

SPIRE

St. Stephen's Community Magazine
Christmas 2011
Issue 10

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Do Mothers exist?
The thoughts of twins

We go a-carolling
with our new Musical Director

Seeking wise Counsel
We meet Helen Hayes & Lewis Robinson

When kids and candles do mix
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A modern Canterbury Tale



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WELCOME

Rev Nick Davies
Guest Editor



Welcome to our Christmas issue! Here, the Vicar gives us a new insight into Christmas from inside the womb. Previewing some of Christmas highlights here at St Stephen's, Katie Preusser gives us the history of one of our favourite children's events, The Christingle Service and Jessica Davies interviews our new director of Music, Jonathan Turner, on some Christmas musical highlights. Meanwhile, Maria Anguita grills two of our local councillors on what can be learned from the riots last summer and what the future holds for our Ward.

In this issue there is also a report on my recent pilgrimage to Canterbury. It was a great opportunity for reflection, particularly as I look forward to pastures new. After three and a half years as a training Curate at St Stephen's, in January I will be heading west to become Vicar of St Philip and St James with St Christopher, in Cheltenham. I will save the speeches for the New Year but suffice to say south Dulwich has been a great place to learn the ropes and Helen and I will miss its welcoming community and wandering through the woods with our spaniel, Oscar.

Should you wish to see me off, we are having a leaving service at 10am on the 8th January. Meanwhile, Christmas beckons, and details of all our services can be found on the back page.

Photographer Wanted:

We are looking for a photographer to join our volunteer editorial team. You will need a digital SLR, an eye for a good image and an interest in capturing the people who make our local community so interesting.

If interested please email nickduffdavies@gmail.com with a link to some examples of your work.



For the first time this year we had an autumn fair in place of our Christmas one. Highlights included guess the weight of the prize pumpkin (8 kilos) and the Curate's dog (22 kilos)! These competitions along with the more traditional sale of cakes, preserves and pickles raised over £1,000 for Church funds. Well done to the social committee!

Looking for a venue for your party or group?

St Stephen's Millennium Hall: available to hire from £35/hr. To book contact Joan Greenwood on (020) 8693 8613 or hallbookings@ststephensdulwich.org





Christmas cards by Elo Allik-Schünemann, sold in aid of church funds, are now available at the back of the church.

Price: 60p each or 50p each for 10 or more.

Inspire SPIRE

Have your say on what goes into Spire!

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The team: Peter Benton, Nick Davies, Sarah Bucknall, Jessica Davies, Linda Christian-Edwards, Maria Anguita & Michael Goodman.
Let us know what you think at **Spire@ststephensdulwich.org**

What is important for Christmas?

Revd Bernhard Schünemann



Once upon the time there were two twins, they had no names yet. Let us call them twin One and twin Two. They were in their mother's womb. One day they had a bit of a conversation: 'Do you know something', twin One asked her brother: 'I think there is going to be life after birth!' Twin Two replied: 'What an extraordinarily silly idea! What should that be, and even more importantly how can that be? Look at our life, it's warm and nice and dark, we enjoy our food which we don't have to worry about, it just comes'

But his sister did not want to give up this thought, this belief in life after birth. 'There must be more than just this life here, here in this place. What if there were a place which was bright and full of light, a place where we can move around freely and where we can eat with our own mouths.'

But she was unable to persuade her twin brother: 'To eat with your own mouth, what a comical idea and here is another thing: nobody has come back from after birth, have they? No, no this here is all there is! And with birth, everything ends. Why should you want something else?'

After some silence, twin One began again with one of her strange ideas: 'Do you know something, I think we have got a mother!'

'A mother!' snorted twin Two sneeringly. 'I have never seen a mother, and therefore I can confidently say that there is no mother!'

Twin One persevered: 'But sometimes, when we are really still, one can hear her sing. And sometimes, don't you feel it, she appears to be stroking our world.'

Again both twins were silent for a while, but then Twin One continued: 'Do you not sometimes feel this strange pressure, this really rather uncomfortable pressure, the thing that's sometimes really painful?' 'Yes,' said her brother. 'And what is that supposed to mean?' he asked.

