



St Mary's Newsletter

St Mary's – at the Heart of Your Community



*Happy Christmas
from St Mary's
church!*

There's a full list of services for Christmas and beyond on page 5.

The principal services are:

Friday 24 December

6.00 pm Crib service

10.30 pm Time of quiet and reflection
(carols from 11.15 pm)

11.30 pm Midnight Eucharist

Saturday 25 December

8.00 am Eucharist

10.00 am Parish Eucharist

Hope Against Darkness

As a Christian community we believe our lives are connected with all other lives, and that we have a vital message for everyone in our society who has lost heart. Some may have worries about money, education, health care, job security, bringing up children, or perhaps larger anxieties about the environment, the contrast between the world of the rich and the poor, or continuing wars and violence. Behind all this are questions about what life is for, and how we can make a difference to the bigger picture.

The community commissioned to continue the work of the Risen Christ presents a very contrasting picture— one of hope.

St Mary's church community stands as a beacon of hope on the corner of Davison Avenue and Claremont Gardens. The welcome, friendliness, concern for justice and peace, pastoral care and the rhythms of our worship say "there is hope; there is meaning".

2011 will be a sort of centenary year for us. The first building erected on our site for worship – a rather modest affair - was built in 1911. But now we have planning permission to subtly modify the present building, ensuring we start our second century with confidence, renewed faith and a renewed church!

The New Testament invites us to be God's temple, built of living stones. It's a paradox that buildings don't matter

at all and yet the way we use them and live in them matter enormously.

We want our church to remind us both of the closeness and friendliness of God who loves each of us beyond any words we could ever discover, and of the utter, transcendent awesomeness of God our creator and redeemer.

So the commemoration of our 100th Anniversary will focus *all* we do on the continuous development of our Christian life, worship, and service for the sake of the neighbourhood and the wider world.

Both individually and as a community this time of renewal and re-creation will take us all to places we have never been before. I invite you to join us on the journey.

Canon Robin Greenwood



Our centenary

The first building on the site, officially opened in September 1911, was formerly the officers' mess of the Northumberland Hussars; it was known locally as the 'Tin Church'. It lasted for 50

The redevelopment plans

We're about to embark on a long-overdue programme of renewal, including some remedial building, engineering and redecoration work, and modern office, kitchen and toilet facilities, turning our building into a modern, multi-use church and community facility.

We've done a lot in recent years to be more welcoming, with worship that sets all the timeless values of our faith in a variety of user-friendly settings. The new plans will feature a free-standing altar just in front of the seating area (with something more comfortable than those 1930s wooden chairs!) Anyone coming along to St Mary's should be able to do so without feeling uneasy or uncomfortable. And, since any Anglican church is a community facility, we will be better able to welcome people in an

adaptable, welcoming and well-serviced building for all sorts of activities, such as concerts, drama, recitals and art exhibitions; and now we'll be adding smaller meeting rooms, all backed up with a decent kitchen and toilets.

We've already made a modest start, but we've still to complete our fund-raising. A phasing programme is being prepared.



Illustration: Anthony Keith Architects Ltd

In the meantime, here's an impression of how things will look from the back of church once the works are completed.

years, serving as a hall after the permanent church was started in 1931. The foundation stone was laid by the Bishop of Newcastle on 9 May 1931, and we'll be celebrating the 80th anniversary of that occasion with Bishop Martin in church on Sunday 1 May to launch our centenary year of celebrations.

David Lax (dlax09@googlemail.com), who

is coordinating the celebrations, wants to hear from anyone with memories of the church and its past activities - photographs, copies of cine films, videos or sound recordings or any other documents relating to the church and your involvement with it - baptism, marriage, tennis club, youth club, foreign exchange visits, social occasions or whatever.

Have a very surprising Christmas!

Life is full of surprises; some good, some bad, but all unexpected.

I have lived in Whitley Bay now for six months and I can say that it has been six months full of wonderful surprises.

Not knowing the area at all, I have been surprised by the beauty of the sea and the coast line; surprised by the wonderful network of the Wagonways I've explored on my bike, and surprised by how good the Spa is at Waves!

Christmas is a time of surprises; whether it's the surprise you feel at receiving an unexpected present, or the surprise visit of an old friend or family member. You might love surprises, you might not; you might be disappointed by them, but it's hard to deny that Christmas is a time full of surprises.

