

## A Different Form of Christmas

It was a very different Christmas in RTM last December with bookable places only for the main services, no packed churches and a more limited chance to welcome those from the greater community of Richmond, who join us each year. Sadly, no Christingle services or Nativity plays for the children. All set against increasing levels of coronavirus. And yet, despite this sombre background the Christmas message was undimmed - God's great gift to humanity, the birth of the Christ Child, giving us hope and through his later sacrifice, the way to eternal life. It was a very different Christmas but it was still Christmas as the following pages show.



*Unable to hold our traditional Christingle service on Christmas Eve, we made up 50 Christingle make-at-home packs complete with orange, sweets, ribbon, candle, a prayer and a link to enable a donation to be made to The Childrens' Society. The bags were offered from the safety of the front garden of St Matthias' vicarage in Cambrian Road, and families on their way to the Park stopped and were delighted to be offered a bag and a chance to celebrate at home.*  
Revd Anne Crawford

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### Advent & Christmas 2020 at St Matthias

Advent 2020 certainly was a time of anticipation and waiting heightened by the uncertainties of the pandemic with all the sadness, concerns and restrictions of present times. There were also unexpected benefits, one being the inspiring and thought provoking virtual Advent calendar which Revd Anne emailed out to us each day. The reflections were very special, sometimes challenging, sometimes enfolding, but always energising. And



*Christmas Flowers at St Matthias* Revd Anne Crawford

nervous about attendance and infection rates rising there were some empty seats available. The church looked glorious with flowers, candles, and a decorated Christmas tree. We sat, masked and spaced out, whilst in time honoured way the crib was blessed and we listening to the familiar words and readings holding on to the promise of new life, light and hope. There were no carols of course and none of the usual pre or post party atmosphere of other Christmases, but the quiet celebration was absolutely appropriate for this time and all we could muster in the circumstances. It has been an unforgettable experience and we have learned from it. Let us hope next year will be back to normal with all joy unconfined.

Margaret Morrison and Judith Pearson, Churchwardens

the time to savour and enjoy them since most of us were at home hardly daring to venture forth. Margaret often thinks about about Jyoti Sahi's painting of the Dalit Madonna.

We managed to keep our church open for many services, all of which were also available via Zoom, and we held our traditional Nine (Seven to be precise) Lessons and Carols online with congregation and family members joining us from all across the world. We lit Advent candles for real, marking each stage of the journey towards the birth of Christ. Our beautiful carved nativity figures bought in Bethlehem were gazed upon in quiet contemplation in church, and our knitted Posada figures were placed in the church porch, an encouraging sight for people passing by.

With infection rates increasing and uncertainty about churches continuing to be open, we considered ourselves blessed to be able to hold our Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Eucharists in church as planned. All places were fully booked beforehand, but with people

## Virtual Posada - Advent 2020 at St John the Divine

Many of us have participated in the Posada over the last few years, in which the (knitted) Holy Family travel around from house to house during the lead-up to Christmas, spending time in a different household each night, symbolising Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem.

Sadly, our new tradition wasn't able to happen in the usual way in Advent 2020 due to Coronavirus, so we at St John's devised a virtual Posada instead. Each day

