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# St James's Piccadilly Press

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## Things are not just as you see them: my tribute to an Iraqi friend

by Frank Kihere

### The apparition

Last year, late at night, as Christmas approached, I lay inside my cubical cell at one of the asylum prisons across the South East of England, wondering whether music had driven me out of my country. Was my reason for going into exile far less serious than any other person could imagine? After all, if someone can go mad because of the sensitivity of the sound of music, why could not a similar sensitivity drive one out of his homeland? As I was coming to terms with my imagination, a guard on duty pushed open the door to usher in a new prisoner, an Iraqi lad who had miraculously managed to flee the tirade of fire in his homeland, crossing mountains, valleys, plains, rivers and even oceans in search of freedom.

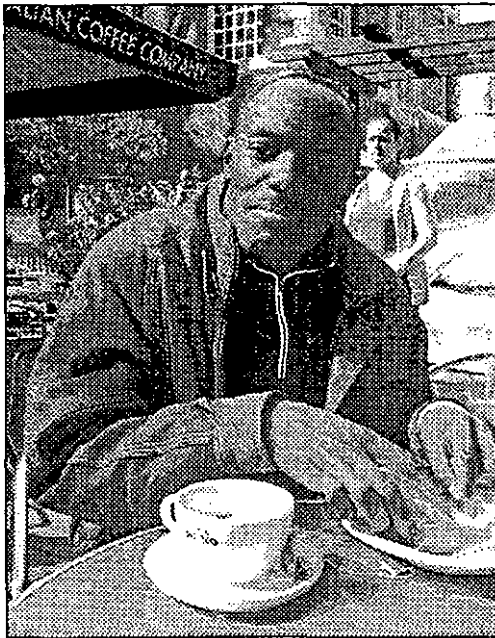
When I set eyes on him, he was enough to make a sane person scream with fright. He had slipped from the gallows of hell and cheated death. His eyes were prominent and protruding, his hair colour had turned muddy, rather brownish, like someone suffering from malnutrition, and his face mirrored what is seen and heard today in Iraq. He was short of breath, pale, wary, lacked

sleep, and would at times speak in tongues, muttering mysteriously in a disjointed mixture of English and some other alien language whose words I couldn't understand at all. The whole impression was of a man trembling in the grip of fear.

From his fragmented speech, I learned that his name was Fazil. I was keen to find out about his background, but the more I looked at him, the more claustrophobic and short of speech he became. I realized that any questions, in addition to those he had already faced, would only cause him more havoc. And indeed, in him, I saw the real reflection of our life as refugees.

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*Frank Kihere at St James's Piccadilly, after the service on Palm Sunday.*

Whenever I woke up in the night, I would see his eyes wide open, at times seated on the edge of his bed, but getting up at regular intervals, inspecting every corner of the cell. He told me of the continuous nightmares he was having every time he tried to sleep, and that's why he could not get a wink of sleep. I tried to be a healer, to tend, nurture and nurse him just like a brother.

Then suddenly, after making a new friend in him, in two days I was transferred to another prison about 40 miles away. It was so abrupt that I didn't even get a chance to say goodbye to my dear brother Fazil.

Today I am haunted by a sense of guilt that I didn't do enough to help him, but what else could I have done? So far, I haven't heard from him and I don't know his whereabouts. Could he have been repatriated to Iraq in the rush of repatriations dictated by today's times, and subsequently martyred? God only knows, but like any other lost comrade, the message is 'Adieu Fazil.'

### **Press hypocrisy, double standards and politics**

A lot has been said about refugees and asylum-seekers in Britain. Negative press reports have portrayed asylum-seekers as parasites and undesirables. Inflammatory articles have grabbed headlines, even

suggesting that illegal immigrants are running Britain. This media frenzy and political rhetoric has undermined the progress that has been made towards a cohesive community united against adversity and has only exacerbated the situation further.

It's an act of total hypocrisy, double standards and political manoeuvring when politicians and the press take a swipe at dictators but forget about the products of such dictatorial regimes. Today, the increasing numbers of refugees worldwide are a reflection of how precarious some parts of the world have become. Those in political power need to get their act together in order to identify the problem and find a solution. In Britain today, the biggest numbers of refugees have come from Somalia, Congo, Iraq, Afghanistan, and maybe Zimbabwe. All these countries have been destabilized by war, tyranny and oppression. Innocent people have been persecuted individually, while others have had their lives wrecked by the disorder. The situation has not been helped by the introduction of malevolent policies like the blanket denial of work to asylum-seekers. This has caused great distress among asylum-seekers, who don't want to be a burden on the state. But then they're left with no other source of income than to scrounge from the public, or earn it through illegal means.

It's in everyone's interest that the public debate on asylum be based on evidence rather than assumption, and that it step back from the day-to-day political rhetoric and public anxiety that surround the whole issue. Only identification of the root causes of mass immigration can provide a definitive answer to the problems it presents.

I am enormously grateful to Puck de Raadt of the Bail Circle, and to the community at St James's Piccadilly, for their unconditional, superb support, care and love they have extended to me throughout the very trying, endless struggles I have been put through. Thank you very much, and may the Lord reward you accordingly and abundantly.

# Passage to heaven

by Rachel Lewis

## The work of Passage House

'Without Passage House I would still be on drugs and living on the streets,' says Jacilene da Almedia Barbosa, aged 14.

