

## **Community Routes**

### **Strangers into Citizens Interfaith Rally**

Migrants to our country have long been on the edge of society, and often work for less than the minimum wage. SSF has long befriended them. In Plaistow and Hilfield we have room for one or two men in such a situation - some who have lived here for over 14 years, but with no right to work, or to claim state benefits. They have blessed our communities in many ways, both in work and worship.

Brothers have been supporting the Strangers into Citizens campaign which calls for these long term migrants to be allowed to become citizens, and have attended the annual May Day rally for several years.

On the May Bank Holiday Monday, Hugh SSF, Sue Height TSSF and Caroline Ugbo TSSF attended the service in St Margaret's (next to Westminster Abbey) with a wonderful choir from Zimbabwe. Others attended Mass in the Roman Catholic Cathedral or Muslim worship, before processing up Whitehall to Trafalgar Square where Vaughan, then a postulant, and Tobias, a volunteer at Hilfield, joined them. It was a very well organised and festive day, a celebration more than a demonstration, as is to be expected from everything organised by London Citizens, the UK's largest civic alliance. The parish in Plaistow in which the brothers and sisters are involved is a London Citizens founding parish.

It was great to be surrounded by people from all over the world, most living in London but with delegations from Birmingham and beyond. We heard imams, members of parliament, bishops and representatives from many countries - all calling for an earned amnesty for those who speak English and who have been here for at least six years.

For further information see the website: [www.strangersintocitizens.org.uk](http://www.strangersintocitizens.org.uk)

### **Born again website**

It's taken a long time, with a pregnancy considerably longer than an elephant's, but the European Province website ([www.franciscans.org.uk](http://www.franciscans.org.uk)) was finally reborn in an entirely new form at the beginning of April. We'd been aware for some time that our original site had grown over the years in a rather disorganised fashion, and starting a new one from scratch seemed the sensible option.

We've kept many of the popular features, such as Latest News, our intercession and engagement lists, back copies of franciscan, and information about vocation (in a much expanded area of the site), but there are also new sections about Francis and Clare, Franciscan praying, and Living as Franciscans.

We've rearranged the pages on houses with retreat accommodation, to make it easier to find out what we offer, and made it simpler to print off programmes

and travel information. And there are far more pictures scattered throughout the site.

We hope that we've produced an attractive and user friendly guide to our Franciscan community, and to the Franciscan way. Please do visit us, and let us know what you think.

### **St Alphege Oratory**

St Alphege Church, Southwark, London was full on Sunday, 19 April - St Alphege Day - to welcome a new Anglican community, now living in St Alphege Clergy House.

The community of the Oratory of St Alphege consists of three sisters of CSF (Gina, Jennifer Chan and Joyce) and two lay people (Anna Verey and Nigel Chapelle) exploring a new model of religious community.

The Rev'd Ray Andrews, Priest in Charge of Southwark St George the Martyr with St Alphege and St Jude, formally welcomed them into the parish and Bishop Christopher Chessun (Bishop of Woolwich) blessed every room in the house. Ray Andrews said, 'When I came here two years ago, it was immediately clear that this was a place where the veil between earth and heaven is very thin -worn thin over many years by prayer and the love of God. Sadly we have not had the resources to re-establish a life of daily prayer and worship here as we have at St George's. So you can imagine our joy last year when Archdeacon Michael Ipgrave suggested to the CSF sisters that they might re-locate from Brixton into St Alphege Clergy House. From that moment, God appears to have opened every door and cleared every path. So it is with much joy and a grateful heart that I welcome them into the parish'. (The above is an edited version of the account which appeared in The Bridge, May 2009, the newspaper of the Diocese of Southwark.)

Since the House Blessing, Anna moved on in May and Regine Nagel has joined the Oratory. Towards the end of June Nigel also moved on and the community is actively seeking another member. This is part of the nature of the new model, of sharing the ancient tradition of the religious life with others as part of their spiritual journey - it is a challenging, changing, evolving and energising experience.

### **SSF Strengthens links with FI**

*An extract from the Franciscans International newsletter:*

Franciscans International (FI) was very pleased to welcome Br. Clark Berge SSF to its Geneva office, 27-29th April. "I am here to get to know FI, meet you all, and see your operation. I want to discover ways in which we can collaborate more deeply and how I, as an Anglican Franciscan, can help to facilitate the Anglican voice through FI" said Br. Clark. "There are so many places around the world where we have unique experience, particularly in Melanesia. What we have to offer is important and timely and yet, given the constraints and the circumstances of communication and education, it is very

difficult to tap it. Consequently, I am trying to learn how FI works and how I can unlock what my brothers and sisters have to offer", he continued.

During his visit Br. Clark had meetings with members of the FI Advocacy team, where they explored possible opportunities for further collaboration. Mr. Onandia Zarrabe, who leads the Advocacy Department of FI, commented "The visit of Br. Clark was a fantastic opportunity to strengthen the links between the Anglican Franciscans and FI and to discuss specific joint advocacy initiatives, such as the Universal Periodic Review of the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea."

Ms. Elin Martinez, responsible for the Asia Pacific (AP) Programme of FI, engaged in a brainstorming session with Br. Clark about ways to concretise the day's discussions into a collaborative project between the SSF and FI. "Working with Anglican Franciscans in the AP region could be a very interesting ecumenical initiative. The Anglican friars are engaged in diverse social justice activities and I am confident about the possibility of initiating a dynamic advocacy project, tailored to their concerns".

FI is enthusiastic about the possibility of working more closely with our Anglican brothers and sisters. The common ministry of Franciscans International and the SSF Brothers is to address injustice, to promote human rights and to work with the most vulnerable, throughout the world.

### **Brother Ronald**

At 97 Ronald is our most 'senior citizen', and with nearly 67 years in vows he's also our senior brother. Now living in a residential care home at Stevenston, Ayrshire, not far from Adelaide College in Saltcoats, his last community base, he keeps in good spirits despite impairment of sight and hearing, and has a continuing ministry of inter-cession for people and situations around the world. He's grateful for friends from the College and elsewhere who visit regularly.

### **Round up**

Two recent visitors to the European Province from the Australia-New Zealand Province have been Christopher John who was at Canterbury for the Trinity term in order to study for an MA at the Franciscan International Study Centre, and Bruce-Paul who will be at Alnmouth from May to September in order to work on his doctoral thesis. Nathanael Gari from the Papua New Guinea Province arrived in the UK in April for a six months stay; he is based mainly at Hilfield.

Desmond Alban has now taken over as Novice Guardian for SSF and Nicholas Alan is the SSF Provincial Secretary.

Barnabas Francis has moved from Hilfield to Holy Island, Vaughan from Hilfield to Alnmouth; in August, Gerardo and Matthew will move to Glasshampton (from Canterbury and Hilfield respectively); in September, Martin John and Peter will effectively swap houses, as Martin John will move to Canning Town and Peter to Alnmouth. Kevin will also move from Hilfield to

Canterbury in August. Christian and Angelo have both moved to new accommodation recently.

In the Australia-New Zealand Province, Alfred Boonkong has been re-elected for a further three-year term as Minister Provincial. *f*