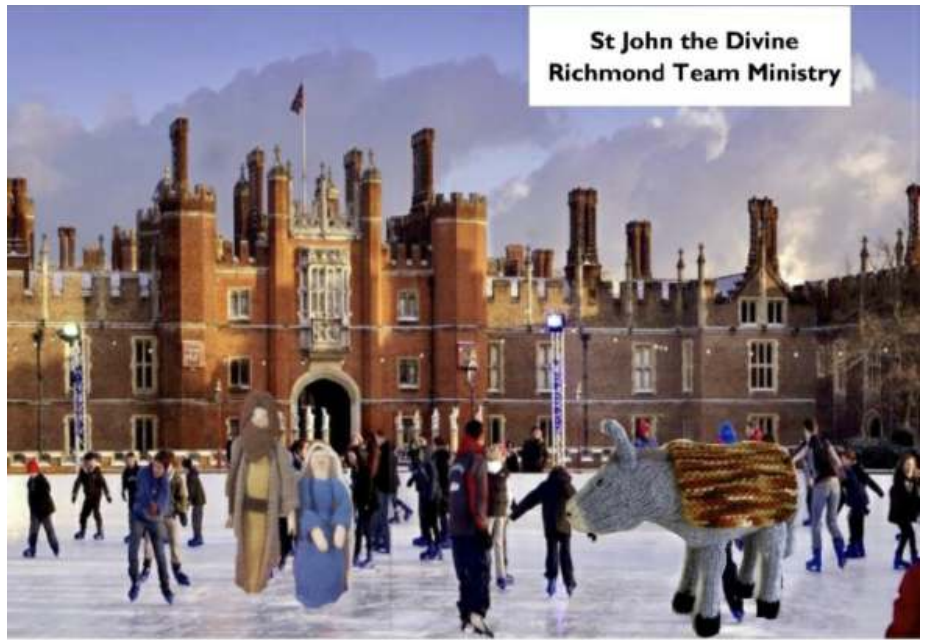


*The Virtual Posada 'Arriving' at Heathrow*

Fiona Morgan



Mary and Joseph (and their donkey) took a step on their journey towards Christmas with them transposed into a different photograph. We posted pictures on social media of Mary, Joseph and the donkey travelling around familiar local scenes. They took in some local sights on the way, including ice skating at Hampton Court Palace, visiting Strawberry Hill, Marble Hill and Kew Gardens, watched the boats on the river, enjoyed the Richmond May Fair and even visited the Coronavirus testing centre at Twickenham rugby stadium! Sadly all the Richmond hotels were closed due to Covid so, after popping in to St Matthias and St Mary's, their journey culminated in their arrival at St John's on Christmas Eve.



*The Virtual Posada 'Skating' at Hampton Court Palace*

Fiona Morgan

You can view the Posada at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/980722069118669>

Fiona Morgan, Churchwarden

## A Different Christmas at St John the Divine



*Knitted Nativity at St John the Divine* Revd Neil Summers

wonderful director of music, and to the small group of representative choir members who sang their hearts out on our behalf - and at a distance from each other – including, amazingly, descants!

Revd Neil Summers

It was, inevitably, a different sort of Christmas at St John's: no school concerts, no Junior Church Nativity, no community Carol Service....

....but on the positive side we were really pleased to be able to host the Team's 'Blue Christmas' service on 21 December (with a larger - albeit distanced - congregation this year). Then the church was open during the afternoon of Christmas Eve for people to visit the crib and light candles, and we held our customary services for Midnight Mass and Christmas Morning.

Special thanks go to the flower arranging team, whose standards never slip, to Ben, our

As we go to press, we learn that Peter Moore, member of St John's congregation and choir, has died in the Royal Marsden Hospital. With his highly professional graphic design skills, Peter provided a great deal of technical and practical support to our Parish Administrator, Tina Roberts, in the production of Team Talk. We will pay a more substantial tribute to him in the next edition, but, for the moment, we give thanks for Peter and his numerous contributions to both parish and wider community life, and we pray for his wife, Ruth, and all the family in their loss.

# Christingle at St John the Divine, 2020

At St John the Divine we held a remote Christingle service. So, early in December we put on our thinking caps and shared some ideas with Mother Wilma. The Children's Society produced lots of resources, which gave us more ideas and material.



The Children's Society

The date set was 23 December, about 10 days later than our usual event. An invitation was sent out to all of our congregation, and several other families who we have regular contact with.

At the weekend we filled our Christingle bags with everything necessary for the day: orange, sweets, raisins, red ribbon, candle and a service sheet, stickers and donation envelopes for The Children's Society. Some people were able to pick up their bags when they came into the church to visit the crib, and Fiona delivered bags to others where this wasn't possible (not just for children!)

At 4pm on the appointed day we came together on Zoom. For some families the time wasn't convenient, but they had all they needed to make their Christingles at home – along with the words of the prayers and the Christingle songs that we sang. We made the Christingles together during the zoom call.

The service was put together and conducted by a small Junior Church team that had come together at the start of Advent: Fr Neil, Fiona, Mish and Mary.

Fr Neil placed his completed Christingle beneath the nave altar where it sat throughout the Christmas season, to remind us of the Light of Christ.

## Carols in the Open Air at St Mary Magdalene

On 19 December at 2pm, congregational singing took place at St Mary Magdalene for the first time since the original lockdown. Although, when the church was open, the St Mary's Choral Scholars provided a wonderful musical accompaniment to worship including hymns, the congregation could not join in. So, with great anticipation, 40 or so St Mary's worshippers assembled, all socially distanced, in the churchyard for an outdoor carol service. After such a long period it was wonderful to be able to sing out loud and together and, moreover, to sing favourite carols.