Passage House in Recife, north-east Brazil, is a safe haven for vulnerable girls who are at risk of ending up on the streets. Many of the girls at Passage House come from slum areas where violence and abuse is common place. Before joining the centre the girls are often aggressive and abuse drugs and alcohol. Some are even forced to sell their bodies to survive. Passage House offers the girls counselling, health care, nutritious meals and a space to grow and develop as girls and teenagers.

The House was set up in 1987 by lawyer Ana Vasconcelos and her sister, Cristina Vasconcelos, a psychologist. Ana spent time talking to the girls, finding out what drove them to such desperate measures and what support they needed to change their situations. Meetings were impromptu and would take place on the street as there was nowhere else for them to meet. Many of the girls thought that Ana was crazy because

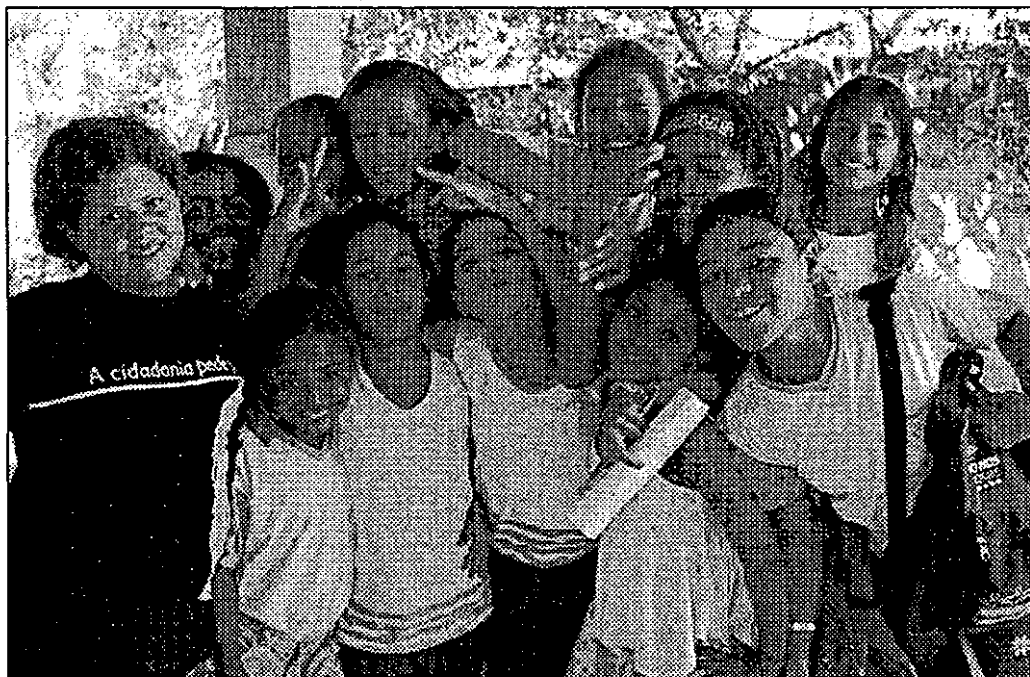
*Girls on the Passage to Life programme.*



*Percussion class at Passage House.*

she wanted to spend time with them, but they liked the fact that she created a safe environment in which they were free to discuss problems without the pressures of social status or hierarchy.

Ana recognized that these young girls were very fragile, facing violence and sexual abuse on a regular basis, often within their own families and even by the police on the streets. Many girls chose to spend time on the streets in order to escape abusive family members. They felt that being there would give them more control over their own lives, as opposed to being victims of abuse at home.





*Janydarte Conceicao Feitosa da Silva.*

Recife has long suffered high levels of unemployment and massive under-investment in public services, especially in poor slum areas. There is also a deep-seated prejudice against girls and women, who are often regarded as second-class citizens. Added to this is a lack of political support for girls and women trying to change their social and economic situation.

### **Breaking the cycle of abuse**

Ana realized there was an urgent need for someone to look out for teenage girls from poor backgrounds. Although some charities existed to support vulnerable boys, there was nothing similar focusing on the needs of young girls. Ana believed that if these girls were educated and received counselling they could break the cycle of abuse often passed from parents to children.

One of the girls currently at Passage House illustrates this situation. Isla Carla Correia, now aged 14, left home when she was 7 because her mother used to beat her with iron rods and throw salt into her wounds. 'I want to change, which is why I've started going to Passage House,' she said. 'I don't want to use drugs anymore and Passage House is helping me to avoid them.'

In the early days, when Ana and Cristina conducted research among the girls living on the streets, they described their everyday life as a 'Passage to Hell.' Ana asked them how they could build a 'Passage to Heaven'

instead, and together they found a way to help.

### **Escaping poor home lives**

Ana and Cristina offered the girls opportunities they would otherwise not have. Cristina was inspired by the story of one young girl, who, when asked to depict her life in a drawing, drew a house leaning precariously to one side, on the edge of collapse. It was this 'house' that led her to the streets, into sex work and drug abuse. The girl explained that the house needed rebuilding, like her life, and that it would be good if she could have a second chance.

It's extremely difficult for the girls to avoid being dragged down by their families and home lives. Janydarte Conceicao Feitosa da Silva (pictured left), aged 17, joined Passage House after her brother was shot in the head while he was playing football. Her uncle was murdered just a few months later when he was accused of being a rapist. 'I came to Passage House to find comfort and support,' Janydarte explains. 'I prefer to keep busy: it's less painful that way.'

