



St Mary's Newsletter

St Mary's – at the Heart of Your Community

Posada - Preparing for Christmas, Mexican style!

St Mary's invites you to experience Advent – the season of waiting and preparing for Christmas – in an old Mexican style called 'Posada'. That's Spanish for 'inn'.

In Mexico, two young people dress up as Mary and Joseph and travel from house to house in their village telling people about the imminent arrival of Jesus and asking if they will give Him a room.

In the run-up to Christmas, you can look out for the Mary and Joseph figures in all sorts of places in our parish. As well as private homes, our Posada couple have been offered lodging in four schools, local shops and businesses, brownie, cub and other youth groups,

a residential home, a Post Office and even St Mary's lighthouse. The list is still growing! In fact, there are so many eager hosts that two separate sets of figures

are journeying round the area. Their journey will be completed when they arrive at the Crib Service at 6.00 pm on Christmas Eve in time to celebrate the birth of Jesus. (St Mary's is at the junction of Davison Avenue and Claremont Gardens.)

Robin Greenwood, Vicar of St Mary's, says: "St Mary's, as a community of

Christians, celebrates the coming of Jesus Christ for everyone, especially those in greatest need. The gift of Christmas is a God who comes to us in all the ordinary places, to show God's great love for the whole world."



The first host family, the Smiths, accept the crib figures as their overnight guests. Robin and Churchwarden Marion Oakes look on.

stMary
THE VIRGIN
MONKSEATON



December 2007



Christingle

**Sunday
9 December
4.00pm**



On 9 December, St Mary's will once again be holding a special 'Christingle' service for children and their families at 4.00pm.

The Children's Society recently launched research which showed that children and young people see relationships with their family and friends as the most important elements of a good childhood. Christingle services are the ideal family activity, in which children and young people can celebrate the Light

of the World, filling the church with glowing colour from their specially made 'candle in an orange' symbols. Last year more than a million people attended some 5,000 Christingle services around the country, and the Children's Society raises valuable funds through Christingle services year on year. This special Sunday offers a chance to celebrate the coming of the light with your children, young people and neighbours during the Christmas season.

The Crib Service

A perfect start to Christmas

6.00pm Christmas Eve



The crib service is very special at St Mary's, a time when many young families are

welcomed to the start of Christmas to celebrate the birth of Christ. Of all the Christmas services this one is most popular with children and their families. It's a service where children can participate, where there's lots to see and hear about the amazing story of God as Jesus being born as a baby in Bethlehem. Many of the children in the area will have seen the Posada figures in their schools, in shops, or have visited them with the Brownies, Guides, Beavers or Cubs. It's great for them all to be there when Mary and Joseph complete the journey to the stable where Jesus is born. But that doesn't

mean that the crib service is just for children. Adults appreciate the Christmas message too, on a different level.

If you haven't seen the Posada figures out and about, why not take time after the shopping and cooking preparations to share the Christmas story and focus on the reason for all this celebration? Peace on earth is the hope for Christmas, so remembering that Jesus was born to uneducated parents in an occupied country, we also remember all those around the world today who are powerless and suffering. We give thanks for God being with us, whatever our situation.

So please, do come and join in this or any of the other Christmas services at St Mary's.

Katy Bell, Co-ordinator for Children and Young People



The Aroma of Christmas

It's become the fashionable thing, in some quarters, to knock Christmas. You know the kind of complaint. Jingle Bells blasting the malls before October is out, shops digging out the tinsel as soon as the summer holiday signs come down, financial pundits predicting disaster on the high street unless we all get out there and spend, spend, spend.

Little wonder, you might think, that Christmas ranks so high on the list of family stresses. After divorce, bereavement and moving house, it's right up there. And if it isn't the in-laws, the kids or the bank manager giving out grief, then it might be a sneaking feeling that somehow, we've lost the plot here. Isn't Christmas supposed to be something about peace on Earth?

So maybe - the argument goes - it's time we scaled down Christmas and replaced it with something a bit more modest? Or at least got back to the 'true meaning' of Christmas, however you want to define it. Being nice to each other for the duration of lunch, perhaps? But peace on Earth? Surely some mistake.

In the Church, it's the season of Advent that gives Christmas its context, which helps us understand where peace comes from, and how the gift of God's son to the world 2000 years ago can speak to us afresh this December.

Advent marks the start of the Church Year for most churches in the Western tradition, beginning on the fourth Sunday before Christmas Day, which this year is 2 December, and ending on Christmas Eve. It's a time for reflecting, for calling to mind our shortcomings, and for anticipating the message of peace that Christmas brings to a troubled world.

Dr John Sentamu, Archbishop of York,



says: "Advent is like a hungry man waiting for a fabulous feast. Christmas comes with a sense of longing being fulfilled and hopes

being met. As a cook, I love Christmas Day. As the aroma of the food wafts through the house it reminds everyone that there's a good meal coming.

"Advent is like the aroma of Christmas, reminding us of the day when God will invite us all to join Him in the best banquet ever. No one need be left out. The choice is ours."

At St Mary's we'll be lighting our Advent candles on the Sundays leading up to Christmas, and on the day itself, we'll be celebrating the coming of peace along with millions of other Christians across the globe.

May peace and joy reign throughout our community this Christmas!