As the Revd Wilma Roest led the singing wearing a fetching pair of red reindeer horns, Churchwarden Emma Meredith in a jolly Santa hat gave out carol sheets and supervised a bucket collection for the Children's Society. (Normally RTM supports the Society through the collections from the churches' Christingle services, but these were unable to take place this year.) The assembled singers worked their way enthusiastically through ten carols. Their singing attracted much approval and thanks from the passers-by many of whom gave donations with others actually staying to join in the singing. Some £350 was collected for the Children's Society.



*In the Churchyard*

Elsbeth Fearn

The singers arrived home from the carol service to find that London was being placed in Tier 4 that night so a further outdoor carol service planned for Christmas Eve had, sadly, to be cancelled. However, the memories of the singing and fellowship enjoyed that afternoon would stay with everyone for quite a while.



## What the Children did at St Mary Magdalene

The children made cards to post to people in the parish who were on their own, and, like the NHS rainbow pictures in the first lockdown, the children made Nativity Windows to display. As there were no Christingle services, families instead visited the Crib and collected a kit in a bag to make a Christingle at home, with proceeds being donated to the Children's Society. Revd Wilma and Sue Eastaugh ran a virtual Zoom Nativity play on 20 December and used the pop-up book of the Nativity story written by the children's author and illustrator Tomie DaPaola, which Sue had used for her own family when children. Wilma welcomed everyone at the beginning and gave a blessing at the end whilst Sue told the story in her own words, as it was a bit difficult to show the book and read from it at the same time. She also asked the children some simple questions such as 'Which part of the story did you like the best?' and explained that as this Christmas the Nativity play couldn't be done in person, everyone was joining together to tell the story instead. As Sue says 'It was lovely to use a book that had special memories for me.

And in fact I've kept it on display as our Christmas crib'.



*The Nativity Pop-Up Book*

Sue Eastaugh

## Christmas Services at St Mary Magdalene

The Christmas season began a little earlier in St Mary Magdalene on Sunday 6 December when Revd Wilma explained that in the Netherlands, as well as Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, the 5 and 6 December were also important. They mark the feast of St Nicholas (Sinterklaas), the patron saint of children and are a time for gift giving.

It was uplifting that compared to Easter when the church was closed, the service of Readings and Carols, Midnight Mass and the All Age Christmas Morning Eucharist were all able to take place. However, because of the need for social distancing, places had to be booked in advance so, sadly, not everyone who wanted to be there could be. A service of music and readings was also held at St Mary's for the Richmond Charities Almshouses as their normal carol service could not happen because of Covid.



*Adoring the Crib*

Revd Wilma Roest

Speaking to Team Talk Wilma said of Christmas 2020 at St Mary Magdalene "It was so good we were still able to celebrate Christmas in church, albeit with much smaller numbers than other years, but with many more watching via the livestream. We were connected in quiet joy as we remembered that small baby in the manger. Jesus came into an imperfect world, and this year we recognised that more than ever before. Yet, it was still Christmas – the light shines in our darkness and the darkness did not overcome it."

# Historic Vestments at St John the Divine

Gill Gregorowski

St John the Divine was built as a chapel-of-ease for St Mary Magdalene between 1826 and 1828. It started life in the evangelical tradition. The arrival of the Revd Henry Miller in February 1879 brought radical change with catholic ritual and solemnity. The large congregation of staunch evangelicals quickly rose in revolt and the majority left in a body. As Fr Miller continued his

mission there was a need for liturgical garments and other items for the new style of worship. We have records of purchases from the ecclesiastical supplier Helbronner from this time. The new pattern of worship was soon established.

The Revd T. Gerard Tylee succeeded Fr Miller and remained in post until 1899. The first reference, so far, to vestments etc being made at St John the Divine comes from the Richmond Herald, January 15th 1892: "...a silk chasuble for use on festivals has been worked by the embroidery class." £2.14.00 was taken in expenses from the Chasuble Fund. The group called themselves S. Veronica's Embroidery Class. Fr Tylee's wife Mary has left us twelve signed embroidery patterns,



Burse - still in use today

Gill Gregorowski

probably used for stoles and altar linen. Besides her contribution to the embroidery class her role included Boys' Sunday School Superintendent and Hon. Treasurer to "Our Boys" Club and the St John's branch of the Home Mission Society. Her parish obituary in April 1945 reveals that she had been a skilled embroideress in her younger days and was largely responsible for the green frontal and two banners which were still in use.

