22 December 6.30pm Nine Lessons and Carols</b>  <i>by candlelight</i></p>
<p><b>THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD</b>  <i>Tuesday 24 December 11.30pm</i>  Isaiah 9.2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2.11-14; Luke 2.1-20  <i>Wednesday 25 December 10.30pm</i>  Isaiah 52.7-10; Psalm 98; Hebrews 1.1-12; John 1.1-14  <i>Weekday Observances</i>  Thu 26–St Stephen, deacon and martyr; Fri 27–St John, apostle and evangelist; Sat 28–The Holy Innocents</p>
<p><b>29 December 1st SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS</b>  <i>High Mass</i>  Isaiah 63.7-9; Psalm 148; Hebrews 2.10-18; Matthew 2.13-23  <i>Said Evening Prayer</i>  1 Samuel 2.1-2,7b-28  Luke 2.22-40  <i>Weekday Observances</i>  Mon 30–Josephine Butler, worker among women, 1905;  Tue 31–John Wycliffe, priest, 1384; Wed 1–The Naming of Jesus; Thu 2–Seraphim of Sarov, monk and teacher, 1833</p>

<p><b>5 January THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD</b>  <i>High Mass</i>  Isaiah 60.1-6; Psalm 72.1-7,10-14; Ephesians 3.1-12; Matthew 2.1-12  <i>Evensong</i>  Isaiah 52.7-10; Matthew 12.14-21  <i>Weekday Observances</i>  Fri 10–William Laud, archbishop of Canterbury, 1645;  Sat 11–David, king of Scots, 1153</p>
<p><b>12 January THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD</b>  <i>High Mass</i>  Isaiah 42.1-9; Psalm 29; Acts 10.34-43; Matthew 3.13-17  <i>Evensong</i>  Isaiah 40.1-11; John 1.1-7,19-20,29-34  <i>Weekday Observances</i>  Mon 13–St Kentigern (or Mungo), bishop of Glasgow, c 603; Tue 14–Hilary of Poitiers, bishop and teacher, c 367; Fri 17–Anthony of Egypt, abbot, 356; Sat 18–The Confession of St Peter</p>
<p><b>19 January 2nd SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY</b>  <i>High Mass</i>  Isaiah 49.1-7; Psalm 40.1-11; 1 Corinthians 1.1-9; John 1.29-42  <i>Evensong</i>  1 Samuel 3.1-20; John 1.43-51  <i>Weekday Observances</i>  Tue 21–Agnes, martyr at Rome, c 304; Fri 24–Francis de Sales, abbot, 356</p>
<p><b>26 January CONVERSION OF ST PAUL</b>  <i>High Mass</i>  Acts 26.9-23; Psalm 67; Galatians 1.11-24; Matthew 10.16-22  <i>Evensong</i>  Sirach 39.1-10; Acts 9.1-22  <i>Weekday Observances</i>  Mon 27–John Chrysostom, bishop and teacher, 407;  Tue 28–Thomas Aquinas, teacher, 1274; Thu 30–Charles I, king, 1649; Fri 31–Charles Mackenzie of central Africa, bishop, missionary, martyr, 1862; Sat 1–Bride of Kildare, abbess, c 525</p>
<p><b>2 February PRESENTATION OF THE LORD</b>  <i>High Mass</i>  Malachi 3.1-4; Psalm 84.1-7; Hebrews 2.14-18; Luke 2.22-40  <i>Evensong</i>  Haggai 2.1-9; 1 John 3.1-8  <i>Weekday Observances</i>  Mon 3–Saints and Martyrs of Europe; Thu 6–Paul Miki, priest, and Martyrs of Japan, 1597</p>