

Diocese of London
The Parish of the Holy Cross Greenford Magna

ANNUAL REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDING
31 December 2024

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORTS AND REFLECTIONS

Rainbows Report for 2024

Through the Eyes – Advent and Christmas Reflection by Antoinette Scott

Savouring Christmas – Mary Finucane



Report 2024

Rainbows is a Girlguiding group for girls aged 4 to 7 years old. We run a programme of learning, through games and activities. We run on Monday Evenings, Term time only from 6 pm – 7 pm.

We have had a full year of activities and fun. We currently have 8 girls attending and 2 girls on the waitlist hopefully joining after February.

We are undertaking and completing badge work and having fun playing games. We have been able to use the outside area with the Parish Room.

We have attended District Skills Events which were good fun. – these are activity mornings that the girls attend and take part in different activities with Brownies and other Rainbows from District. There was also a District Event Meet the Animals which the girls enjoyed very much. They are then awarded badges for each Event.

In November, we were invited to join the Remembrance Parade with our District, unfortunately no girls were available.

At Christmas, we went to Panto, to see Beauty and the Beast at Greenford Hall. We all had lots of fun, girls had a good time shouting when the ghosts came on.

Over the year our numbers have stayed steady at 8 girls.

WE WOULD LIKE MORE GIRLS TO REGISTER, PLEASE GO TO THE GIRLGUIDING WEBSITE. You can register your daughter's name at any age to be on the waiting list.www.girlguiding.org.uk

I would like to say a very big thank you to my helpers Sarah, Marie, Anita, and Emily who support the programme, girls, and myself. I appreciated all they do. Lydia has just started to assist and to complete her Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Thank you to all the families that support us over the year.

Alexandra Marconi
Rainbow Leader

Reflections

Through New Eyes – Antoinette Scott's Advent & Christmas Blog

My Advent journey began in joining my fellow members at Greenford Station on our way to the Crypt of St Paul's. An opportunity to be refreshed and preparedness as we ascend the stairs to **St Paul's Cathedral for the Advent Carol Service**. The magnificence of the cathedral that held the masses was dimly lit by the small and tall pillar candles to create a sombre atmosphere. Readings, prayers and beautiful choral singing from the choir were echoed from different parts of the vast cathedral creating a sense of closeness and togetherness as we reflect on the arrival of Jesus the Messiah. Our group was sat directly under the mighty Dome as we sung and listened to the haunting melodies from the choir. A beautiful service we talked about on our way home.

I took part in the **Compline or Evening Prayers** during the Sunday evenings over Advent. Leaving the warmth of my home only to be warmly met by an inviting small group of fellow worshippers in the sacred space of the Old Church lit by a handful of candles. The mood created was that of reverence. Prayers were said and punctuated by moments of silence. Though the period of compline was short it was impactful. It disciplined me to be still, go inward for quietness, deeper reflection on the words of the prayers and the thoughts that emerged. I came away quietly meditative and hopeful for a positive approach to the week ahead.

I had the pleasure of welcoming the Nativity figures or the **The Posada** in my home, having collected it from Tebsy – thank you. In my front room I arranged the figures, opened the day on the Advent calendar, lit a candle and read the contained prayers. The Posada was a focal and talking point for friends who visited that night. It also sparked my imagination. I imagined what was going through the minds of Joseph and Mary, as they been turned away multiple inns; how they were feeling, did they lose faith. From personal, would I have noticed the bright star in the night sky; and what would it have been like to be a shepherdess' (me) in the stable, looking in total wonder at Jesus the Messiah. The Posada reminded me of the very humble arrival of Jesus the Messiah on earth, and to look out for others. The next day the Posada continued its travels to Mandy's home.

Magical is the word I'd describe the **Community Carol Service**. The feeling of excitement and expectation were palpable. I enjoyed the spirited and cheerful voices of the children from Edward Bentham primary school that complimented the harmonious, tuneful singing of the church choir as we sang our favourite hymns. A violin player accompanying Jared the pianist and the vocals of a trainee opera singer, elevated the occasion to special. The joyful carol singing and the mass candle lit environment brought a feeling of solemnity and thoughtfulness. It felt like we were highly honouring the arrival of Jesus the Messiah.

I had a delicious **Christmas Lunch** in the middle of December. Plentiful good food, festive music, lots of people, lively chatter and seconds, in a warm and engaging environment. To add to the occasion, we were joined by a gentleman celebrating his birthday of 97 years. I am grateful to Jenny and the team for a wonderful lunch.

Next stop was **Family Quiz night** where I had lots of fun. My competitive spirit came out to win. Again, the church was packed with tables of families and friends from the community - including a table of teens, competing for star prizes and raffles. Just like the others, we too had a team of brains on our table: Andy & Frances and Father Graham. We scored superbly in subjects like sport, local knowledge, history, royal family and politics. My team came in strong in 4th place. Although we didn't win the prize, it was a great evening of conversation, encouragement, hearty good food and entertainment. Andrew the quizmaster kept the questions flowing.

The **Midnight Mass of Christmas** was amazing. A night of singing praises matched with sombreness as lit by the candles and reading Scripture. I reflected on the Divinely chosen messengers - from Abraham and the Prophets in the Old Testament, to John the Baptist in the New - that signalled the arrival of the Light of the World. The service was joined by musicians

playing the piano, guitar and violin. I'm reminded to continue to embrace the Light and live the way that Jesus the Messiah taught us to live with one another.

I've come to the end of my Advent journey, which was an enjoyable and reflective experience. I thank Father Graham and the Church Council for a packed programme of events.

Savouring Christmas – Mary Finucane

I think the Christmas season at the Holy Cross stands out as a time of enrichment, reflection, and celebration. One of the exciting dates in the calendar is the Christmas Craft Market. Last year, expertly led by Frances Hounsell a strong group of committed men and women transformed the church setting into a festive wonderland. Local artisans set up stalls adorned with handcrafted ornaments, jewellery, cards, homemade treats, and thoughtful gifts. The scent of mulled wine and mince pies mingled with the sound of music, laughter, companionship and warm conversation really set the scene beautifully. It is not just a market; it is a lovely gathering where local people come to support one another and embrace the spirit of giving.

Another timeless tradition, Carol Singing, also hits a high note for me! Last year we were delighted to visit both Meadows Residential Care Home and for the first time ever The Grange. Bringing music and companionship to residents who may not be able to celebrate Christmas as they once did is a deeply meaningful experience. As we sang familiar carols, we were often joined by the residents themselves, their voices blending with ours. Some shared their own stories of Christmases past, making these visits extra special. We also took our carols beyond the church walls, to sing at Greenford Underground station to raise money for two charities, Ealing Foodbank and Ealing Churches Night Shelter. Wrapped up warm and festive we stood near the exit barriers harmonizing to the sound of rushing commuters. Some paused to listen, others dropped coins into our collection tin, and more joined in, momentarily swept up in the seasonal spirit. It is always a humbling reminder of how music can connect us, even in the busiest of places.

And finally the ultimate highlight, Midnight Mass by candlelight. Holy Cross Church, adorned with flickering candles and fragrant evergreens, bathed in a warm glow was truly beautiful. The readings, the prayers, and the solemn beauty of the Eucharist created an atmosphere of deep reverence. When we sang "O Holy Night," it felt as though time stood still and the true essence of Christmas filled our hearts.

Life at The Holy Cross is more than attending services; it is about community, faith, and the moments that bring us closer together. Through events like these, we not only celebrate traditions but also create lasting memories that bind us in love and fellowship.