



St Mary's Newsletter

St Mary's – at the Heart of Your Community

Welcome Back

Do you have golden memories of Sunday School as a child? Singing Jesus Wants Me for a Sunbeam or listening to tales about a baby in the bulrushes?

Did you once have links with your local church, but moved away, got fed up with the dreary hymns, or simply found yourself too busy to keep up the connection?

Would you like to try a church service again, or become part of the church community, but feel you've left it a bit too long?

If so, Back to Church Sunday, on 28 September, is just for you.

Members of churches all over Britain, including for the first time St Mary's, will be joining in Back to Church Sunday this year, inviting friends



and neighbours to drop into their local church and sample the regular worship there.

The invitation is to any of the three services that day: 8.00 am Holy Communion, 10.00 am Parish Communion, and 6.00 pm Evening Prayer. The 10.00 am service will be a simple worship with 'as you go instructions', says Sue Hart, one of the lay ministers at St. Mary's, and nobody need fear that they'll be left wondering what to do. "There'll be cakes, tea, coffee and friendship extended afterwards," she says, "And songs we can actually sing!"

Put the date in your diary now, or call our parish office for further information: 0191 251 4216

stMary
THE VIRGIN
MONKSEATON

September 2008

Summer of Fun



aerobics, football, drum workshops, silly games in the garden and even sillier games on the beach, as well as worship and the opportunity to learn about the faith. The highlight of the weekend came when the youngsters went out in groups to work with churches in North Northumberland on community projects. In spite of the pouring rain, they got well and truly stuck in to their projects

It's been a great summer to be young at St. Mary's.

A group of nine to 13-year-olds spent a weekend away at Whithaugh Park, a Christian Adventure Centre in the Scottish Borders, along with three leaders, sampling raft-building, sailing and rope climbing. They also learned about the work of Christian Aid in India - look out for the chance to buy some lovely bags for Christmas which the children made and will be selling later in the year to support Christian Aid.

For older children, the four-day "Staying Alive" event at Seahouses Hostel proved even bigger and better than last year. This Newcastle diocesan event is designed to connect young Anglicans throughout Northumberland, and St. Mary's youth group joined with 60 other young people for fun, worship, teaching and community action.

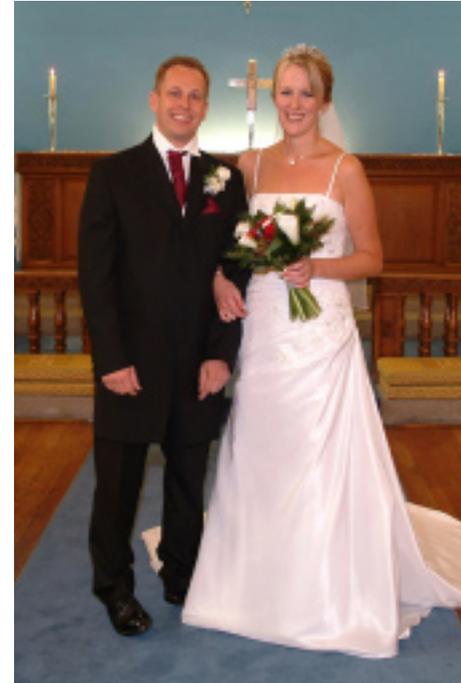
There was drama and dance, Christian

- clearing overgrown community space, bag-packing, washing windows and entertaining young children, all for free!

Then came Harvest, a youth event organised by Youth for Christ NE and Scripture Union when nearly 1,000 young people came together to worship, listen to some inspiring speakers and 'cool' bands in a very muddy field in North Yorkshire.

Back at St. Mary's, planning for COGs (our youth group) next term is well underway. There will be two streams to COGs this year: COGs for all young people in Year 7 and above, and COGs PLUS! for the over 14s. The programme includes teaching, worship, fun and games as well as bowling and other trips out. If you are in Year 7 and above and would like to know more - contact Val Cowan via the Church Office.