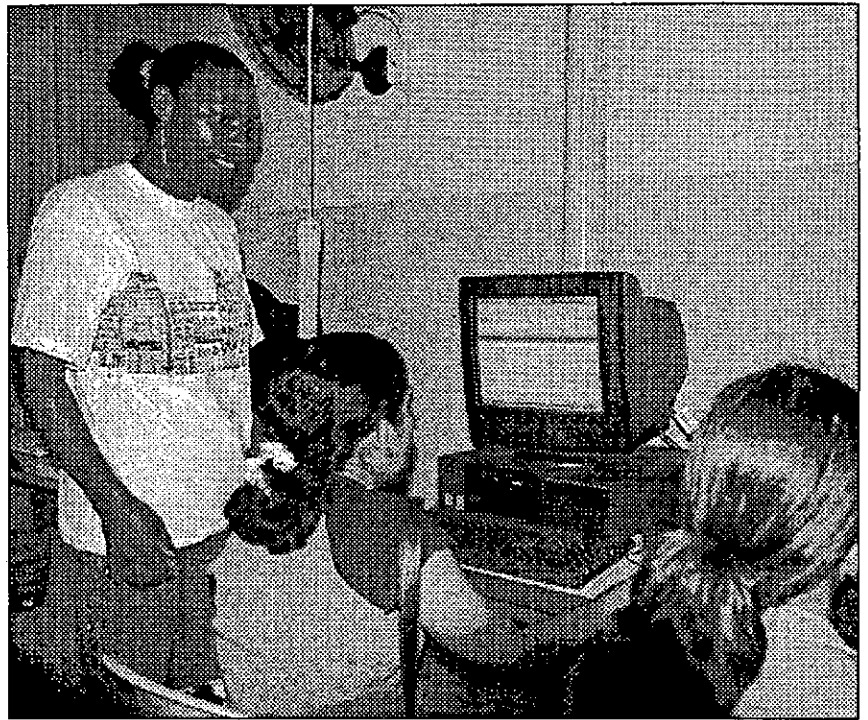
### **Financial support: a success story**

Passage House started with donations from individuals. Over time, international bodies began to take note of the inspiring and successful work. Today Passage House is internationally respected and is supported by a wide range of organisations, including Christian Aid. It has appeared in international press and on TV.

Passage House now works directly with around 500 individuals and reaches about 1,000 indirectly through workshops and projects in the community. One of the teachers in the Passage to Work house, Maria Betania da Silva, now aged 33, was one of the very first to join Passage House. Today she teaches girls about citizenship, sexuality and health. When Maria was 15, after spending 6 years on the streets, she met Ana, who introduced her to the centre. At the age of 18 Maria learnt to read and

write, and this summer she graduated from university. She is planning to study for a PhD. Today she has four children and they are all going to school. She said: 'I have my own house, a bed and enough food for all my children. I used to have nothing on the streets and now I feel like a winner. I thank God he gave Ana the idea for Passage House.'

*St James's Piccadilly supports Passage House through Sarah's Fund, a memorial to Sarah Root. To donate, see page 16. St James's also supports Passage House indirectly by supporting Christian Aid.*



*Computer class with teacher Maria Betania da Silva.*

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## The St James's Biblethon: charity effort in 1985

*by Chris Ohlson*

### ***Faith in the City***

The year 1985 represented the high water mark of Thatcherism. The Tories were masters of the electoral universe while Labour was down and out. The party's manifesto for the General Election of 1983 was described by one senior Labour MP as the longest suicide note in history, written, of course, to the electorate. The only opposition to the Conservative Party came from a surprising source.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Runcie, commissioned *Faith in the City*, a report on inner city blight. Most of the blame was ascribed to Thatcherite policies. The report caused apoplexy amongst Tory MPs. An unnamed Cabinet Minister dismissed *Faith in the City* as pure Marxist theology. Another claimed the Anglican Church had been taken over by a load of communist clerics. Norman Tebbit, in his own inimitable fashion, snarled: 'The Church of England

should concentrate on spiritual matters and leave politics to the professionals.'

The controversy made *Faith in the City* famous. The report triggered a widespread public and media debate on Thatcherite ethics, urban decay and the growing divide between rich and poor.

The report made 61 recommendations: 38 to the Church of England and 23 to the Government. The church was asked to identify six indicators of urban deprivation. These were: levels of unemployment, overcrowding, households lacking basic amenities, pensioners living alone, ethnic origin and single-parent households.

### **Saved by the actors**

Church Action on Poverty was an initiative established after the publication of *Faith in the City*. Donald Reeves, then the Rector of St James's Piccadilly, came up with his own



*A group of the community of St James's Piccadilly in 1985, outside the Red Lion in Duke of York Street. Chris Ohlson is second from the right, talking to the St James's cantor.*

initiative to support Church Action on Poverty: the Biblethon, a non-stop reading of the Bible. Reading started on a Thursday and continued until Saturday lunchtime.

The Biblethon encompassed every style of reading imaginable from the Good, the Bad, the Absolutely Appalling to the Sublime. The range of bad readers was astonishingly wide, varying from robotic, through inaudible, incomprehensible and even slurred. The event was saved by actors, a profession widely mistrusted by insurance companies. The actors not only read magnificently but always turned up earlier than required.

The actor Paul Alexander was, in fact, one of the prime movers alongside Donald Reeves. Paul read the Gospel of St John, as he had done at the Young Vic Theatre. The media and politics were represented by reader Gyles Brandreth.