Very few vestments etc. seem to have been purchased since 1892, when a cope worked by the renowned East Grinstead sisters was presented to the church. Most subsequent items were made in-house. By 1905 St John's Embroidery Guild (the term used in the Statistical Return of Parochial Work) had 21 members, reaching a probable peak of 30 during the years 1906-08. This is the time of the recent construction of the new chancel and vestries when there was a special need for liturgical items for a vicar and two assistant priests.

An Altar Linen Guild also functioned at this time. It always had fewer members and unlike the Embroidery Guild, which met twice a week, they worked in their own homes. Individuals



Stole - none of the other vestments remain from this set  
Gill Gregorowski



from the congregation mostly paid for articles to be made such as fair linen cloths, corporals and purificators. Some women were members of both guilds like Miss Emily Taylor who was also deeply involved in the day-to-day life of the parish.

The guilds have left no written records, but I live in hope. The St John the Divine parish magazines are useful in acknowledgements of some of the items made by the guilds. They are often incredibly brief and sparse in detail e.g. May 1903 "A new chasuble... is a handsome piece of work". Occasionally a little more information is included so we know that at Easter 1906 the white embroidered frontal was used for the first time. It is still in use today!

The guilds have left a legacy of some of their labours which include 17 sets of vestments; five of these are highly embroidered and six sets are still in regular use. We have copes, high altar frontals and super-frontals, two of which are embroidered, banners, pulpit falls, tabernacle veils, and much more. We also have a large selection of altar linen, which was always embroidered in white. The fair linen cloths were repeatedly repaired and sometimes



*Cope Hood*

Gill Gregorowski

cut and added to other linen to prolong their use. Much of this exquisite embroidery is still in very good condition considering its age, usage and constant laundering.

We are also the fortunate custodian of over 200 embroidery patterns for liturgical use as well as many sketches, tracings, templates, paper pattern transfers, besides numerous "secular" patterns. The latter were also very important. Sales of work of secular embroidery and needlework were essential to help pay for liturgical items. The evidence of these patterns goes some way towards explaining the huge range and quantity of items produced by the guilds for St John's. Gifts of vestments and linen were also made as gifts to churches at home and abroad.

The Embroidery Guild finally folded in 1970. For many of the preceding years "make do and mend" had become a necessity. Nevertheless what an amazing legacy these highly skilled and industrious women have left us. Truly their work was done for the Glory of God and we have much to thank and praise them for today.

PS My thanks must also go to Fr Neil for allowing me to keep looking into every nook and cranny at St John the Divine. It is remarkable what can still be discovered. I am preparing a comprehensive booklet about the Embroidery Guild and related activities at SJD which I hope to complete by the end of 2021.



*Chasuble - still in use today*

Gill Gregorowski

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# Walking with Christ - Lent 2021

*Revd Anne Crawford*

I've recently enjoyed a few days leave, and with lockdown restrictions still in force and wet and wintry weather keeping me indoors, I had the perfect excuse to sit in front of the TV and catch up on some of the programmes I haven't so far had time to view. The series of 'Winter Walks' produced for BBC 4 were the most enjoyable, taking me on a journey – an armchair pilgrimage – through some of my favourite north Yorkshire landscapes, all of them in the company of the most insightful and spiritual of guides: Baroness Warsi, Rev'd Richard Coles, Lemn Sissay, Simon Armitage and Selina Scott. The walks were solitary affairs, filmed by the walker on a camera which enabled a full 360 degree vista, with a few glimpses from above taken by an accompanying drone. If you haven't managed to catch this series then I can wholeheartedly recommend them as perfect



*Trees in Richmond Park*

*Revd Anne Crawford*

Lenten viewing; there's plenty of opportunity not just to enjoy the scenery, but to reflect with the walker on the benefits of putting one foot in front of the other and having the space to notice the small and intricate details beneath our feet, of feeling the wind in our hair and the rain on our faces, of being enfolded in nature and feeling humbled by our wild and, in the case of these particular winter walks, deeply spiritual surroundings.