Twin One replied: 'I think this pain is there for a purpose, it is supposed to prepare us for that other place, that place where everything is beautiful, even more beautiful than here, the place when we can see our mother face to face. Won't that be exciting?'

In this little story, it is difficult for unborn babies to think and perceive 'outside the womb'. At Christmas time we are all encouraged to think and feel 'outside the box'. Christmas is one time when just for moment in our busy and anxious lives we are allowed to think that there is light even in a season that is in fact the darkest time of the year.

Christmas is popularly celebrated by many who do not even share the Christian faith, but because the deep values of Christmas are positive and universal: the giving and receiving of gifts as tokens of love, the spreading of hope in times that otherwise may look bleak and hopeless. Christmas at a time of sustained economic uncertainty and hardship can help us to re-focus on what is really important in our lives, the things that sustain us beyond our material certainties: our relationships, our ability to love and be charitable, and our spirituality, whatever it may be.

A happy and blessed Christmas to all our parishioners!



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The meaning of Christingle

by Katie Preusser

The glow of candles, smiling little faces and the hushed excitement as the lights go down. For more than 50 years one of the most enchanting events in the church calendar, the Christingle – or Christ-Light- service, has been raising crucial funds for vulnerable children. Christingle oranges have been used by churches to celebrate the coming of Christ, the light, into the world since 1968. That was when the Children's Society, a charity helping disadvantaged young people, first introduced the candlelit service to the Church of England.



But the roots of the celebration date back much further. There are records of an ancient Welsh 'calenig' service, and the Moravian church has held Christingle services for more than 200 years.

Today, the Children's Society encourages communities to run a service in the lead up to Christmas to help bring families together and raise vital funds for its work. The charity provides candles and other materials needed to make the Christingle oranges, and in return church collections have helped raise more than £1 million every Christmas in recent years.

Bernhard Schünemann, vicar of St Stephen's Church in South Dulwich, says the service is a particularly special one. "It has got this wonderful element of unpredictability with small children being put together with candles," he says.



"I like the idea that when they are all lit and then the lights go out and the children's faces are illuminated, the children become quiet in the dimmed light and it suddenly becomes a very Holy moment," he adds.

The Christingle orange represents some of the key messages of the Christian faith. The orange is the world. The red ribbon around it indicates the love and blood of Christ. The dried fruits and sweets on cocktail sticks in the orange represent the fruits of the earth and the lit candle is Jesus, the light of the world.

"The Christingle itself, whilst being made in the service with the children, allows you to talk about the way God has the whole world in his hands and how Christ is light in the world but how nevertheless there is some sadness in the world, symbolised by red ribbon, and the highlight is putting on the sweets which symbolise God's gifts to us," explains Rev'd Schünemann.

Paul Acers, who helps run the church's 'Footsteps' Sunday school, says the service at St Stephen's has become more hands-on in recent years. "Rather than giving children completed oranges, there are tables around the church for children and their families to make their own Christingle. The children love making things anyway, the fact they are making things with sweets and oranges means they get a lot of fun out of it," he says.

Children of all ages, their families and carers are welcome at a St Stephen's Christingle service on 11 December at 5.30pm

For more information about the Children's Society or making Christingles visit: http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/christingle



with our new Musical Director

By Jessica Davies



Our new director of music, Jonathan Turner, encourages us to be inspired by Christmas carols.

If Christmas feels like a marathon to you, spare a moment's thought for St Stephen's new organist and director of music, Jonathan Turner. By Christmas morning he will have led the music-making in at least eight carol services, as well as the midnight service the night before. As we all head home for lunch, presents and a snooze, he will climb into his car and drive home to Blackburn, five hours away.

Yet he remains full of enthusiasm for the season and its music. Still only 24, and formerly an organ scholar of Lincoln College in Oxford, he began learning the organ at 15 and earned his stripes after leaving school as a precociously young organ scholar at Blackburn Cathedral. Among the congregational carols sung there at Christmas, O Come, All Ye Faithful remains a favourite. "In the run-up to Christmas you might sing it 20 times," he says. "Then at midnight mass you finally reach verse seven, Yea, Lord, we greet thee, and it is absolutely amazing. It always sends a shiver down my spine," he adds.