Mention must be made of Alec McCowen, who was starring in a popular television spy drama of the day entitled *Mr Palfrey of Westminster*. McCowen brought along some members of the cast, including Caroline Blakiston, the well-known actress. McCowen himself actually recited St Mark's Gospel from memory, without the aid of the Bible. He had done a one-man show.

Other stars of television from an earlier era included Barry Morse, a regular worshipper at St James's. Barry had appeared in the American TV show of the 1960s, *The Fugitive*. He had played Lieutenant Philip Gerard, the implacable pursuer of Dr Richard Kimble. He later acted in a famous British adaptation of Henry James's *The Golden Bowl*.

Stars of the stage such as Roger Rees, the lead in *Nicholas Nickleby*, gave a memorable finale with his reading of The Book of Revelation. Donald Reeves, a talented organist, played 'Now Thank We All our God.' It was a suitable hymn to finish on.

#### **It made a profit**

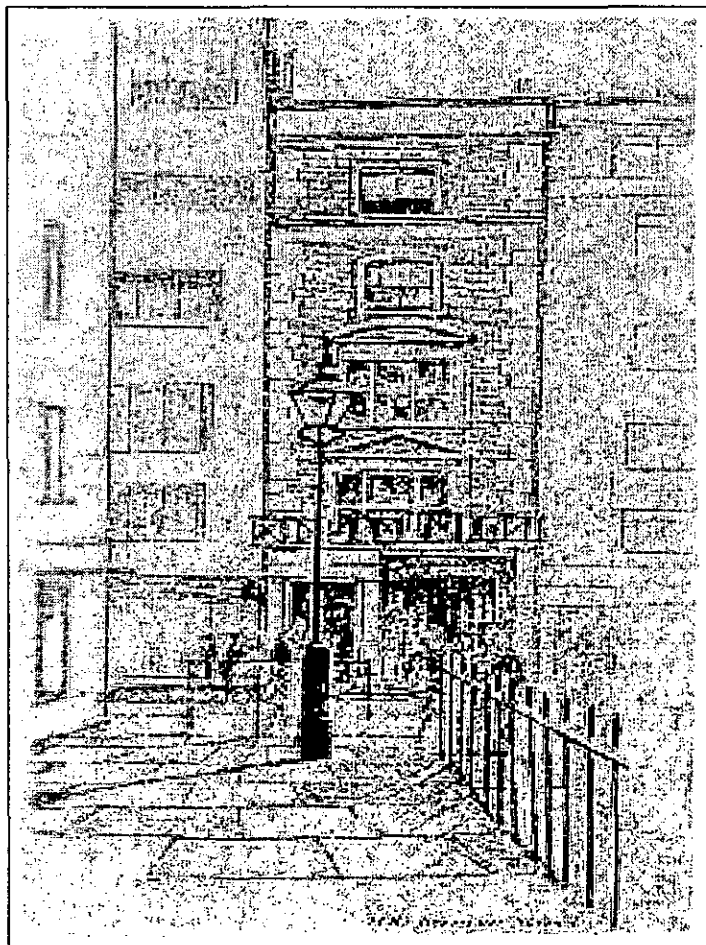
Amazingly, St James's made a profit on the Biblethon, which it was able to pass on to Church Action on Poverty. The church had stayed open all day and all night throughout the reading. St James's seemed to represent an oasis of peace and tranquillity compared to the outside world. There was a party in the garden, attended by many of the performers. But real life intervened shockingly that evening, with the news that many Italian football fans had been killed in Belgium after Liverpool supporters had run amok.

# Shirts, socks, shoes and St James's

by Janet Lucitt

When you leave St James's through the south door you step right into one of London's most famous and picturesque streets, Jermyn Street. It was established over 300 years ago in 1661, when the Queen Mother, Henrietta Maria, leased 45 acres of Pall Mall Fields to Henry Jermyn, first Earl of St Albans, as a reward for befriending Charles II in exile. A *bas relief* on the front of no. 73 depicts the grant. After long delays in developing the area, the street was eventually completed in the early 1860s, when it contained mostly shops and inns.

Among the famous people associated with the street are the poet Thomas Gray, who wrote 'Elegy in a Country Churchyard', inventor Isaac Newton, who lived at no. 87 and Gladstone and Thackeray, who both had lodgings here. Thomas Wall of Wall's ice



cream was born in 1846 at no. 113, now Rowley's Restaurant. In the 19th century, writer Walter Scott stayed in one of the street's many hotels.



Beau Brummell

Jermyn street is now best known for its fashionable men's clothes shops, many of which are long established. The best candy-colour shirts can be found in Harvie and Hudson, founded in 1929, at no. 97, or from Turnbull and Asser, founded in 1885, at nos 70–72. If you're feeling peckish, there are food merchants Paxton and Whitfield, established since around 1740, at no. 93, and on a rainy day, or just because you feel like it, you can pop into Bates's hat shop, founded in 1900, at no. 21a. For those whose passion is shoes, there's Russell & Bromley at no 95. Dunhill's tobacconists at no. 50 and Astley's, established in 1862, at no. 109 can supply you with cigarettes, cigars and snuff. And for that special gift there's Floris, the perfumers at no. 89.

Finally, a sculpture of dandy Beau Brummell (1778–1840), who claimed that 'clothes maketh the man,' poses at the entrance of the Piccadilly Arcade. This 19th century Laurence Llewelyn Bowen 'embodies the spirit of St James's past and present.' The plinth inscription reads: 'To be truly elegant one should not be noticed.'