Getting Married at St Mary's



a parish church if any of the following applies:

- one of them was baptised or prepared for confirmation in the parish
- one of them has ever lived in the parish for six months or more
- one of them has at any time regularly attended public worship in the parish for six months or more
- one of their parents has lived in the parish for six months or more in their child's lifetime
- one of their parents has regularly attended public worship there for six months or more in their child's lifetime
- their parents or grandparents were married in the parish.

If you received this Newsletter through your letterbox, then you live in the parish of St Mary the Virgin, and that's the church you should contact for more information about getting married in the Church of England.

However, many couples would like to marry in a church that has special significance for them, through family or other close connections, even though they don't actually live in the parish. From October 1 when new legislation comes into force, it will be much easier for them.

The changes mean an engaged couple will be welcome to marry in

Even if none of the above connections apply, we still want to help you explore whether it may be possible for you to marry in your special church. Talk to the vicar well in advance to discuss the options.

Wherever you may be thinking of getting married, you'll find lots of helpful information and links to other sites at our parish website: www.stmarysm Monkseaton.co.uk

You'll also be welcome to learn more, and have your questions answered at the Newcastle and Durham Diocese Stand at the UK Wedding Show at Gosforth Park Race Course, 27 - 28 September, 11am to 5pm.

Grappling and Growing

This autumn St. Mary's embarks upon a year of "spiritual growth", a period in which 12 members of the congregation will lead the rest of us on a journey toward greater understanding and celebration of our shared faith.

It sounds, by degrees, a bit daunting, a bit vague, and even a bit scary. Some of us wonder what exactly is meant by "spiritual growth" and how we might feel at the end of the process. Others wonder whether we haven't done enough growing for the moment, thank you very much, and ask why we can't have a period of calm and consolidation in our church. And others, perhaps the more boisterous among our ranks, are saying: Yes! What are we waiting for?

But it's true to say that all of us, Christians of different personalities, shapes, sizes and ideas, are agreed on one thing. The faith we have grasped isn't a fixed set of principles that once mastered can be filed in some interior bottom drawer and dusted off occasionally. On the contrary, Christian faith is dynamic, always leading us on to new challenges, new ways of looking at the world.

That's why the current debates in the worldwide Anglican church, which dominated newspaper headlines during the recent Lambeth Conference of bishops, look rather different from inside the Church of England. And it's also why "spiritual growth" is such a necessary and liberating undertaking.

According to which newspaper you read, members of the Church of England are either a bunch of fussy old prudes stuck in the 19th Century, or a band of wishy-washy liberals too compromised to stand up and say what they believe. And yes, if we're honest - and we do try to be! - sometimes those labels seem to fit.

Labels, however, don't say the half of it. Life is a complicated business, and if we're to make sense of it, and more importantly, if we're build a better future for our children and our children's children, then we need to grapple with life's contradictions and conundrums.

The grappling is what you see when Christians appear to disagree and fall out, and "spiritual growth" is what you get when those same Christians come together to talk and pray about their differences. It's been going on since the apostles began building the early church, as the letters of Saint Paul show with amazing, and sometimes amusing, clarity.

It's not likely to stop now, and nor would we want it that way.

And with all this in mind, we'll be launching our year of spiritual growth, and we'll be continuing with all our usual activities, worship with the accent on community and fellowship, prayer, with the focus on gratitude to God and service to our neighbours.

Honouring Eric Peel

Readers may remember that our last newsletter looked ahead to one of St Mary's biggest ventures to date – the staging of Tony Harrison's play 'The Mysteries: The Passion'.

In a Church context 'the Passion' refers to the sufferings of Christ from the last supper to his death on the cross. Tragically, the word had another significance for the people of St. Mary's, especially the company who presented the drama. Our director, Eric Peel, learned during the three-night run in March that he had an inoperable cancer of the pancreas, and an extremely poor prognosis. He died on May 19 with his wife Clare and daughter Sarah at his side.



Eric meant so much to so many people at St. Mary's, that we've set up a memorial fund in his name, to help with the costs of developing and improving the church. The fund will benefit from the proceeds from a 'Remembering Eric' concert on Saturday November 22, in the church hall. Tickets will be on sale at the beginning of October, via the parish office.