Other favourites include Hark the Herald. "The Willcocks descant is beautiful," Jonathan enthuses, "and Christina Rossetti's poem In The Bleak Midwinter, sung to the Harold Darke, instead of to the Holst, setting." Jonathan's taste in choir carols is decidedly modern. "I love Bob Chilcott's Midwinter, as it provides an alternative setting to the Rossetti text, and What Sweeter Music by John Rutter," he says. "Both of these will appear in the lessons and carols service at St Stephen's. The atmosphere they create is magical, and melodically they are both very beautiful."

Other great choir carols likely to feature over Christmas this year at St Stephen's are the gorgeous and intensely moving O Magnum Mysterium by the American contemporary composer Morten Lauridsen, the more-familiar and equally lovely This is the Truth by Ralph Vaughan Williams, and the traditionally reassuring Coventry Carol.

"But what really epitomises Christmas for me," says Jonathan, "is a series of carols called the Manchester Carols, with text by Carol Ann Duffy and music by Sasha Johnson Manning. They



are up-beat, fun and dead easy listening, as well as very appealing to children." He plans to introduce them to the boys at Dulwich Prep School, where he teaches music, and urges us all to discover them for ourselves: "This is music hardly anyone knows, but it is perfect for getting you in the festive mood and great to have in the background instead of your usual carols! It is just music that immediately makes you think: that's Christmas to me."



A modern Canterbury Tale

Revd Nick Davies



Walking 44 miles in two and a half days might not be your idea of a relaxing break. But this was my plan for a retreat in October when I made a pilgrimage to Canterbury Cathedral. It began easily enough taking the train to Rochester, before shouldering my pack and heading south towards Aylesford.

I had wanted to hike the Pilgrim's Way for many years. I had walked sections of it before but wanted to commit to something longer and, hopefully, more prayerful. I had vague recollections of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales from English school lessons, and I liked the idea of long days of walking, followed by evenings beside a roaring fire.

My first day's hike was a mere nine miles. Walking along green lanes, spotting buzzards and a dormouse, I imagined myself alongside one of Chaucer's characters. But the ever-present sound of the M2 and the passing Eurostar reminded me that much has changed. I was walking



towards The Friars – one of the ancient houses of the Carmelites Order - at Aylesford, where I was spending the night. This peaceful friary, built from flint and thatch, nestles in a bend of the Medway. I arrived in time for evening prayer, a hot bath and some simple food.

After a Eucharist the next morning, I set out eastwards along the North Downs Way. Chaucer's pilgrims may well have followed the route of today's A2 and the Pilgrim's



Way marked on our maps owes more to Victorian romanticism than medieval archaeology. Nevertheless the views south from the Downs are a great backdrop for prayer. Eventually, after 17 miles, and as dusk fell, I arrived at The Oak pub in Charing. Sweaty and achy, I stumbled into the bar to be greeted by curious stares.

My final day's walk brought blue skies, skylarks and yellowing poplars. Unfortunately, I also had another seventeen miles ahead of me. As I turned north-east at Boughton Lees, however, I had a sense of being on the last leg. Walking through King's Wood south of Chilham I met a mountain biker who asked me what my hike was in aid of. I tried to explain that I wasn't raising money, but going on a pilgrimage. Finally, I arrived in Canterbury and made my way to the Franciscan Friary for a hot bath, a meal with pudding (as it was a saint's day) and prayers for a peaceful night, which were duly answered.

The next morning I headed for the Cathedral and spent time praying in the ancient crypt. It was here



that Thomas Becket's body was first laid to rest after he was killed by four of Henry II's knights. It was this martyrdom and the miracles that followed which made Canterbury one of the most important centres of pilgrimage across Europe.

For medieval pilgrims the journey promised indulgences. For me the benefits were less exalted; an opportunity for walking, the appreciation of nature, a chance to pray and reflect, and meet some interesting people. And maybe the sight of a priest walking an ancient pathway might just have reminded people that pilgrims still exist.