## Reference

Weinreb, Ben, and Hibbert, Christopher (editors): *The London Encyclopaedia* (rev. edn). London: Macmillan, 1995.

Left: Jermyn Street.

# Die well, die often: rethinking Advent

by Hugh Valentine

It is in the nature of copy for print media that it has to be written well ahead of time. I write this on the Feast of All Souls, and the subject I am to address is Advent. By the time you read this, we shall be knee-deep in the feel-good preparations for Christmas and may even have had more mince pies than is decent.

Any remotely literate Christian will know that the season of Advent is the run-up to Christmas and that its purpose is to prepare ourselves (inwardly and seriously) to celebrate God's incursion into our material reality through the birth of the child Jesus.

Christmas takes second place to Easter in the church's ranking of key events. God 'plugged into' a human happening at Christmas (adapting the familiar occurrence of birth), but at Easter (so we Christians claim) did something entirely contrary to human experience and knowledge (resurrection).

Of all the hints, meanings and possibilities we may take from these two pivotal Christian reference points, there's no escaping the place of birth, death and re-birth in their narratives. If human birth can serve God's compulsion, through love, to reach out and enter into the material things of Her Creation, the business of coming to birth assumes more than just biological impressiveness. And if this same God takes death, destroys all conventional understanding of it and makes something new in and through it, then things change radically indeed.

To die well, and to die often. Not quite the usual theme for Advent but it is more useful than much of the sentimental stuff we peddle in this under-rated season.

**To die well should be one of our desires**  
Traditional religious thinking describes this as to 'die in a state of grace,' at relative

peace, sustained by love, aware of an imminent transition. It seems perfectly likely to me that to die traumatically or in a deep state of estrangement or anger or distress gives rise to problems: problems and discontinuities in both process and transition. I don't think these are problems our Creator cannot address, but they are better avoided.

This is one reason why I support assisted dying in certain carefully regulated circumstances, a view reinforced when I cared for my mother and kept watch during her last weeks.

Dying 'well' – being as ready as possible to attentively and trustingly move further into God's future – is a fitting Advent meditation. How could it not be?

## Dying often is also a fitting Advent meditation

Big things are made easier by practice and rehearsal. Small deaths, small 'dyings,' teach and prepare us. Each loss and humiliation, each relinquishing of some possession or circumstance or belief that we had regarded as essential to our security, is a tutor from whom we learn something (perhaps never enough) about how to die well.

These little deaths will be myriad. Does not something die in us when we lose and relinquish? We lose aspects of physical health and dexterity; we lose illusions about ourselves we play host to; we lose some elements of confidence, some aspects of ego, some desires, some fears, some certainties, some friends, some time. And do we not rail and struggle against much of this, with a kind of Dylan Thomas rage?

Star Trek fans will remember the menacing Borg and their strap line 'resistance is futile.' They had a point (but not a heart). Much of our resistance to the losses and relinquish-

ments life seems to toss in our direction is futile. Acceptance of many of these things is a tool of the spiritual life, because of our need to die often as part of life's apprenticeship in dying well.

Let this not be read as some ridiculous counsel of flabby acquiescence in all that life throws at us. There is much to be resisted and fought against, much to be denounced, battled against, challenged and attacked. The trick is to know the difference: this is part of the business of living in which we really do need one another's support and wisdom.

And the purpose of all these little deaths and dyings? In order that we might better live.

### **The Word was made flesh**

Refuse to sentimentalize the birth narratives of Christ, the Light of the World. The stable stank. The family were without home and security. The circumstances were improbable and scandalous, and they remain improbable and scandalous. That God should make such a disreputable entry into our realm was and remains shocking. As Yeats puts it: 'But Love has pitched [her] mansion in the place of excrement; for nothing can be sole or whole that has not been rent.'

What is it to be 'rent' apart except a form of small dying? And the promise of such things, in the economy of grace? To become whole.

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If you want a copy of any sermon and can't get easy access to the website, phone the Parish Secretary, and ask for a hard copy, offering a small donation towards expenses.

*Below: Dance of affirmation at St James's, August 2005. From left: Joanne Stone, Sio Tin, Jean Humphrey-Gaskin and Mary Jean.*



# CD review: A sombre rejoicing

by Donald Wetherick



*And we rejoiced* Miriam Mackie/Illumination  
directed by Kerry Prest (CD 33 mins)

## What is Anglican music?

I do not know if Miriam Mackie considers herself Anglican, but listening to these six of her compositions, performed by the group Illumination, I began to feel that I had found an answer to this question. Her music is at once traditional and personal, rooted in history yet contemporary, attractive and at times also hard to listen to. Most of all, beginning with 'Truth' (a setting of St John's '...and the truth will set you free'), it holds out hope of some kind of salvation. Yet in the final song setting, Psalm 126, from which the rejoicing of the title is taken, there is not vivacity or triumph, but rather a reflective and sombre resolution. It is not easy being Anglican these days, and perhaps no more so for a composer.

## The devil gets the best harmonies?

There is much to celebrate in this recording – Mackie's colourful and imaginative choral writing for a start. She mixes plainchant (I hear echoes of Hildegard of Bingen) and sparse counterpoint with rich contemporary choral sounds. There is strength here, too. Textures change frequently, sometimes surprisingly, and force one to listen. I am reminded of the rubric in the Book of Common Prayer enjoining the priest to 'say in a loud voice ...' There is no soft-focus musical-mumbling mysticism, unlike much of what passes as 'religious' music today. A complaint? Words like 'hell' are set to dramatic poly-chords while more virtuous words are left with plain diatonic chords – a case of the devil getting all the best harmonies? The overall sound however, is in the best Anglican choral tradition, helped by Kerry Prest's clean direction, some pure singing from the choir and fine, subtle organ playing by Lindsay Bridgwater. Nothing here would sound out of place in any of the great cathedrals.