During all three lockdowns, when our freedom of movement has been limited, a walk outside in the fresh air has been one of life's little joys. Whether it's a walk along a suburban pavement when we are shopping, or a stroll through the park or by the river, we are blessed by living in an environment which makes walking a pleasure. Walking through the Vineyard passage the other day I spied the first snowdrops peeping through the undergrowth, and my heart jumped for joy at this first sign of spring. Walking in the park this afternoon I noticed the early signs of fattening sticky buds on the chestnuts, and down by the river the fast

flowing water and the high spring tides remind me that the earth keeps on turning and life goes on despite rising infection rates and the sadness and loss we see all around us.

Lent is a time when we take a metaphorical walk with Jesus through the Wilderness of his journey to the cross. Lent is a time of pilgrimage, of walking with spiritual intent, of taking time out to make headway through the issues we've been struggling with, mapping a way forward as the path ahead becomes a little clearer. Walking the Stations of the Cross during Lent is an ancient practice of prayer which is both physical and spiritual, a journey with Christ through the worst days of his life and a reminder to us that walking the way of a disciple - following in Jesus' footsteps - will inevitably involve pain and sacrifice. Walking can help as we reflect on our own journey of faith, our own passage through times of loss and grief, uncertainty and pain as well as through those moments in life when we are a little more sure of ourselves and of our place in the world.

In previous years I've led a prayer walk during Lent, and it's been beneficial to walk and talk and get to know our fellow travelling companions a little better, especially those who are new to



Church. Our walks have given us an opportunity to stand and stare too, to stop and 'be in the moment', to reflect on life's journey, to consider how far we have come as well as begin to recognise the path ahead, to pray and to keep silent and listen out for direction and inspiration. This year we may not be able to gather in a group for a traditional Lenten walk, but despite lockdown restrictions we can still enjoy a walk outside, either alone or with a friend.

The Anglican priest and poet Malcolm Guite has written a poem which celebrates walking as a means of prayer. It's the poem I've used to mark the beginning of our Lenten prayer walks through Richmond Park, and as I read it today in a climate of huge change and uncertainty it seems to have an added poignancy. It speaks of walking as a means of bringing those dead ends we experience in life to God in prayer to be blessed so that we can find a way round them. I know that for me personally a solitary walk in the fresh air is the best solution to preacher's block; a walk gives me space to step outside myself, a rare opportunity to find some inner stillness, the peace and quiet around me allowing me to hear what I need to hear (and not always what I want to!). A stroll in the park with a friend is a great way to share worries and offer comfort, sometimes even without a word being spoken; walking for me miraculously unravels the knots I tie myself up in and clears away the stuff which has been building up and blocking my view of the way ahead. Walking is the best therapy I know, and the greatest aid to prayer.

These last 12 months have held more dead ends than most of us ever want to face in life, so I share this poem in the hope that it will encourage you to walk with hope through Lent and in walking find that you are not alone.



*Snowdrops in Yorkshire*

Revd Anne Crawford

## Prayer/Walk

*Malcolm Guite*

A hidden path that starts at a dead end,  
Old ways, renewed by walking with a friend,  
And crossing places taken hand in hand,

The passages where nothing need be said,  
With bruised and scented sweetness underfoot  
And unexpected birdsong overhead,

The sleeping life beneath a dark-mouthed  
burrow,  
The rooted secrets rustling in a hedgerow,  
The land's long memory in ridge and furrow,

A track once beaten and now overgrown  
With complex textures, every kind of green,  
Land – and cloud-scape melting into one,

The rich meandering of streams at play,  
A setting out to find oneself astray,  
And coming home at dusk a different way.

*From 'The Word in the Wilderness' - A Page a  
Day for Lent and Easter*

# An Adventure Like No Other

*Fenella Warden*

My travelling companion, Judy, has a cousin living in the North East of Scotland. She is a member of a Scottish Presbyterian church. Many such churches in Scotland are twinned with a similar church in Malawi because of the David Livingstone connection. After retiring from her teaching post, said cousin, Jos, decided to volunteer at a school in Lilongwe, capital of Malawi. Judy decided she would visit her. "Would you like to come?" "Yes," said I, "if we can go via the Victoria Falls." So in June 2015 we flew to Zambia via Johannesburg and hence to Lilongwe. As we left the



*Children learning with text books*

Fenella Warden

airport there was Jos to greet us and Gerard, the Reverend's driver with the car. In went our luggage and then!!!....a truck load of children appeared from the school to greet us. Out they tumbled and hugs all round. We came to know many of the children helping in the classrooms with English and sharing songs with them and also the teachers who worked with a passion.

