



# St Mary's Newsletter

St Mary's – at the Heart of Your Community



**Happy Christmas from St. Mary's...**

December Newsletter 2009

## The Crib Service Christmas Eve, 6.00pm



It's a long and popular tradition at St Mary's, welcoming young families to the Crib Service, at 6.00pm on Christmas Eve, to start Christmas by celebrating the birth of Christ. It's a service where children can participate, where there's lots to see and hear about the wonderful story of God as Jesus being born as a baby in Bethlehem. Fiona Jones, who's coordinating the Crib Service this year, says: "I have lots of fond memories of my own childhood church nativity services, from playing angels,

sheep and shepherds to the part of Mary, also singing in the choir and playing in the church band when I was too old to fit into the costumes! Consequently I feel it is really important for children, especially the little ones, to be actively involved in St Mary's advent celebrations. It also gives Christmas Eve an extra edge of excitement in our house!

"However, I do know that the children are very busy at this time of year and fitting in rehearsals for something else becomes very difficult. We have therefore decided to make things as easy as possible for the children to take part and simply ask that those who have already given me their details attend one run-through at church on Tuesday 21 December from 5-7pm and then arrive at the church for 5.30pm on Christmas Eve.

Any questions, please contact me: [jones.hascombe@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:jones.hascombe@blueyonder.co.uk) or 07740421305.

## Street Pastors

We mentioned in our last edition that the local churches were considering ways they might be of service to our local community. There's a lot of interest in the Newcastle Street Pastors Scheme in which teams of church volunteers have been mingling with revellers since the run-up to Christmas last year. The work involves caring, listening and providing practical support – water for dehydrated drinkers or flip-flops for people who've lost their shoes. The Newcastle Street Pastors are dedicated volunteers, working 10pm to 4am on Friday and Saturday nights. They're expected to

commit to at least one night a month and undergo 12 training sessions. Obviously, there are close parallels between Whitley Bay and the centre of Newcastle on weekend nights. We'll keep you posted about developments.



Street Pastors work with the police

## Prayer focus on Afghanistan

Over the last few weeks people from Whitley Bay's churches have gathered for 'prayerful conversations' about the situation in Afghanistan. We have learned from one another how 'praying for Afghanistan' is a complex challenge. Building on those sessions, we offer this series of prayers.

### For British and other NATO forces

We pray for the 100,000 foreign soldiers in Afghanistan from more than 40 countries. We honour those killed in Afghanistan, over 200 British service personnel and the fallen soldiers from 20 countries. We pray for those wounded, mutilated, disfigured or emotionally scarred; for their speedy and effective rehabilitation and recovery of their morale. For those who continue to serve, and their anxious families, we ask for courage and hope.

### For Policy and peace makers

We pray for our Government, for President Obama and other NATO heads of state, their military and political advisers, and peace makers of every kind. We pray for an outpouring of your divine inspiration, so that a strategy might be worked out to reduce the threat of terrorism, and to set out a realistic plan for withdrawal of foreign troops.

### For the government of Afghanistan

We pray for President Karzai and his government, and for local government, that somehow a new style of governance can be found that is more representative, less corrupt, more effective in addressing the needs of the Afghan people.

### For local Afghan people

We pray for the people of Afghanistan, where the average life expectancy is 44, where one in five children dies before the age of five, where most people have no safe drinking water, and where disease, malnutrition and poverty are widespread. We also pray for the relatives of the 1,013 civilians killed between January and June this year.

### For Afghan women

We pray for Afghan women, who experience oppression and injustice in their daily lives. We pray for a reduction in the maternal mortality rate, currently one of the highest in the world, for the expansion of education for girls, and for an end to the bombing of their schools.

### For Afghan refugees in the UK

We pray for the millions of people who have left their homes to flee conflicts in recent years, and for the five million Afghans who have returned to their country since 2001. We pray for the 'Walking with' project in Wallsend, and others elsewhere who work with refugees from Afghanistan.

## If Jesus is the answer, what's the question?

Or, to put it another way,  
What's all the fuss about?

