SPIRE

St. Stephen's community magazine
Christmas 2008
FREE

THE GIRL, THE CRIB AND THE SCOOTER
A Christmas story

THE SPIRE INTERVIEW
in the Dulwich Wood House

RECESSION PROOF
A new kind of local bank

BETHLEHEM 2008
'O little town' under siege



WELCOME

Andrea Hensher
Editor



It's that time of year again. The mad rush towards Christmas is well and truly under way as we build up to the biggest celebration in the Christian calendar.

Let me invite you to take a quiet moment, get yourself a soothing brew and flick through Spire, the new community magazine of St Stephen's parish Church. In this issue Baby Jesus leaves his crib for a scooter ride and we take a look at the present-day town of Bethlehem, a far cry from the picturesque setting of the Christmas story.

Closer to home, we feature a community bank which uses time instead of money to encourage the local exchange of skills and services. For observant readers there's a small prize if you can name the location in our picture competition, and now the paint has dried on one of our local landmarks we find out what's new inside the recently refurbished Dulwich Wood House. pub.

There's no shortage of festive activities on your doorstep from Christmas fairs to carol services, so if it's local Christmas shopping or a good sing you're after, we think we've got it covered. Enjoy!



Where in the parish?

Can you identify where you will find this lion?

First five correct answers by post or email to the editor will receive bars of fair trade chocolate.

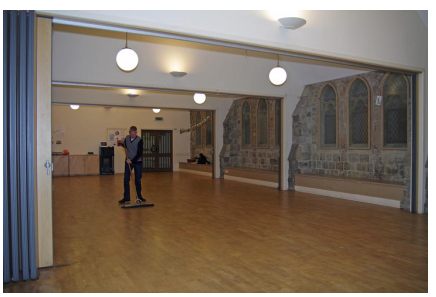


St Stephens Christmas Cards

60p each or £5 for 10

Available in the church after services or when the church is open.

Hand delivery for orders of twenty cards or more



Looking for a venue for your party or group?

St Stephens Church Hall available to hire from £35/hour.
To book contact Joan Greenwood on 020 8693 8613.

Spire will be out three times a year.
Let us know what you think at Spire@ststephensdulwich.org

St. Stephen's Church, College Road, SE21 7HN.
Tel: 020 8766 7281

Vicar: Revd. Bernhard Schunemann, 111 College Road, SE21 7HN
Tel: 020 8693 3797. Email: schunemann@btinternet.com

THE GIRL, THE CRIB AND THE SCOOTER

Revd. Bernhard Schünemann on the promise of Christmas



It was Christmas day. The rush of services in the church had died down, the church was quiet and it smelled of candles that had just been blown out.

The Vicar was in the vestry clearing away the robes and filling in the service registers. It was then that he heard footsteps in the church. These were the footsteps of a five year old girl. With great determination the girl was heading for the crib. She looked at the Christ child for a moment and then proceeded to take him out and slip him delicately into her jacket pocket.

The Vicar resisted the temptation to step out and prevent the girl from leaving, reflecting briefly that this did not look like malicious theft. He followed the girl out of the church. Once outside she mounted her scooter and started to scoot around the church. Not once, not twice but three times the girl scooted around the church with great gusto.

Afterwards she parked her scooter at the door, went back into the church and stood before the crib. She took the baby Jesus out of her jacket pocket and with great tenderness placed him back in the crib, making sure that he was positioned comfortably in the straw and replacing the piece of torn sacking to cover him for warmth.

It was then that the Vicar stepped out of the shadows and asked the girl what she was doing. The girl was not in the least bit surprised to be confronted. "I had promised him that if I got a scooter for Christmas I would give him a ride on it and promises are there to be kept!" "That is true," said the Vicar quietly as girl scooted away, full of joy about the promise that had been kept.

Christmas is a time of expectations, wishes, desires and promises. A time teetering on the thin edge between the joy and pain of this world. Children especially expect many hopes to be fulfilled.



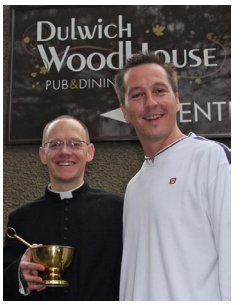
For some it is a new scooter or a new bicycle. For others it is perhaps a visit or some attention that we have long promised and that we make a special effort to give.