## Historic best of Anglican liturgy

The texts plunge the listener into the historic best of Anglican liturgy and spirituality. I am reminded of Vaughan Williams' 'Five Mystical Songs' which, like Mackie's, begin with a song about truth ('This is the truth sent from above'). Mackie's 'Truth' is a simple, short Introit based on a Bible verse. 'Hymn to God in my sickness' is a setting of John Donne's poem, inaugurating a theme of struggle in adversity that pervades this collection, while 'In the land of the living' is a setting of Psalm 116 with the composer's own *haiku*-like interpolations inspired by the dramatic storm in the north of England in 2000. 'Prayer of St Francis' is a setting of familiar words (infamously used by Margaret Thatcher), and is my favourite of the set, with some fine composition and particularly good solo singing from two of the men. 'His coming to the sepulchre' is another choral anthem, this time to words by Robert Herrick, and the collection ends with 'May those who sow in tears ...,' words from Psalm 126. For me the best music is in the non-Biblical texts, though whether this shows an austere respect for sacred text or a greater valuing of our personal responses to God I cannot say.

I do wonder why there are not more contemporary texts, apart from Mackie's own 36 syllables in 'In the land of the living'. Is there nothing in the last 300 years that would offer a composer the same, or better, opportunities to write imaginative religious music that wrestles with issues of suffering and loss? Mackie dedicates her St Francis setting to people of the Ardoyne in Belfast, but this is a private association rather than a public statement. Her music has a strong grasp on eternal spiritual conflicts, but its grip on current political realities is more tentative.

## A warm resonance

The sound on the CD is clear and Rosslyn Hill chapel offers a warm resonance.

Perhaps because of this, the words were sometimes hard to distinguish and I was glad to have the full texts in the insert. Mackie's harmonies occasionally put demands on the choir's intonation; there is some variation in noise levels on the recording, and one audible page-turning incident. But none of these spoiled my enjoyment of the music. At times I wished for a larger choir than the dozen voices of Illumination, especially to make more of the double choir effects, yet I liked the intimacy of the solo sections and the chamber-scale organ sound.

## No easy faith

Overall, it must be said that this is serious music, and not easy listening. It is music of faith, but not an easy faith. Despite its title, this is not music to rejoice with, and certainly not to day-dream to. But it is music worth listening to, with an awareness of those very Anglican virtues of faith, tradition, and reason. For all that, don't listen so hard that you fail to hear the music. The words are a starting point and Mackie has a composer's ear for where they may lead. Enjoy.

*The CD And we rejoiced is available for £8 from miriammackie@fireflyuk.net*

## Interview with Miriam Mackie

by Lindsay Meader

*Following the popular and successful launch concert of And we rejoiced, Lindsay Meader spoke to composer and St James's Piccadilly community member, Miriam Mackie.*

### Did you grow up with music around you?

Yes, to some extent. I'm sure I inherited musicality from my father, a Baptist minister, who'd play the piano, and sing and whistle all the time. I did the same from an early age, coming home from church, playing the hymns on the piano, and writing my own music. Later, I turned away from classical music, and wrote and played in pop bands. So I also borrow things from popular music in my work.

### How does the creative process begin and happen?

In different ways: there's no set formula. I don't sit at a desk or keyboard and wait. Sometimes the spur is being asked to write something for a specific event, say Christmas, or finding a particular text. Or I see something in daily life; the other day, in some gardens near where I live, gazing up into a massive tree in the sun, and thinking of Psalm 150 'Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!', a little figure of repetitive melody came into my head. I wrote it down

when I got home. There is an archive of these notes, which may or may not get used in the future. The excitement about the process is writing something that, though it may draw on what already is, is making something that wasn't there before.

### Do you have a particular technique?

Music is a language. My grasp of it is very limited: I'm very young as a composer, and have much language and technique to learn. My music is mostly tonal – in a particular key – making it reasonably accessible. I don't set out to use specific techniques, but I notice I'm interested in the power of intervals between notes, in melodies, the pairing of voices, and the use of choruses and refrains. Repetition is important too, but hopefully not in a formulaic way.

### What comes first, the words or the music?

In the recent past, I have always used a text, which often comes first, but this won't always be so. Sometimes I have just the musical idea, and develop it with a text. Very occasionally, a whole section of a piece plays itself in my mind, like hearing a recording, and all I have to do is write it down. This happened once on a train, and Virgin paper serviettes came in handy!

## What inspires you?

Texts obviously inspire me, and other people's music moves me – not so that I think 'Oh, I'll do that,' but I take it in and it must become part of me, to some extent. Then there are a lot of notions about things that happen in the world: things we do to each other, things we need to do. I have a lot of ideas for future work, and some of them must inform what I do now. I try to keep press articles of things that may be starting points.