Congratulations, Father Eric!



St. Mary's curate, the Revd. Eric Lewis, was ordained a priest at the end of June.

Eric has followed his vocation to the priesthood in spite of

the demands of continuing to run the '129' Coffee Shop in Park View with his wife Carol. Eric says: "There is great comfort in knowing that you have been accepted for all your faults, and now I'd simply like to share the grace I feel I've been given."

Looking Ahead

Autumn Fayre (see pg 7)

Saturday 27 September

Back to Church Sunday (see front pg)

Sunday 28 September

Harvest Celebration

Sunday 12 October, 10.00 am

All Souls

Sunday 2 November

St Mary's invites you to remember before God your loved ones who have died. From 3.00 pm the church will be open for you to come and share in conversation and refreshments. Lists of names to be read during the service, which starts at 4.00 pm, can be given in between 3.00 pm and 3.50pm.



What St Mary's means to me



If we were allowed only one word to describe St Mary's it would be 'kindness'.

There's always a kindly welcome when we come in, with loving concern for our welfare from life-long friends we've made over the years here.

When the going gets tough, at St. Mary's people are there for you, helping you in gentle ways. We know that many others have experienced this as well as ourselves.

We enjoy being involved in low-profile duties, interacting with like-minded people, and we've learned that in giving you receive so much more in return.

Under the guidance of our excellent clergy team, the numbers at St. Mary's are growing, and it's lovely to see many young families joining the Sunday services and getting involved.

We believe there are exciting times ahead with plans for redeveloping certain areas of the church, and we know that whatever happens, there will never be a dull moment at St Mary's!

Jane and William Walker

We have attended St. Mary's Church for about 15 years and from the very first minute we were welcomed and made to feel part of the church family. We're not people to sit on the sidelines, so it wasn't long before we were invited to join the choir, serve on the PCC, Property Services Committee, Redevelopment Group, Worship Group and be part of the team organising the first two autumn fairs! We've both had the honour of serving as churchwardens and in recent years, Derek has been the church treasurer and Elizabeth has led the church choir.

What does St. Mary's mean to us? It's the place where we go to share joy, laughter and learning, and to receive strength, forgiveness and guidance which help us live our lives in the best way we can. In both the good and difficult times, members of the church have always been there to journey with us, clearly demonstrating the infinite love that God has for each one of us. We are truly privileged to be part of such a Christian community and we thank God for all His blessings.



Derek and Elizabeth Hayes



Autumn Fair Saturday 27th September

Brian Wardle is one of the busiest people in St. Mary's come September because it's his job to organise our autumn fair, the biggest social event in our calendar, which this year falls on Saturday the 27th.

Brian has been doing the job for some time now, and he admits it gets hectic and a bit nerve-wracking as the big day approaches. Will there be enough home made cakes and jams ? Will there be the usual load of rubbish left in the church porch along with a plentiful supply of much-valued clothing, bric-a-brac and jewellery, sorely needed for the stalls ? And will anyone buy all those books ?

The answers are yes, yes and yes! "Like every church fair we get the contents of cupboards that really should have gone to the tip!" Brian says, "But we also get lots of items that people really want to buy – and they're vital for this, our major fund-raising effort."

People from both the congregation and the community look forward to joining in the fun and fellowship of St

Mary's fair, and if you haven't popped in on us yet, make sure you're there in time for the official opening at 10.30 am. The buying goes on until 2.00 p.m. when the fair closes.

Stay for coffee or lunch, and bring the family for regular favourites like face painting, bouncy castle, coconut shy and other games. There's a 30p entrance charge, and all proceeds are in aid of church funds. A selection of fair trade produce will also be on sale, and there'll be chance to win something unexpected at the tombola, or something exciting in the raffle (first prize £100).

If you bring along the slip below, you'll get a free entry in our prize draw too.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

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)
Monday-Friday 7.00pm	Evening Prayer

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.



Canon Robin Greenwood,
vicar of
St. Mary's

Information about all these activities 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@stmarysm Monkseaton.org.uk**

www.stmarysm Monkseaton.co.uk

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