



# St Mary's Newsletter

St Mary's – at the Heart of Your Community

## Only 98 shopping days to Christmas!



*St Mary's  
invites you to  
prepare for  
Christmas in a  
different way.  
Pat Moran  
explains!*

Isn't it  
strange  
how we  
count down

the days to Christmas in terms of shopping? And how frantic it gets as 25 December looms larger, and the list of things to do gets longer and longer! But does a happy Christmas really depend on frenzied activity and endless shopping? There has to be an alternative that is kinder to our emotional and physical well-being as well as our pockets. And what is Christmas all about anyway?

On the Sundays before Christmas we'll be looking at some of these issues in a series of events for everyone. It doesn't matter if you only come to church rarely, or whether you've never been before. You'll be welcome at any or all of the following.

### **20 November: 'Stir up Sunday' 3 - 5pm**

A family event where we make the Christmas cake (bring a cake tin), try our hand at making cards, decorations, advent calendars etc, explore alternative gift ideas, with short child-friendly informal worship and a cup of tea.

### **27 November: 'Advent pit-stop' 3 - 5pm**

A breathing space, literally a pit-stop in the race to Christmas, for adults (crèche for children). A time to relax and slow down – no formal service, just space and quietness to explore at your own pace and in your own way, with refreshments.

### **4 December: A traditional Advent Service 3 - 5pm**

Readings, prayers and singing in preparation for the birth of Jesus – to be followed by tea, cake and chat.

### **11 December: Christingle 3 - 5pm**

Come along between 3 and 4pm for mince pies, mulled wine and a chance to make your own Christingle - oranges, sweets and candles to represent the coming of Jesus as the light of the world. Candlelit child-friendly Christingle service at 4.00 pm

### **18 December: Home and Away – Christmas Carols as part of our Centenary celebration 3 - 5pm**

A ground-breaking informal Christmas Carol Service during which we will link up with those we love in other parts of the country and abroad using Skype and recorded messages...with Christmas cake, of course!

Look out for posters nearer the time, and hope to see you in Advent.

## St Mary's Centenary Celebrations

Our centenary year is well under way. Here are two further celebrations, to which you are invited, no matter whether or not you ever come to church.

**September: Centenary Exhibition.** You will be able to visit the exhibition and relive the history of our church through displays, audio clips, video clips and personal reflections on the changes that have taken place. We have unearthed documents from the architect's files and discovered plans and drawings not displayed for many years.

The exhibition is open every weekend in September - why not see what is on show when you visit the Autumn Fair on 24 September?

**Sunday 18 December: Home and Away – Christmas Carols,** as part of our CENTENARY CELEBRATION, 3 to 5pm.

Share in a ground-breaking informal Christmas Carol Service during which we will link up with those we love in other parts of the country and abroad using Skype and recorded messages.



### Botswana Youth Trip 2011

In July eleven young people from the Diocese of Newcastle, accompanied by our Curate Benjamin Carter and another Curate from Walker, visited our Link Diocese of Botswana.

There they met with young people from Botswana and from the Diocese of North Carolina, USA. During the trip the young people focused on sharing their experiences of faith, life, and the Church with other Anglicans from throughout the world.

The centre piece of the visit was a two day conference on HIV/AIDS. The Church in Botswana are at the forefront of education awareness of HIV/AIDS in Botswana, where around 17% of the population are infected, with countless more affected by the virus.

Youth from all three Dioceses agreed to take forward a project for a walk of witness in all three places to raise awareness and money for those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS.

As Emma Clinch, from the Great Park said, "Our experiences of meeting people affected by HIV/AIDS in Botswana made the situation so much more real and made us determined to do something about it and change the world."

We all went away proclaiming one commitment (which was on the T-shirts we were all given) – "I'm Positive: About ending HIV/AIDS in Africa."



### Something new for young people

'Youthink' is a lively and lovely bunch of young people aged 10 to 14 - a Youth Group for young people, run by young people, meeting monthly.

Susana Moran tells us what it's all about:

A couple of us set up **Youthink** last March to cater for the over 10s in the church community. We also wanted to provide further opportunities for members of Young Notes (our Junior Choir) once they have reached age 10. We have young people from other churches and we welcome new members!

**Youthink's** main aim is to allow children to meet and get to know one another in a safe, supportive space. In the near future we hope to engage our youngsters in discussions and activities which will help them to explore their faith. We then hope to encourage them to get involved in and engage with church services and the church community more generally

We aim to offer our children opportunities to socialise, make new friends, engage in a range of activities, including bowling, ice-skating,



and trips to the cinema. We also have plans to visit places a little further afield, for example, the Centre for Life.

We have been out together for a meal, had a pizza, ice cream and DVD night and an Easter egg hunt in the church. Our next meeting, in September, will be bowling at XS Superbowl, Longbenton.

So if you like...having fun, meeting new people, playing on the Wii, visiting new places and eating pizza...then maybe **Youthink** is the place for you!

If you are under the age of 10 and enjoy singing then you might be interested in Young Notes - a small group of children who like making friends, playing games, learning new things and most of all SINGING!