## You seem to be particularly fond of the 17th century Metaphysical poets?

Two of these poems affected me as soon as I read them; John Donne's 'Hymn to God ... in my sickness' is one:

*Since I am coming to that Holy Roome,  
Where, with thy Quire of Saints for evermore,  
I shall be made Thy Musique; As I come  
I tune the instrument here at the dore*

George Herbert's 'The Temper' is the other:

*Stretch or contract me, thy poor debtor:  
This is but tuning of my breast,  
To make the music better.*

Both of these have not only inspired specific pieces, but have helped me know my direction. There is also something about using texts to do with death, that somehow make it feel more approachable.

These poets are very specific in their theological belief systems, and some of their language is difficult. Far from being a disadvantage, this is somehow a huge freedom for me. I recently read something Stravinsky said, quoted by Steve Reich in the 'Guardian Review' (30 September 2006):

*In art as in everything else, one can build only on a resisting foundation: whatever constantly gives way to pressure, constantly renders movement impossible. My freedom thus consists in my moving about within the narrow frame that I have assigned myself for each of my*

*undertakings ... Whatever diminishes constraint diminishes strength.*

## Who are your favourite composers?

I love polyphonic music of the Renaissance, and some earlier than that. I would have to mention Bach. Then I jump to the last and the present centuries (I'm being very selective here) and the great traditions of church music: Howells, Holst and Vaughan Williams, Rachmaninov's 'Vespers'. I'm influenced by so-called American minimalism, especially Steve Reich and Philip Glass. I am a big John Adams enthusiast. I recently heard him speak about composition: asked what music was for, he said 'to communicate emotion' without hesitation. I think his ability to convey compassion directly in his piece 'The Wound Dresser' is very rare. It's probably obvious that I would also include John Tavener and Arvo Pärt.

## How has your experience in suffering encephalitis affected your priorities in life?

Life is quieter on the whole, and slower. Music comes out of silence, so I need plenty of that. Different things are important now, less materially important. As I'm not able to return to my previous work, the blessing is that I'm able to do more music. I feel it's what I'm meant to be doing. I hope the experience will add to my music in some way. I certainly value my musical ability more, and thank God that it has survived, when other abilities are not as they were. So, yes!

## Is music an expression of your faith?

It certainly describes some of the journey. But I wouldn't only want to write, or be known for 'sacred music.' When I heard Philip Glass speaking, I asked him about music and the spiritual journey; he's a Buddhist. He said that the music comes first, its discipline, its technique, its work. I am very sobered by that, because I have a long way to go there!



*Rejoicing at St James's, Hildegarde of Bingen's Saint's Day, 17 September 2005. From left, Heather Williams, Mary Jean and Elaine Collins. The Revd Meg Johnson is seated in the background, with Janet Lucitt by the organ.*



## **Short story: Emmaus, where the warm springs are** *by Richard Cutler*

I cannot say when, where it was, how long it lasted ... only a few names remain in my mind ... the valley near the olive grove, the hill that overlooks it – and the woman.

The season was dry, the road a grey-ochre, dusty. The banks where the road dipped were soft, a sandstone not yet sand. The low hills on the lee side of the west wind were steep, an escarpment carved by thin sheep-tracks spiralling to the summit. We kept mainly to the unknown roads. Safer that way.

I had arranged them in fours, trying to give each quartet a leader, a child, an elder ... and a slow one. Perhaps she joined us at the river, when we paused to drink and wash our feet. The woman was dressed in a loose blue smock, a white muslin shawl over her head and shoulders – she appeared from nowhere. Certainly not in the sixteen when we left the market square. Yet no-one was surprised. As if she had been expected. Yet she could not have been with us unnoticed, like a young unmarried aunt who is always in the background, unseen and not spoken to.

After that I became aware of her often, the sadness in her face, her silence. She carried no bag and remained in no one place, moving up and down the column. She held a child's hand for a while, then an elder's, always with a gentle smile, never speaking. Perhaps she was from a distant area – from the North, a different language ... or perhaps she had a deeper reason for her silence. I had noticed her bare feet, her long hair tied back in a coloured braid, bleached but not grey, her walking easy. Her legs swung forward loosely from the hips, effortless and tireless. It was an ease of movement I've seen before, in hill people and goatherds, and the young women who follow the sheep.

The road, no more than a track, dipped down then left the deepcut chalky valley to climb upwards onto a heath with open dunes and ridges studded by marram grass, anchoring the soil from the suck of wind-drift. The sun was hot. We stopped in a churchyard, in the shade of a cedar. An elder asked, 'How much farther, Francis? The children are tired. And the slow one can't keep up.'

'We can rest an hour,' I said, and unstrapped the sack from my shoulder. The children came up to me. 'Sit down in the shade,' I said. 'I'll bring you all some bread and dates.' And I called the woman 'What's your name? I didn't see you when we left the market place? Thanks for helping them.'

'Emisha,' she replied, looking down.

'Sit down beside me. There's some bread and dates, and a few oranges.'

She crouched in a loose, natural way, like a nomad. I added, 'We'll give them to the children and elders first. Did you join us at the river?'

'I am a free one.'

'Not with a group.'

'No.'

'How is that? Everyone has a group.'

'I was not listed.'

'How come ... aren't you from our district?'

'No.'

'Then you are travelling alone?'

'I was with my son ... but he died.'

'I'm sorry.'

'I shall make your group too many.'

'You are welcome. You can help, Emisha, with the food, and the slow ones. And check all the feet when we stop.'

After an hour we moved on. The paths were flat, worn to a sand-turf by sheep and centuries – here green, there brown, where the sun had scorched. After a while I brought her forward to walk beside me. Our progress was slow but thankfully the sun's heat was tempered by a wind from the north.