We need such periods in our lives. We cannot constantly rush around always giving attention to urgent matters and never to the important ones. The wonderful thing about Christmas is that at one point the rushing stops and the holidays start. It is at these moments that life can be surprisingly empty, because we are just not used to giving attention to the joy that the promise of Christmas holds.

For Christians this festival is the celebration that God himself kept his promise, the promise of his own presence in the pain and the joy of his creation. In the Bible there is a story about Simeon who also took the baby Jesus in his hands, just like the girl in my story above, and he looked him in the eyes and he said: "Now I can depart in peace, I have seen the salvation of the world so beloved by God".

Peace is the great promise of Christmas. This year I would like to take this opportunity to wish you a peaceful Christmas.

LANDLORD, DANIEL BOWDEN



He recently re-opened the Dulwich Wood House for pub dining. To mark the occasion, the pub was blessed by St. Stephen's curate, Revd. Nick Davies.

We went to find out how it's going now...









How did the opening go?
In a word- fantastic. We served 186 lunches on the first Sunday.

Why did you get the pub blessed?
I liked the idea and it just felt right. We've had no major accidents so far!

What makes the Dulwich Wood House Special?
Lots of things- location, history, tradition, Young's and the team we have got in place.

What's your favourite drink?
Ice-cold Peroni beer.

What's the secret of a good pint of ale?
Leave it to settle, good clean lines and lots of tender, loving care.

What special events are you having over Christmas?
We planning to have carols on Christmas Eve and we are almost full for lunch on Christmas day. For New Year's Eve we will have a black and white theme and swing band music.

What is your favourite course on the menu?
Traditional fish and chips!

What would you recommend for after a walk in the woods?
A pint of Winter Warmer and steak and ale pie or, maybe, chicken and chorizo?

What's the secret to running a good pub?
Being a people person and having an eye for detail.

How will you spend Christmas day?
Working! With the family, it's the one day that I begrudge. I think I've worked the last fifteen Christmases.

Do you know any good pub jokes?
A horse walks into a bar... Barman says, "Why the long face?"

Dulwich Wood House
39 Sydenham Hill
Tel: 020 8693 5666

TIME REALLY IS MONEY

Dulwich spends and saves time in recession-beating community bank

Forget the Euro – people in South East London are trading time. For the past few months, residents of the Dulwich and Crystal Palace have been able to earn and spend time in a time bank held at Paxton Green health centre.

The time banking idea originates from the States, where time dollars are familiar tools in community regeneration programmes. What seems to be a crazy solution to social isolation seems to be working well in SE21.

Louie Millman built up credits in the time bank by showing another participant how to make cushion covers. She has recently been able to spend some of her savings on a trip to Borough Market – where she grew up over 90 years ago. "I would love to get out more but I'm not so steady on my feet anymore and I really need someone to come with me. I've used the time I'd got from showing Cathy how to make cushion covers to get a trip out. The time bank is a very, very good idea."

Another member, Mrs Taylor, has poor eyesight but is a celebrated poet. She spends time credits getting help in her home, especially with using a new rowing machine she bought to get fit. She earns credits sharing her poems and inspiring others to put their thoughts to paper.

The Paxton Green Time Bank is a way for local people to come together and help each other through sharing skills. Participants 'deposit' their time in the bank by giving practical help and support and are able to 'withdraw' their time when they need something done themselves.

Everyone's time is worth the same. Sarah Burns and Suzanne Worrica, the time bank brokers, link people up and keep records. People can help each other with everything, from telephone befriending to helping with errands, from gardening to walking the dog.

The Paxton Green Time Bank was the brainchild of GPs Gemma Anson and Kevin Brinkworth at the Paxton Green Health Centre. They were inspired by a nearby time bank that has been operating from the Rushey Green Health Centre in Catford for nearly a decade:

"We wanted to set up the time bank because we know how important a supportive, helpful community is to people's health and wellbeing. Hopefully the time bank will help us to build this kind of caring community here in Dulwich where neighbours help neighbours. The time bank needs people of all ages with all kinds of skills to join – so please do get in touch if you would like to find out more!"



"DEEP AND DREAMLESS SLEEP?"

St. Stephen's curate, Revd. Nick Davies, reflects on a recent visit to Bethlehem



'O Little town of Bethlehem' is a familiar carol but it seems a long way from the Bethlehem of today, as I discovered when I visited earlier this year.