If you are interested in either **Youthink** or **Young Notes**, please contact Susana Moran on 07852 723 618. *We welcome new members.*



## Ovingham's new Priest-in-charge

Our dear colleagues Eric and Carol Lewis, with Bishop Frank at Eric's licensing as Priest-in-Charge at St Mary's, Ovingham. Many of you will know Eric and Carol as proprietors of 129 Coffee Shop, whilst Eric served as Curate at St Mary's for the last four years.

# Starting up again



September– back to work, to school, to routine after the holidays. Perhaps new starts- off to college, job-hunting or starting new adult education activities. So how about church, faith and all that? Perhaps it's a good time to pick up where you once were, or to start thinking about what Jesus Christ means to you.

They say many people simply don't know anything about the Christian faith these days. An exaggeration? Well, how often do you hear someone say 'oh, I'm not religious'. Perhaps you say it yourself. There's precious little in the media to stir our minds about faith. Coverage of anything 'churchy' is more likely to be about women bishops, gay clergy or some scandal rather than the good news of Jesus.

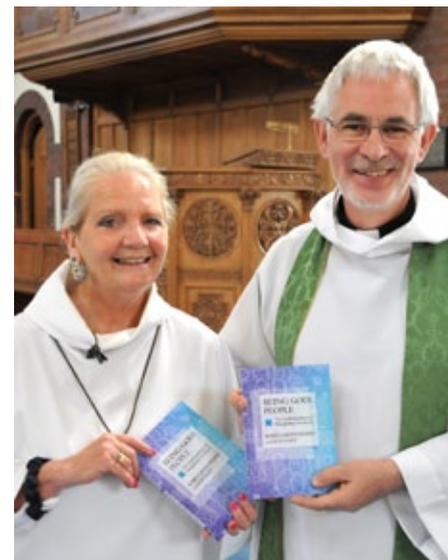
So is the 'default position' just not to bother thinking about God, Jesus, church or indeed what our lives are all about? That used to be true of many people who have since been

moved to look to Jesus for meaning and hope in their lives.

Like most church communities, St Mary's contains people on many points of the faith spectrum –from those who see their faith as the supreme driving force and reason for their lives (but rarely without some doubts and worries) to those who are seeking something – they may not know what - that might give shape and purpose to life. That's why we welcome anyone at any point on their personal journey of faith- because we too are travellers at different points along the way. But in the end, we come to realise that Jesus is himself the way, as well as the destination.

It may happen in a blinding moment of revelation. For most it's more like a quiet listening for the voice of God's spirit, which we're more likely to hear in the company of fellow seekers after the truth. What truth? That God chose to give us himself, in the human shape of Jesus, not only to show us what God is like, or to show us how we should be, but through his death on the cross, and his rising again, to give us the promise of eternal life. Wow! Now how can anyone go through life without even sparing a thought about what all that means for him or her? We can only say 'I'm not religious' if we've thought about all of that and decided it's all hokum. Can't we?

You don't have to spend half a lifetime studying Christianity to experience God's love or to feel Jesus' gentle invitation, 'Come, follow me'. You'll always be welcome to come and give us - and him - a try. Something appropriate for the season of starting up again, perhaps?



## 'Being God's People – The confirmation and discipleship handbook.'

Our Vicar, Robin, and Sue Hart, Lay Reader, are the authors of the recently published 'Being God's People'. They have written about St Mary's approach over the last few years to learning and growth, discipleship and faith. The book provides practical suggestions for churches in these areas, in preparing for Confirmation, in welcoming and integrating newcomers and making new disciples and leaders.

There's lots more on the Parish website, [www.stmarysm Monkseaton.co.uk](http://www.stmarysm Monkseaton.co.uk)

Published by SPCK, ISBN 9780281063611, £8.99, or ring the Parish Office.

## Coming up

**Friday 14 October, 7.00 pm:**  
**Swingbridge Singers Concert**

Tickets £6 adults (includes interval glass of wine), £2 children (soft drink)

**Friday 18 November, 7.00 pm:**  
**Northumbrian Evening**

Standing Stones (Northumbrian Singers and Songs); Cloggie Dancers; Northumbrian Piper, plus hot Northumbrian meal. Tickets £8

**Saturday 3 December, 7.00 pm:**  
**Backworth Colliery Brass Band**

Tickets £6 adults (includes interval glass of wine), £2 children (soft drink)



## Coffee, anyone?

The latest phase of our church redevelopment was completed in August, providing not only a well-equipped new kitchen with serving hatch into the church, but a decent suite of toilets, including a disabled wc and baby change facilities.



# What St Mary's means to me

I was pregnant when I came to live in Whitley Bay in 1977 with my husband David and two



year old daughter. I had been born and brought up on the Wirral, whilst David came from Yorkshire - we had no family locally and knew no-one. At our first visit to St Mary's there was an immediate friendly welcome - I remember being introduced at Parish breakfast by the late Eric Dodgson, the warden, standing on a table! Soon I was helping with the Guide units. Since then and with the encouragement of others including the clergy, I have gradually taken on different leadership roles in the Church.