The Church of Central Africa – Presbyterian – is the largest denomination in Malawi where 70% claim membership of a Christian church. It has 500 congregations and 600,000 members. Its constitution states that "The

Mission of the Church is the proclamation of the Gospel for the salvation of mankind; the shelter and nurture and spiritual fellowship of the children of God, the promotion of the truth, the promotion of social righteousness and the wellbeing of mankind."

The school is Mb'uka CCAP. The relatively new curriculum for Primary Schools states that the aim is to address the social, economic and political changes with methodologies that have been carefully selected to effectively deliver a curriculum that is more relevant and responsible to the needs and characteristics of the learner today and in years to come.

Lovely moments with the children:

1. Judy being greeted in the playground by a little boy who ran at speed and flung his arms round her knees.
2. All the singing and dancing in the classrooms...better than an English grammar lesson any day.
3. The children's greeting when we entered the classroom.

"Good morning Madame." "Good morning children." "How are you?" "I'm fine thank you, how are you?" We are fine thank you Madame." "You are welcome Madam." THANK YOU



*Children in class*

Fenella Warden

As with all tourists we enjoyed and marvelled at the natural wonders but we also stepped outside the tourist trail and met the people, and experienced their laughter and generosity, their innocence rather than sophistication, humility rather than arrogance and children with optimism, enthusiasm and energy. Materially they have little but in many respects they are rich beyond measure.



# THE HUGUENOTS AND THE FRENCH HOSPITAL

## 'LA PROVIDENCE'

*Elsbeth Fearn*

The French Hospital 'La Providence' whose motto 'Dominus Providebit' means 'God will Provide' is a charity founded in 1718 to provide care for Huguenots in London. They were French Protestants in the Reformed or Calvinist tradition, oppressed for their beliefs. A stream of Huguenot refugees came to London from the mid 1550s onwards. Later, following the revocation by Louis XIV in 1685 of Henry IV's Edict of Nantes, which had tolerated Protestantism, over 500,000 Huguenots fled abroad from persecution, and 100,000 came to Britain.

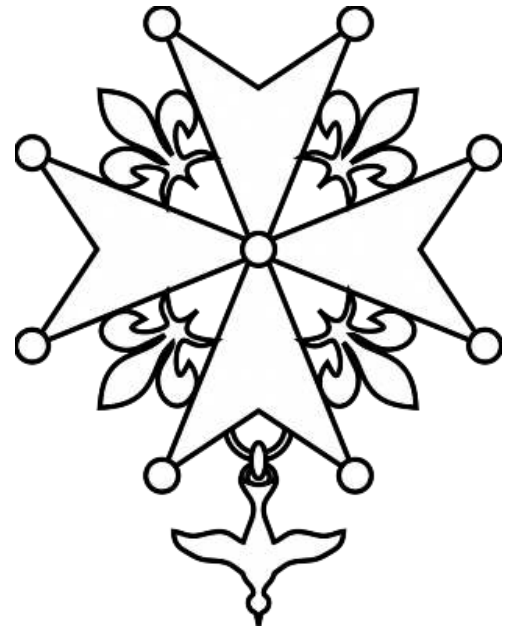
The Huguenots were talented people - gold and silversmiths, jewellers, wood carvers, furniture makers, clock makers pharmacists, master silk weavers, merchants, doctors, bankers, lawyers, and financiers - many and their descendants prospering and becoming important contributors to British life and society. For example, Field Marshal Sir Jean-Louis Ligonier, Commander in Chief of the British Army from 1728 -1747 and Sir Robert Ladbroke, merchant banker, MP and Lord Mayor of London in 1747 to whom there is a memorial in Christ Church Spitalfields, a Huguenot district, dressed in his mayoral robes.