Given all I've said about surprises it might seem strange for me to say that the most familiar thing about Christmas, the story of Jesus' birth in a stable in Bethlehem, is the greatest surprise of them all.

We are so used to living in a world where some people think that if they want to be noticed they have to be in the papers or on tv, being as visible as possible. Next to this, it is very surprising that God showed his love for us through the birth of a baby, to a young mother, in a poor family, in a quiet backwater.

The surprise of Jesus did not end there. Rather than seek influence by spending

time with the rich and powerful, Jesus spent time with the ordinary people, and even the outcasts of his society, to show that the love of God is given to us all, no matter who we are.

The great surprise of Christmas is that its central gift, the birth of Jesus, is aimed not at those who can afford it, or those who think they deserve it, but at you, me, and everyone, simply because God loves us for who we are.

Whatever Christmas holds for you, I hope you will take time to appreciate all the surprises that Christmas has in store for you. I know that in all the Christmas services at St Mary's, listed in this Newsletter, you will receive a warm welcome, and a space to enjoy and give thanks for the gift of Christmas.

Above all, from everyone at St Mary's, I simply say have a very merry and surprising Christmas.

Benjamin Carter, Assistant Curate



Christmas Services... and beyond

You are warmly invited to celebrate Christmas at St Mary's

Friday 17 December

10.00am	Toddler Carol Service	(followed by refreshments)
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Sunday 19 December

6.00pm	Service of Christmas Readings & Carols	Tea and coffee from 5.30 pm
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Christmas Eve

6.00pm	Crib Service	
10.30pm	Time of quiet and reflection	(carols from 11.15 pm)
11.30pm	Midnight Eucharist	

Christmas Day

8.00am	Eucharist	
10.00am	Parish Eucharist	

Sunday 26 December

10.00am	Eucharist	
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Meditation @ St Mary's: 'With open hands'

Do you ever feel that you never have time to stop, and even when you do all you see are the jobs you still need to do, especially as we approach Christmas? 'With Open Hands' is a series of evening services, which offer time, space and quiet in which to relax, find the centre again, and simply be open to God. The format is very simple – short readings, music and silence. Everyone is welcome, whether you come to church normally or not. Dates and times are as follows; some weekdays will be added after Christmas:

Tuesday 21 December	7.30 pm
Sunday 23 January	6.00 pm
Sunday 27 February	6.00 pm
Sunday 27 March	6.00 pm

There will also be a time of quiet and reflection on Christmas Eve at 10.30 pm in church, immediately prior to the Midnight Eucharist. Carols from 11.15 pm.

All Age Eucharists in the New Year:

Sunday 13 February	
10.00am	Valentine's Day
Sunday 3 April	
10.00am	Mothering Sunday

Also Coming up

Desert Island Discs The castaway will be the Rt Rev. Martin Wharton, Bishop of Newcastle. Friday 4 February at 7.30 pm, in church. Tickets £7.50, including a glass of wine and finger buffet.



What St Mary's means to me

In 1979 Tony, Nicky and I started attending St Mary's and it became an important part



of our lives. Nicky was a chorister from the age of nine until she married and left Whitley Bay. Tony was Treasurer for 14 years, and we were involved with many aspects of life at St Mary's.

In 1999, Tony was seriously ill and nearly died – on Good Friday! My church family held us in their prayers and we had eight more wonderful years together. Being widowed for the second time, (my first husband died when we were both young), has not been easy but the caring people of St Mary's gave me comfort, support and love - that vital ingredient - which carried me along until I felt stronger. I don't suppose they know how greatly they helped me, but they will now!

I have worked in our Parish Office for the last three years and I am Chairman of our Redevelopment Fundraising Group, organising events to raise money for the exciting reordering of our church building. St. Mary's means a lot to me.

Ruth Blake

Christina and I moved to Whitley Bay in 1992, the year my mother died. I began to



ponder the big questions of life and death, and started joining Christina regularly at St Mary's. My confirmation in 1994 was followed by a 'Saints Alive' course and St Mary's became the centre and focus for my Christian journey.

As a serving police officer, St Mary's was a safe haven for me where I could pray, listen to the word of God, observe, and be in the company of other Christians.