St Mary's clergy and people have been there for me through the bad times and the good. They have encouraged me, supported me and pushed me at times and my faith has grown. Church friendships formed in those early days are still important. Our own family has grown up and now live at opposite ends of the country, but this is home and St Mary's, its congregation and its clergy, is a huge part of that.

Carole Lax

When Marian and I moved to Whitley Bay from Reigate, Surrey, in 1978, our



nearest C of E church was St Mary's, so we began to attend its services. We had both been confirmed, and soon became involved in church life. We found it to be welcoming and active in the community.

With the approval of the vicar, Revd David Smith, I began Reader training and in 1981 was licensed by the bishop in the cathedral. It has been a privilege to preach and lead groups; especially the MenZone group for the past eight years. The men's prayer cell has also been of particular value. Our boys, Paul and David, were both confirmed at St Mary's. Coming from an evangelical church tradition, I had to adjust to a more liberal theology. What I have found is the value of other traditions without losing sight of my own background.

I find St Mary's an even more welcoming church now, and with an incredibly gifted congregation.

Derek Burton

House bought? Check.

Removals van booked? Check. Keys picked up? Check. New church found? Hmm - not so simple.



Moving to a new area in 2008 meant finding a place where I could feel at home, both in terms of my own personal faith and as part of a community - no easy task. I was looking for a place I could be part of, a place where my faith could grow. That is what I found at St Mary's.

The things I cherish most about St Mary's? There's a bit of a buzz about the place. I love the imagination used in the services; people have an opportunity to experience and think about God in fresh ways. The Easter services were really special - especially the 5 am service (with bacon butties and bucks fizz afterwards). The energy in this church comes from a deep sense that seeking to know God better means not standing still, but rather going on a 'Magical Mystery Tour', as the confirmation course here is called. I'm glad to be going on the next part of my journey with the people of St Mary's.

Jo Hardy



## Water - too much, too little or too polluted?

Floods in Pakistan, tsunami in Japan, drought in the Horn of Africa - water so often seems to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. In south west Sierra Leone there's a different problem: they get a decent rainfall each year, more than 3500 mm, but a lot of it is simply unusable because the same water sources are used for toilet, washing, cooking and drinking. Fewer than 46% of the population has access to safe sources of drinking water. There's fewer than one toilet facility for every 125 people. Of these, most are 'local latrines', which can mean just a space with a shallow pit in the ground. Diarrhoeal diseases such as dysentery, diarrhoea, worms and scabies are rampant and a major cause of death in babies and young children. Women and girls have to walk long distances to rivers and swamps to fetch water, facing the risk of assault whilst walking alone in the bush. Water 'wells' are often dangerous, slippery and populated by toads and snakes. The water is often far from pure or clean.

When St Mary's was looking for a project to raise funds for, alongside fundraising for redevelopment of the church buildings, Christian Aid suggested to us a 'Clean, safe, water project' in Sierra Leone. Through rainwater collection systems, new wells and provision of low cost 'eco latrines' and a major education programme, the project will make women's and girls' lives safer, will improve the health of people in 78 rural communities and will save children's lives.

Every pound we raise will be matched with three more from European development funds. So our target of £5,000 to be raised by October 2012, will be bumped up to £20,000.

Christian Aid will ensure that the project will be delivered by established local partners, bypassing opportunities for misappropriation or corruption by formal agencies and officials.

If you'd like to help us reach the target, please ring the Parish Office (0191 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:

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, 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.*

Day and time	Worship
Sunday 8.00am	Eucharist
Sunday 10.00am	Eucharist
Sunday 6.00pm	Evening Prayer (Healing Service on 2nd Sunday of month)
Mon-Fri 9.00am	Morning Prayer
Tue & Wed 9.30am	Eucharist (Book of Common Prayer, Tuesdays)

St Mary's Parish Office is open  
Mon – Fri 10.00am – 12.00 noon

Telephone: **(0191) 251 4216**

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

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

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

## AUTUMN FAIR

**Saturday 24th Sept 2011**  
**10.00am to 1.30pm**

Doors open 9.45am

Official opening 10.00am

**REFRESHMENTS** ★  
Morning Coffee  
Freshly made lunches  
Italian Ice Cream

★ Admission only 50p  
Children FREE ★

★ Bouncy Castle • Photo Portraits  
Face Painter • Military Enactments  
Competitions • Hook the Duck  
Salvation Army Band  
Lots of fun to be had... ★

**LOTS OF STALLS...**  
Cakes, Plants, Toiletries,  
Home Produce, Books,  
Toys, Jewellery,  
Tombola, Traidcraft  
Tomorrow's Antiques  
and lots more...

**FANTASTIC  
RAFFLE PRIZES:**  
£100 first prize,  
Christmas food hamper,  
dinner for 2 at  
a local restaurant,  
and lots more... ★

**FREE Prize Draw - Bring this with you!**

Name:.....

Address:.....  
.....

Telephone:..... ★

★ All proceeds to St Mary's redevelopment fund