... This is a story about a mother laying her baby in a manger, and angels and shepherds, and camels and kings .. Is it just a lovely story to feed our imagination and to give us some songs to sing, or does it really matter? At the end of the day does it make any difference to anybody? Is Jesus the answer to anyone's real question?

Well what about this real question: 'If there is a God, what's he like?' Are you going to say that you have never asked a question like that? I don't believe you. I have heard you: 'Why did my husband suffer? Why doesn't God stop those children in Rwanda dying of starvation and cholera? Why doesn't God smash the heavens apart and come and knock the heads of the nations together and force them to live in peace and harmony with each other?'

The answer is: Because God isn't like that! This is what God's like, like a baby that brought tears to his mother's eyes. He doesn't smash the heavens apart but creeps into the world through a stable door where he is discovered and recognised by shepherds waiting in the night for morning to come. God doesn't bellow from the ramparts of heaven for all the earth to hear and be afraid, but breaks the silence, not only of that night, but the silence of the ages, with

the lusty cry of a hungry baby. God who made the world and all that is in it, gave away his pride, his might, his omnipotence, his power and his glory, to become like one of us. That is what God does. That is what God is like.

In other words God has nothing else to say except, 'I am in it with you!' This child is God's only word. That is why they call him 'Emmanuel', which means, 'God is with us.'

If Jesus is the answer, what's the question? The question is: 'What is God like?' and Jesus is the answer.

If Jesus is the answer, what's the question?

The question is: What were men and women meant to be like? Or, what does it mean to be human? Jesus is the answer to that question. That's what we were meant to be like.



*Happy Christmas from everyone  
at St Mary's*

## Christmas Worship

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

### Friday 18 December

10.00am	Toddler Carol Service	Especially for all pre-school children, babies and their parents, grandparents, carers and other families and friends. A simple Christmas service round the crib, with refreshments and chat afterwards
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### Sunday 20 December

6.00pm	Endings and Beginnings	A service of Christmas readings and carols. Refreshments from 5.30pm.
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### Christmas Eve

6.00pm	Crib Service	See article on page 2
11.30pm	Midnight Mass	Refreshments served in the Foyer from 10.45pm

### Christmas Day

8.00am	Eucharist	
10.00am	Eucharist	

### Sunday 27 December

8.00am	Eucharist	
10.00am	Eucharist	

### And in the New Year:

### Wednesday 6 January

7.30pm	Epiphany Eucharist with Carols	
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### Sunday 31 January

6.00pm	Candlemas Scripture, prayer and candlelight procession	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
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## Home communion

If you, or someone you know, is housebound, or not well enough to get to church for Holy Communion, we may be able to help. Home communion is taken out by a small number of clergy and lay volunteers, usually once a month. We use a shortened form of the Eucharist service, and our volunteer will bring a service sheet together with

a consecrated Holy Communion wafer, intincted with a drop of communion wine. Family members or carers are welcome to join the short service. If you're interested, or would just like to know more, please ring the Parish Office (251 4216) and a member of our Home Communion team will call you back.



# What St Mary's means to me

For me going to church, having a belief in God, is as natural as breathing. But what does St Mary's mean to me? It is a place of quiet, of busyness, of peace, of noise, of chaos, of order, a place where I can feel heaviness becoming lighter, a place where I meet friends and share laughter or tears, a place to not feel alone, a place that can sing. It is also a place which keeps me occupied, for I am involved in several areas of church life - planning services (our monthly healing service, or seasonal services eg Christmas or Lent). I'm also a cashier (counting the collection), and sacristan (preparing for a communion service).

St Mary's strives to be an open and welcoming place, but it is not just a building which is full on Sundays. St Mary's is a community of living, struggling, normal people who are brought together by their love of God and who wish to know Him more. Come and join us – any time!

**Alison Stroud**



Perhaps I'm not the only member of the congregation who has doubts about faith. And perhaps we joined St Mary's for the wrong reasons – our girls became Brownies and we felt they needed our support, but we've been part of the church on and off for more than 25 years. Then services were much different to those we were used to – 'high church' our parents called it.