I retired from the police service in 2005 and could foresee myself committing more time to St Mary's. Within three months I was serving God in ways I'd not envisaged: as Churchwarden, then welcoming, administering the chalice and taking part in the Passion play. I've gained so much on both a spiritual and church community level. Being part of the Passion Play company gave me one of the most spiritual experiences of my life.

Alan Kerkstra

My first contact with St Mary's was joining the Young Wives in the early



60s. Ties strengthened when the children were born. Both were baptised at St Mary's and at different times they and their father were confirmed. Debbie became a Brownie and later a Guide. Martin joined the Cubs, the choir, played oboe in the music group and learned to play the organ. Over time I have seen friends in trouble, ill or depressed and have been aware of the support that has been given unstintingly, by clergy and lay people alike. It makes you want to be part of something like this. We have become more outward-looking and welcoming through groups like Menzone and the Lunch Club. Our local ministry development team brings a caring, spiritual aspect to all the groups that make the church what it is now. Now I'm looking forward to seeing our building development plans come to fruition, equipping us for the future.

Ruth Wolf

What were you doing at 20.10 on 20.10 in 2010?

If you were ever a Guide, Brownie or Rainbow, you might have been renewing the promise you made when you first joined, as part of the Centenary celebration of Girlguiding UK. The Scouts had their Centenary in 2008, and both are flourishing at St Mary's.

For girls there are Rainbows (age 5-7), Brownies (7-10) and Guides (10-14). For boys there are Beavers (6-8), Cub Scouts (8- 10 ½) and Scouts (10½-14).

You may be wondering whether these organisations aren't just a bit old-fashioned and out of touch, and whether they're just for churchgoing families?

The familiar package of fun, games, camping and learning a range of social and practical skills continues, but you only need look at the waiting lists (44,000 nationally for the Guiding organisations, mainly Rainbows and Brownies) to see how popular they remain. And as for being in touch with the realities of today's world, Guides are currently petitioning the Prime Minister 'to introduce compulsory labelling to distinguish between airbrushed and natural images to help combat the rise of eating disorders and shape a generation of self-confident girls and women'.

And the camping is a less Spartan experience than it used to be, especially with the continuing programme of

improvements at the outdoor centre in Kirknewton.

Guiding and Scouting are multi-faith organisations. At St Mary's, as well as providing a safe place for meetings, we work with the leaders to see how we can support what the young people are up to, trying to integrate their activities with things going on in church. Earlier this year, for instance, the young people prepared contributions about the plight of bees for a service on World Environment Day.

So if you're a young person, or a parent, interested in how to have fun while developing emotionally, mentally, physically and spiritually with a view to making a positive contribution to your community and the wider world, (and making some life-long friends!) have a look at these websites:

www.girlguiding.org.uk and www.scouts.org.uk

Or give our Office a ring on 0191 251 4216. We're interested in hearing from potential leaders too.



Debt Free and Beyond!

Earlier this year Christians Against Poverty (CAP) launched a centre offering free debt counselling, advice and support to people in the Whitley Bay area. In partnership with Acorn Community Church, CAP works with all members of the local community (regardless of religious belief) negotiating with creditors to work out a realistic budget for clients, which prioritises food and essential bills to ensure they will be debt free within five years. Centre Manager, Julia Wilthew says 'The worst thing someone in debt can do is stay silent; being in debt is nothing to be ashamed of. So anyone in financial difficulty is urged to contact CAP on 0800 328 0006.'

More information from www.capuk.org

or contact Julia Wilthew on 07944241862 email juliawilthew@capuk.org

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	Eucharist
Sunday 10.00am	Eucharist
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 Tuesdays)

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:

Badminton club, Baptisms, Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, Rainbows, Brownies, Guides, Bible study groups, Church Hall for group events or parties, COGS (a young people's group for teenagers to explore more deeply issues of faith and life), Funerals, Lunch club, Menzone (a group for men to share fellowship and to learn more about the faith), Mothers Union, Mums and toddlers group, Prayer cells, Rambling, Singing and other music making, Weddings.



**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

Web: **www.stmarysm Monkseaton.co.uk**

We're at the junction of Claremont Gardens and Davison Avenue, Whitley Bay.