



Happy Christmas from St Mary's

St Mary's – at the Heart of Your Community



Tidings of comfort and joy...

December Newsletter 2008

POS★DA

Making room for Jesus this Christmas

Once again, our crib figures are travelling around Whitley Bay this December, seeking a night's stay at whatever Posada ('inn') they can find, on their way to St Mary's in time for the Crib Service on Christmas Eve.

This is our modern interpretation of the old Mexican tradition in which young people dressed as Joseph and Mary travelled from house to house asking for somewhere to stay and telling the people about the imminent arrival of Jesus.

As these diary entries from Posada last year show, Mary, Joseph and the donkey were made welcome in many interesting venues, from private homes to all sorts of institutions and organisations!

'It's a privilege to welcome Mary and Joseph to Whitley Lodge Post Office



again this year. It's wonderful that the children see them when they come in for sweets, it reminds them of what Christmas is for!

'Thank you, Mary, Joseph and the donkey for staying with us at Southridge First School. Lily drew Jesus in her picture because she said that Mary would be thinking about him when she was waiting.'

'Mary and Joseph have been watching over us in Delaval Avenue, resting on the long journey to Bethlehem. They visited the choir practice at St Mary's before moving on to 129 Coffee Shop'



Joseph, Mary and the donkey are welcomed at the Rendezvous Café

'We took the figures to Whitehouse Farm where they seemed to be happy to spend some time resting in the barn with the sheep and cows.'

'Today Mary and Joseph breathed the cool air of the flower shop. We were busy but Joseph kindly supervised the making of the holly wreaths. Mary was busy looking around and making sure things were tidy and clean.'

St Mary's Junior Choir



Take a look at the Christmas cards in the shops, and you are certain to see pictures of choristers with angelic faces wearing ruffs and cassocks, usually holding lanterns. Could this be St Mary's Junior Choir at a church near you...? Well, maybe not the lanterns, but they can look fairly angelic when they try!

St Mary's Junior Choir has been running for nearly two years. Yes, it's a church choir, but primarily it's a choir for fun, enjoyment and the pleasure of singing together informally. We take part in services once a month, usually singing a solo item and joining in with the adult choir for the rest of the service. Recently we performed Jonah-Man Jazz, complete with dance routine, for the congregation. At the other end of the scale, taking part in the carol service, in a packed, candle-lit church, offers a different experience altogether.

We meet to practise weekly, but if you have visions of choristers sitting in straight lines singing scales, think again! We warm up and use our voices in all sorts of different ways, with action, concentration and part-singing games and songs. Then, after an orange juice (and chocolate finger) break, there's time to practise for forthcoming services. But we do more than simply sing! We made bread and sold it at the church fair in September, and for our final summer meeting we had a fabulous evening at Wet & Wild.

Are you interested? We currently have 11 girls ranging in age from 7-13, but we would welcome more – boys too. Practices are held on Tuesday evenings from 6.15-7.00 at St Mary's Church, so feel free to drop in.

Or contact me, Sarah Boutwood, church organist and leader of the Junior Choir, on 237 3146. We have a choir email address too: smjuniorchoir@yahoo.co.uk We look forward to seeing you!

Waiting and Hoping

The month leading up to Christmas, which the Christian Church observes as Advent, is a time of waiting and hoping.

Amid all the frantic preparations for the midwinter feast, the Church invites us to pause, to consider our place in the great cosmic drama of seasons and solstices, to ask the question beloved of kids and comedians alike. Why are we waiting? Oh, why-hy are we wai-ai -ting...

The kids can answer that question without hesitation. They're waiting for Santa, for the presents to appear at the bottom of the bed, for the stockings hanging on the mantlepice to be filled.

In the same way, the rest of us play our own little waiting game. Will everything be all right on the night? Come Christmas Eve, will we have wrapped all our parcels, defrosted the turkey, replaced the defunct lights on the tree, and, perhaps most pertinently this year, will we have managed to outwit the credit crunch?

The Church begs a different set of questions. What are you longing for, the Advent liturgies ask. Why are you so anxious? Where is your hope? Whom do you seek?

We know the answer to that one, of course. Two thousand years of Christian history have not passed us by, even if, as the headlines constantly remind us, we live in a largely secular society. Most of us still know that Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus, the one his followers

call Emmanuel, God-with-Us, the Messiah, the Christ.

But how can this speak to us today? It's a nice story, Mary, Joseph and the donkey, shepherds in the fields, wise men presenting their gifts in the stable. But a source of hope? Climate change, economic meltdown, war, poverty, famine...And we're talking hope?

Yet as Christmas 2008 approaches, hope no longer seems like such a dirty word. Huge amounts of it have been invested in the choice of Barack Obama as the next US president, not just by the American people, but by the rest of the world too. Hope has blossomed, and looks set to flourish, at least until the new president makes his first major decision and we rediscover what we already know, namely, that half the world thinks him far too radical, and the other half deems him not nearly radical enough.

Which isn't to say that all the hope is misplaced. Politicians can, indeed must, offer hope, and President-elect Obama is certainly doing that. But lasting hope, the Christmas message says, springs in the individual heart, and it comes when the star of Bethlehem shines its light into all the dark places, when the angels' song is heard, and when the gift of Jesus' birth is truly grasped.

Tidings of comfort and joy after all that waiting!