Christmas worship

You will be most welcome to celebrate the birth of Jesus at any or all of our Christmas services:

Sunday 9 December	4.00pm	Christingle (see page 2)
Sunday 23 December	6.00pm	Carol Service followed by sherry and mince pies in the Church Hall
Christmas Eve	6.00pm	Crib Service (see page 3)
	11.00pm	Midnight Mass
Christmas Day	8.00am	Eucharist
	10.00am	Holy Communion

...and don't forget:

Sunday 6 January	6.00pm	Epiphany Carol Service
Sunday 3 February	4.00pm	Candlemas



What St Mary's means to me



St Mary's is like a second home to me. I've attended regularly for nearly 40 years and have always found it to be a place where I feel happy, safe and protected. It has always been a source of support and love, particularly when I've needed it. St Mary's has also been a central part of my family's Christmas for all those years. The 'Carol and Crib' service is one of the happiest events of the year, always enjoyed by everyone who goes - assuming they can find a seat! And now my daughter, Hannah, is growing up in the church, and she's just as happy at St Mary's as I was as a child. **David**



I began to come to church to please my Gran. Well that was the original plan, but it changed! St Mary's is a wonderful place to meet people both young and old. I have gained so much from the experience and I love working with the children in Godly Play, which has opened up my job prospects for the future. It has made me realize that I want to work with children. I love coming to church and socializing with everybody, and

it's such an amazing place to be at Christmas, with a fantastic atmosphere and brilliant lead-up to the day itself. St Mary's puts on an outstanding performance at Christmas Eve, involving all age groups. The church is always full and it is such a lovely way for everybody to get ready to celebrate the birth of Jesus. **Lauren**



St Mary's has been a way of life for me for more than 50 years, from Sunday school (which I tried to avoid), through Cubs, Scouts, confirmation and the Youth Club. It was at the Youth Club where I met my wife, Andrea, and our wedding and subsequent baptisms, confirmations and family funerals have all taken place at St Mary's. Last month I walked my younger daughter Amy up the same aisle on her wedding day. Of course, the more you put in the more you seem to receive. Over the years I have always been involved at the church, as a server, a PCC member, a church warden and youth club leader. The people are great and I've made some wonderful friends. Regular Sunday worship keeps life in perspective and on track (most of the time!) **Roger**

And a Happy New Year...

Christmas is wonderful, a very special time for Christians, but the story doesn't stop there!

The back page of this Newsletter describes a wide range of ways in which you can be part of the living church. You're very welcome to give any of our services or activities a try – don't be afraid that you'll not be allowed out without being 'signed up' for something!

In the New Year, we'll be celebrating Epiphany – the time when, tradition holds, the wise men presented their gifts to the baby Jesus – and Candlemas, the festival which marks the moment Joseph and Mary took their son to the temple in Jerusalem where he was seen by two very old and wise people, Simeon and Anna.

After that, we'll be looking toward Ash Wednesday and Lent, a time of study, prayer and taking stock. All that, of course, leads up to Easter, the greatest festival of the Christian year, and this Spring we're planning something very ambitious.

Here's a note from Eric Peel, who's our Producer/Director for ...

The Mystery Plays: 'The Passion'

Do you think churches are boring, offering you just the odd Bible story, probably not very easy to understand? Well, you're not alone! For centuries ordinary people have struggled with this. In medieval times they decided to present plays which told the stories in language which they understood and with concepts which allowed simple emotions to take centre stage; a kind of Biblical soap opera, full of earthy and humorous language - something you could watch with a beer or a cup of wine in your hand.

At St Mary's next Easter we thought it would be great to recreate the excitement of those plays with a version of The Mysteries by an esteemed northern poet, Tony Harrison. He has taken the best of all the medieval plays and woven them into a powerful modern drama which is just perfect for a community such as ours. The story starts with the Baptism of Jesus, and traces the last week of Jesus' earthly life, ending with a powerful portrayal of the Crucifixion. There's everything in these plays from tears to laughter.

So on Palm Sunday (16 March) at 5.00pm, and on the following Tuesday (18 March) at 7.30pm we will present 'The Passion' in the church with music specially composed for the event.

You will be very welcome to come and see the Easter story told in a totally new and exciting form (no charge, just an invitation to contribute to costs). But if you feel you could be part of the presentation, on stage, back stage or administration, we'd love to hear from you – urgently! You can contact me via the Parish Office (0191 251 4216) or direct by e-mail: ericpeel@talktalk.net

St Mary's - at the Heart of Your Community

Church is at the heart of what we do at St Mary's, and these are our weekly services:

Day and time	Worship
Sunday 8.00am	Holy Communion
Sunday 10.00am	Parish Communion with children's church and crèche, followed by breakfast
Sunday 6.00pm	Evening Prayer (Healing Service on 2nd Sunday of month)
Monday-Friday 9.00am	Morning Prayer
Tuesday & Wednesday 9.30am	Eucharist (Book of Common Prayer on Tuesday; coffee after service on Wednesday)
Thursday 7.30pm	Eucharist

If any of the many other activities at St Mary's interest you, please ring the office, and we'll put you in touch with the right person:

- baptisms and weddings,
- Bible Study Groups,
- prayer cells,
- Mothers Union,
- choir singing,
- the Praise Band,
- Menzone (a group for men to share fellowship and to learn more about the faith),
- COGS (a young people's group offering the opportunity for teenagers to explore more deeply issues of faith and life),
- a lunch club,
- Mums and Toddlers Group,
- Badminton Club,
- Church Hall for group events or parties.



Information is available from St Mary's Parish Office (open Monday – Friday 10.00am – 12.00 noon)

Telephone: (0191) 251 4216
(answerphone outside office hours).

Email: newsletter@stmarysmonkseaton.org.uk

Web: www.stmarysmonkseaton.co.uk

You'll find us at the junction of Claremont Gardens and Davison Avenue, Whitley Bay.