Things have changed. No longer is the priest muttering over the high altar, his back to us. He's now in among us. We can see his face. He no longer uses the sermon to preach at us but rather to speak to me. And sometimes, he's a woman! I join in if I want to, but more often I meet with myself and reflect.

I'm not sure about praying. I'm not sure I pray at all. Nor do I read the Bible. I'm not even sure about God. I believe we should be pleased to help those in the world who are less fortunate than ourselves and I'm sure that any faith that recognises the



needs and talents of others is a winner.

**Jeff Pickering**

It's being asked to DO things! When my late husband and I came into the parish 51 years ago, we found ourselves immediately being 'persuaded' to become involved in many projects, some singly, some together. When our three children – who were all baptised in St Mary's – were small, I was asked to be 'superintendent' of the junior Sunday School with eight teenagers taking the classes. Much later we helped to run the Over 60s Luncheon Club for people with learning difficulties, at YANA House.

One of our most rewarding challenges was being pressed by the vicar (in the 1960s) to take into our house an unknown, unmarried, pregnant girl who was homeless. She stayed with us throughout her pregnancy and after the birth of her son until we finally made other arrangements.

To sum up: what the church means to me is being actively involved and being prepared to adapt to change. Next challenge ?!

**Kathleen Dales**



## Coming up...

Sunday 10 Jan. 6.00pm	Healing Service
Sunday 17 Jan. 7.00pm	Beginning of week of prayer for Christian Unity - 'Better Together'. Joint meeting with St John's Methodist Church. Refreshments from 6.45pm
Saturday 23 Jan. 7.00pm	New Tyneside Orchestra (conductor Stephen Pettitt) Programme includes Saint-Saëns' 'Carnival of the Animals' Prokofiev's 'Peter and the Wolf' and Poetry as 'Clare goes solo'. Tickets from Parish Office: £5 adults, £2.50 children
Sunday 24 Jan. 5.00pm	End of week of prayer for Christian Unity, Joint service at St Edward's RC Church
Friday 12 Feb. 7.30pm	BBC Radio Newcastle's 'Gardeners' Question Time'. Bring your plants, problems and questions to the team. Tickets from Parish Office: £5
Wednesday 17 Feb., 7.30pm	Ash Wednesday, Eucharist and Ashing Launch of 'The Big Read'
Each Sunday in Lent (21 Feb. to 21 Mar.), 6.00pm	Stations of the Cross
Sunday 14 Mar. (Mothering Sunday), 10.00am	Children-friendly Eucharist
6.00pm	Healing Service

## The Big Read



Here's a chance for all of us, whether or not we're churchgoers, to enrich our lives by studying St Luke's Gospel. Using Bishop Tom Wright's book

'Lent for Everyone – Luke', people from churches across Whitley Bay will be getting together in facilitated groups in Lent (mid-February to the end of March) to read and think about Luke's message. The book will be available any day now, and churches are planning to group

together to order copies at a 55% discount rate of £3.15 each.

There will also be a series of larger meetings between January and May when Bishop Tom (Bishop of Durham) will speak about Luke's Gospel. The nearest venue for us is St Nicholas Cathedral in Newcastle, on the evening of 4 March.

If you're interested in joining a group, if you'd just like to order a copy of the book, or if you'd like to know the full list of Bishop Tom's venues, give us a ring on 251 4216.

# 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,
- Mum's and toddler's group,
- 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,
- Badminton Club,
- Church Hall for group events or parties.

## Family-friendly weddings for couples with children

It is now possible to merge the marriage service with thanksgiving for the gift of a child, or with baptism, and St Mary's welcomes couples who already have children, offering to make their combined wedding service a special occasion for all the family. We have already taken steps to encourage more couples – with or without children – to marry in church, making it easier for them to choose where they get married.



**Canon Robin Greenwood,  
vicar of St Mary's**

Information about all of the above is available from St Mary's Parish Office which is open  
Mon – Fri 10.00am – 12.00 noon

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

Email: [newsletter@stmarysm Monkseaton.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@stmarysm Monkseaton.org.uk)

Web: [www.stmarysm Monkseaton.co.uk](http://www.stmarysm Monkseaton.co.uk)

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