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

Friday 19 December		
10.00 am	Toddler Carol Service	Especially for all pre- school children, babies and their parents, grandparents and carers, a simple Christmas service around the crib. About 20 minutes with an opportunity afterwards for refreshments and a chat
Sunday 21 December		
5.00 pm	Carol Service	
Christmas Eve		
6.00 pm	Crib Service	A participative service where children and their families can welcome the Posada figures to Bethlehem in anticipation of the birth of Jesus
11.30 pm	Midnight Mass	
Christmas Day		
8.00 am	Eucharist	
10.00 am	Eucharist	

And in the New Year:

Sunday 4 January		
6.00 pm	Healing Service	A service with silent periods for personal reflection, an invitation for anointing or the laying on of hands, and to pray for the world and those in need
Sunday 11 January		
6.00 pm	Epiphany Carol Service	Marking the tradition of the arrival of the wise men to present their gifts to the baby Jesus
Sunday 18 January		
6.00 pm	Songs of Praise	The Salvation Army Shiremoor/Backworth band, with support from our organist and choirs from local churches will help celebrate The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
Sunday 1 February		
6.00 pm	Candlemas	A service of light and dark, mystery and awe, hope and expectation, remembering when Joseph and Mary took their son to the Temple at Jerusalem

Eric Peel Memorial Concert

Here's hoping Eric enjoyed it as much as the sell-out audience did on November 22nd. Old favourites were joined by new talent in 'an evening of words, wit, song and music' (at least that's what it said on the tickets). St. Mary's managed to raise £700 towards the Eric Peel Memorial Fund, which will go towards the church re-development fund.



What St Mary's means to me

St Mary's has been part of my life for over 45 years. What more can I say?



I arrived with a new baby and two children under five on Whit Sunday 1963, and was greeted with open arms. I have worshipped there ever since, even though I moved out of the parish 24 years ago.

I have seen vicars and curates come and go but have known that there has always been someone there for me through sad times and happy times. I enjoy worshipping in other churches but somehow there is nowhere quite like St Mary's for me. I just feel 'at home' there in God's presence. Being part of a congregation is like being part of a large family, especially when you have 'grown up' with so many people.

The memories are all there – baptisms, confirmations, a wedding. I hope when I leave this life there will be a happy gathering of all my friends. Where? Why, St Mary's of course!

Anne Otter

My 'day job' is Diocesan Secretary for the Diocese of Newcastle, which means that I oversee the administration and finance of the diocese from Church House, the diocesan office in North Shields.



In many ways the diocese could be regarded as a medium sized business with 150 staff (mostly parish clergy) 230 churches and an annual budget of £7 million.

Any job overseeing an organisation of that size has its stresses and challenges, and mine is no different so I need to have a spiritual 'base' – somewhere where I can go to think, reflect and talk about the things that are bothering me at work or at home. And somewhere I can go to worship the God who makes all things possible and is there for each and every one of us.

St Mary's is that place for me - a very important part of my life.

Philip Davies

It's just like home in many ways. I've done the same sort of things here, the washing, ironing, cleaning, polishing, serving breakfast, reading, in fact most things except sleeping. Although I seem to remember years ago nodding off (no! not during a sermon) at a vigil.



Now I leave the more strenuous tasks to others and enjoy being part of the fellowship.

Music has always played a large part in my life and acting too, so I was particularly glad to be part of 'The Passion' last March. It was a journey I will never forget.

I have sung in the Choir since 1975 and have seen Choir Leaders and Choristers come and go but even though the old voice isn't what it used to be I still get a tremendous lift from the Hymns, Psalms and Anthems which we learn and sing each week.

Changes are afoot at St Mary's and some of them not to my liking. But I'm still here!

Dot Elliott

Coming up...

Think Summer Fun!

After enjoying a family fun day in Morpeth this summer organised by a local church, I thought why not do the same in Whitley Bay next year? I'd like to see a Christian outreach event, hopefully organised by young people from the churches in the Whitley Bay area, offering live bands, stalls, food and free activities for all ages. The Links and Whitley Bay town centre have been discussed as possible venues, but neither has yet been confirmed. A group of us from St Mary's has already met several times to discuss the idea, and there was a public meeting in October. No one has yet come up with a name for the event, so if anyone would like to suggest one, please get in touch. I'm trying to get a team of 10 young people (15-plus), ideally from different churches in the area, to be the main organisers. They'd



need to be able to work well with other people and be prepared to come to a few meetings. Email me at Rock@StMarysMonkseaton.org.uk if you'd like to be involved.

Fiona Tate

Pentecost Plans

On May 29 next year the worldwide church celebrates Pentecost, the day when the church began 2000 years ago. At St Mary's we'll have a special visitor this Pentecost, Canon Paul Bayes, a former curate of St Paul's in Whitley Bay, who now works with a special task force convened by the Archbishop of Canterbury. During Lent and after Easter, the St Mary's 'Yes' team will be helping groups explore the question: How do you know when the Spirit comes? It all starts on Ash Wednesday, February 25. Further details from the parish office.

Robin's latest book!

Our vicar's 10th and latest book will be launched in January. In 'Parish Priests: For the sake of the Kingdom', Robin Greenwood encourages the whole church to take a fresh look at its vision, recognising that we now live in an age when most people have given up on the Church. He urges us to think about what we should understand by 'Christian living', and asks what is the most appropriate role for the parish priest. The book encourages Christians to see themselves not simply as people who go to church, but as members of an open, non-authoritarian community, rooted in the kind of loving relation that Jesus models with his disciples, having courtesy, mutual concern and a passion for justice and peace as its hallmarks.

ISBN: 978 0 281 05538 8
£14.99; Pub: SPCK

To order, e-mail: direct.order@marston.co.uk or call 01235 465 500

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)

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@stmarysmonkseaton.org.uk
www.stmarysmonkseaton.co.uk

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