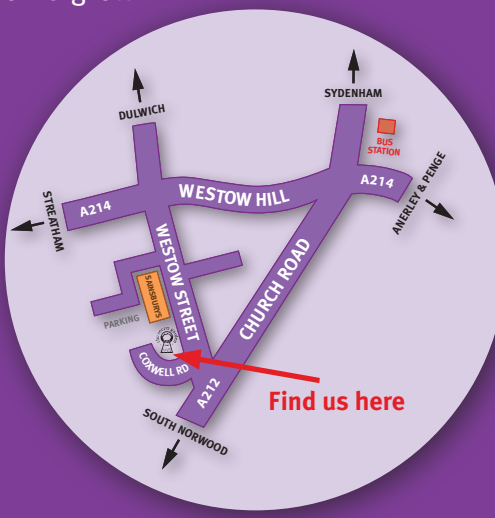



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We meet Helen Hayes & Lewis Robinson

Maria Anguita

This year has been defined by budget cuts and riots, but as London prepares to welcome the Olympics in 2012, the residents of College Ward can look forward to enjoying the legacy of the Games long after they have finished, say councillors Lewis Robinson and Helen Hayes.



"I'm really pleased that Southwark Council has set up a £3m Youth Fund to support young people"



"we should be looking to introduce more apprenticeships for young people"

Q: 2011 has undoubtedly been a challenging year, but what do you consider to be your biggest success this year?

Lewis: The work that gives me the most personal satisfaction is sorting out individual resident's issues. However, if I was to name one success, it would have to be getting Transport for London to admit that they were wrong on some road works at Alleyn Park that blighted local residents' lives, and to put them right.

Helen: We lobbied successfully to keep a dedicated Safer Neighbourhood Team sergeant for the ward. I am also really pleased that both Kingswood and Dulwich libraries will remain open and that the Kingswood Estate housing office is now open three days a week instead of two.

Q: What can we learn from this year's riots?

Helen: We need to make sure that we offer opportunities and a positive future to young people, and I'm really pleased that Southwark Council has set up a £3m Youth Fund to support young people who want to continue in education and to pay some tuition fees for university. I also think that local communities play a really important role in giving people a sense of responsibility towards each other, and providing a sense of belonging. We are really fortunate in the ward to have some fantastic community organisations which do great work.

Lewis: The causes of the riots were complex. However, I would make three comments. First, the majority of young people were not involved in the riots. Second, more police should be given training in public order situations to crack down immediately on organised criminality. Finally we should be looking to introduce more apprenticeships for young people to provide training and employment.

Q: The year ahead will be defined by the Olympics. What benefit do you think this will bring to the ward?

Lewis: I believe that securing the future of the Dulwich and Camberwell Baths and others such as Herne Hill velodrome is the best Olympic legacy for all the children of Southwark, as they will still be there long after the jamboree of next summer has been and gone.

Helen: I hope that residents will enjoy watching amazing sports and be inspired to take up more physical activity.

Q. What are you hoping to get this Christmas?

Helen: I'll settle for a few quiet days with my family and watching the excitement of my daughters (aged 6 and 3)!

Lewis: Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy on DVD, one of the best films of the year.



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Christmas at St Stephen's



Sunday 11th

5.30pm - **Christingle Service**
A candle-lit service especially suited to children of all ages.

Sunday 18th

6pm - **Festival of Lessons and Carols**
A service lead by our Choir with readers from our community and the Roman Catholic and Baptist churches of our parish. Followed by mulled wine and mince pies.

Christmas Eve

*Saturday 24*th
4pm - **Blessing of the Crib**
Children please come dressed as angels, shepherds, wise men and other characters from the nativity.
11pm - **Midnight Mass**

Christmas Day

8am - **Holy Communion**
(Book of Common Prayer 1662)
10am - **Christmas Day Parish Service** with our Choir

St Stephen's Day

Monday 26th
11am - **St Stephen's Day Mass**

St Margaret Clitherow RC Church

Christmas Eve

Midnight Mass - Carols 11.45pm

Christmas Day

Mass 10.30am

Boxing Day

Mass 10.30am

Portuguese Mass each Sunday in December from 9am

Kingswood Community Church

Langbourne School

Sunday 18th

10.30am Carol Service

Christmas Day

10.30am Christmas Service

Regular Services

Sunday:
8am Holy Communion (BCP)
10am Sung Parish Eucharist with Sunday School during term time

Monday to Friday:
8.30am Silent Prayer followed at 8.45am by Morning Prayer

Wednesday:
9.45am Holy Eucharist