By 1700 there were over 20 French Huguenot churches in London but people also needed medical and social care as many were poor and needy. Following a bequest by Jacques de Gastigny, the French Hospital was established in Finsbury. As well as medical care the elderly and infirm could shelter there. An important feature was sensitive, humane mental health treatment, very advanced for the times. Most Huguenots had experienced great trauma in France with the added strain of adjusting to a new country. The mentally ill were treated in small safe rooms called 'les petites maisons'. This contrasted with the contemporary provision for Londoners such as Bedlam (St Mary Bethlehem), the main asylum. Here the patients were kept in large rooms in degrading conditions providing a cruel entertainment for contemptuous visitors, come in to 'view the lunatics'.

In 1865 the Hospital relocated to Hackney and in 1947 to Horsham in Sussex. In 1956, the decision was made that, thanks to the advent of the NHS, medical services were no longer needed. Instead the Hospital would provide social care through sheltered almshouse housing. So, the Hospital in 1959 moved to its present home in a then run down Victorian square off Rochester High Street. After much renovation and building over the years there are now 58 almshouse flats, many with tenants of Huguenot descent, and a larger older house which contains the board room of the Hospital's Court of Directors.

Why Rochester? Well the then Bishop of Rochester Christopher Chevasse was himself of Huguenot ancestry so was sympathetic. (Incidentally his twin brother, Noel Chevasse, was the only person ever to win the Victoria Cross twice, the second time, posthumously) There had also always been Huguenot settlements in Kent such as at Canterbury and Maidstone. As well as the flats, there is also a thriving community centre and continuing close links with Rochester Cathedral. The Huguenot Garden grows plants associated with the Huguenots such as lavenders, pinks, auriculas, Gallica roses, French pear varieties and a mulberry tree, the last commemorating the importance of silk weaving as silkworms are fed mulberry leaves.

A sister charity, the Huguenot Museum, is just along the High Street. It displays portraits, silver, documents, watches, porcelain and silk samples from the Hospital's own collection. In normal times, the Museum holds occasional events, when visitors can see the almshouses, the community centre, garden and the board room which are usually private.



*The Huguenot Cross* Wikipedia & Sryatsu

The elements of the Huguenot cross signify:

- 1 lily of France, as a Maltese cross, with four petals - the Four Gospels
- 8 rounded points at the corners of the petals - the Eight Beatitudes
- 4 fleur-de-lis representing France
- 12 fleur-de-lis petals – the 12 Apostles
- 1 dove pendant - the Holy Spirit

**Team Rector and Vicar, St Mary Magdalene:**

The Revd Canon Wilma Roest  
T: 020 8940 0362  
E: rector@richmondteamministry.org

**Team Vicar, St Matthias:**

The Revd Anne Crawford  
T: 020 8940 7462  
E: anne.crawford@richmondteamministry.org

**Team Vicar, St John the Divine:**

The Revd Neil Summers  
T: 020 8332 1838  
E: neil.summers@richmondteamministry.org

**Self Supporting Ministers:**

The Revd Andrew Williams  
E: andrew.williams.london@gmail.com  
The Revd Alan Sykes  
E: alan.sykes@richmondteamministry.org

**Reader:**

Ruth Martin  
T: 020 8948 4458 E: ruthtea304@hotmail.com

**Southwark Pastoral Auxiliary (SPA):**

Sue Eastaugh  
T: 020 8943 9137 E: sue@eastaugh.net

**Children & Young People's Ministry Leader:**

Vacancy

**Property & Facilities Manager:**

Ronan Mulcahy  
T: 020 8948 1725  
E: property.manager@richmondteamministry.org

**Parish Administrator:**

Tina Roberts, Parish Office, The Vicarage,  
Ormond Road, Richmond TW10 6TH  
T: 020 8940 0362  
E: admin@richmondteamministry.org

**Bookings Administrator:**

Liz Roberts, Parish Office, The Vicarage,  
Ormond Road, Richmond TW10 6TH  
T: 020 8940 4905  
E: bookings@richmondteamministry.org

**Safeguarding:**

Judy Wright T: 020 8940 5786  
E: judytwright1@gmail.com

**TEAMtalk Editorial Board:**

Elspeth Fearn, Heather Montford, Mary Ricketts,  
Richard Rondel, Alan Sykes  
Any enquiries/comments:  
E: teamtalk@richmondteamministry.org

**Website:** richmondteamministry.org

**Webmaster:** Robert Kealey  
E: webmaster@richmondteamministry.org



*St John the Divine*



*St Mary Magdalene*



*St Matthias*