'Do you know this area, Emisha?'

'I have been here before. I passed through as a child. With my family.'

'Your accent ... are you from the North, north of the Sea?'

'My father was a shepherd. We followed the flock.'

'And the boundary? Did you cross it?'

'We were not stopped in those days.' She looked at me, some hesitation. I smiled so that she might continue. 'They say you are from the community that lives in the valley of the caves. That you are Francis?'

'Yes.'

'That you live in a monastery and own nothing?'

'We have our own fields. We eat together.'

'Are you the Wise One?'

'I am not the Wise One.'

She sighed and became silent. After some distance she said, 'I shall leave you at the boundary. It is not allowed to have an extra one.'

'This is not an enquired group,' I said. 'They will not question us, or check numbers.'

'May I go back now, to help the children?'

'Yes, go back. They like you. We shall reach the first boundary in about an hour, tell them to keep going. There will be shelter after that.'

The boundary was visible but still a long way off, its long white cloud and exit. At last we reached the gap. An old man came out to us.

'Are you the Essene?'

'Yes,' I answered.

'Is this an enquired group?'

'No.'

'How many are you?'

I looked into the anxious faces of the children, the elders ... Emisha had gone. 'Sixteen.'

'Where are you going to?'

'The next boundary.'

'Have you any unlisted women?'

'Do you see any?' I said.

The old man frowned, 'I am not to be questioned.'

'We are not to be interrogated.'

'What is your name, Essene?'

'Francis.'

'Where are you from?'

'The Western Market.'

'There is no right of passage for any unlisted.'

'My group is tired. Let us pass. We are also not to be questioned.'

'Very well.'

As we passed through the gap into Area Nine, the mist rolled back in, sealing the exit.

The refuge at Aspartia was a barn. Stacked at the far end were amphorae, some broken. All empty. The woman Emisha came out from behind one of the straw heaps. She crouched down and rested two water pitchers onto the barn floor, slipping the loops from her shoulder pole:

'I've made some bedding from the straw. At the back. We will not be visible from the entrance, Francis.'

I was astonished to see her, and the water. 'Where did you find some water?'

'A well. I remembered it.'

We sat down. The children gathered around her, excited and asking questions. From a patterned bag she brought out small bowls, dipped them into a pitcher and handed them round. The elders waited. I could see how everyone was entranced by her, the calmness and her kindness. I gave out the last of the bread and the dates.

'However did you get through, Emisha? There is no way. The gap is closed now.'

She looked away and did not answer. In the night she came to me. She was trembling. I placed an arm around her and her shaking ceased. But I knew we would have to betray her at the final exit. We were too many.

The next morning was clear and warm. The children were hungry. I gave them what bread I had held back, and the last three oranges. We took with us what water we could manage. Emisha had rubbed all their feet with a balm. We walked away refreshed, more comfortable and hopeful. But my heart was heavy.

The track descended from the dunes, where the sky had been so close. We smelled the

burnt ground before we reached it – burnt barns, smashed empty houses, charred trees, blackened fields. It all broke our hearts. The children were comforted by the elders, the slow ones encouraged. Emisha travelled constantly up and down the column, now holding a hand, then an arm, always calming and encouraging. At Area Nine Arch, a similar custodian to the last one threw at us the same questions.

Suddenly he said sharply, 'But you are seventeen! It is not possible to leave.' I saw Emisha coming forward. Quickly I said:

'I am not passing through.'

'You are the Essene?'

'Yes.'

'They will crucify you.'

I turned to Emisha. 'Take them through, please.'

I watched them leave until they were out of sight. Cloud shadows were settling on the hill, touching the olive trees, layering their squat, wind-bent shapes with sadness. I walked back and upward. From the summit of a small hill I looked north. The setting sun momentarily lit up the group in the distance. I could see the woman at the head of the column, her blue-white tunic billowing out behind her in the evening breeze. Then they were gone.

Across the valley oil lamps were being lit in Tiberias, pinpoints of light studding the incoming dusk like clusters of glow-worms, or the setting of minor stars. I thought of Emisha and the son who had come with her for a new life and who had died. What sorrows are carried in the human heart behind the mists of appearance.

I made my way along the summit to an old walled garden. It was broken and abandoned, its olive trees bent to the ground, twisted and black – in a corner was a charred olive press. I rolled out my mat, lay down and looked up into the dark purple of the night-gathering sky. My feet ached. They were encrusted in a grey-black, caking dust. Sand and burnt ground.

Tomorrow I shall make for Emmaus, and the warm pools there.

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### at St James's

**Sundays**    0915    Eucharist  
                 1100    **COMMUNITY EUCHARIST**  
   with sermon;  
   children are welcome  
   **Evening Prayer**  
   (unless otherwise  
   announced)

**Tuesdays**   0830    Eucharist  
                         1305    Eucharist and short  
   address  
                         1800    Prayers for healing

**Other**  
**weekdays**   0830    Morning Prayer

### Who's who at St James's

Rector	The Revd Dr Charles Hedley
Associate Priest	The Revd Meg Johnson
Associate Priest	The Revd Lindsay Meader
Associate Priest	The Revd Hugh Valentine
Churchwardens	Cornell Jackson Jane Preest
Deputy Wardens	Caroline Clark Ray Crocker
PCC Lay Chair	Simon Dawson
PCC Treasurer	James Dow
PCC Secretary	Jo Hines
Organist	Malcolm Hicks
Music Leader	Elizabeth Lil

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