Since 2002, Bethlehem has been surrounded by the Israeli security barrier which stretches for over four hundred miles. It aims to provide security for Israel and to stop suicide bombers but also causes real hardship for the 250,000 Palestinians it surrounds. With an economy based on tourism, Bethlehem now has 70% unemployment.

I stayed in the Bethlehem Star Hotel. Despite its 72 rooms, I was the only guest. I chatted with a bored waiter over breakfast and reflected that the Holy Family would have no trouble finding a room today.

On my first morning, I visited the ancient Church of the Nativity. As I descended to the grotto, the traditional site of Jesus' birth, I passed icons and candles, as ancient frescoes appeared out of the half-light. Kneeling before the crib, I was struck by a sense of history, as I realised pilgrims had made this journey for over one and half thousand years.

> "This is a living grotto. We see miracles here every day"

I also visited the Holy Family Maternity Hospital, now run by the Order of Malta.

The Director took me round their state of the art facilities which have provided free maternity care since 1990. In that time they have delivered to over 40,000 mothers without ever having suffered a maternal death. Proud of his hospital, Dr. Tabash explained, "This is a living grotto, we see miracles here every day."

As we sing our carols, it's worth sparing a thought for babies born in Bethlehem this Christmas time.

An exhibition of Nick's photos will be on display at St. Stephens on Sunday 11 January.
(See back page)

www.holyfamilyhospital-bethlehem.org









A SELECTION OF COMMUNITY EVENTS THIS DECEMBER

2 /3 December
Kingsdale School Performance of the Musical **'Oliver'** at 7pm in the Drama Studio; contact school for tickets.

6 December
Langbourne Primary School **Christmas Fair** 11.30 – 2pm
St Margaret Clitherow Christmas Fair 11 – 2pm.

8 December
Christ's Chapel, Dulwich **Concert of Christmas Music**– featuring Dulwich College Preparatory School. 7pm. Tickets: £12, £10 Friends, Children free. Price includes refreshments and admission to Dulwich Picture Gallery afterwards.

9 December
Kingsdale School: **Strings concert** (Violins and Guitars) in the Music School at 6pm (free).

10 December
Kingsdale School: **Piano concert** in the Music School 6pm (free).

10 December
Kingswood House: Over-sixties **Christmas Dinner** for Kingswood Estate Residents at 1pm (free).

11 December
Kingsdale School: **Singers** plus Percussion Players in the Music School at 6pm (free).

14 December
St. Stephen's **Christmas produce** sale, including cakes and gifts. After the 8.00 and 10.00 services in the Church Hall.

15 December
Kingsdale School: **Carol Service** for pupils and Parents in St. Stephen's Church 10.30-11.30am.

16 December
Langbourne Primary School **Carol Concert** 2pm.

22 December
Dulwich Choral Society carol concert in aid of St. Christopher's Hospice, St. Stephen's Church. 6.30pm

Local Christmas Services:

St Margaret Clitherow Roman Catholic Church
Portuguese Mass
Each Sunday in December from 9am
Midnight Mass
Wednesday 24th December (Carols from 11.45pm)
Christmas Day Mass
Thursday 25th December 10.30 am

Kingswood Community Church (Baptist affiliated)
(Langbourne School Hall)
Carol Service: Sunday 21st December 2008 2pm
Christmas Day Service
Thursday 25th December 10.30am

Sunday 30 November

6pm Advent Carol Service
A special service celebrating a journey from darkness to light, using musicians and musical ensembles from our parish.

Sunday 14 December

5pm Christingle Service
A hands on service with Christingle oranges for children of all ages.

Sunday 21 December

6pm Festival of Lessons and Carols
A service led by our Choir 'The Stephen's Singers' and our choristers. Followed by mulled wine & mince pies.

Wednesday 24 December
Christmas Eve

4pm Blessing of the Crib
Children please come dressed as angels, shepherds, wise men and other characters from the nativity.

11.30pm Midnight Mass

Thursday December 25th
Christmas Day

8am Holy Communion
10am Christmas day parish service

Friday December 26th
St Stephen's Day

11am Sung Eucharist

Sunday January 11th

10am Epiphany Mass
Featuring photos from Bethlehem

Christmas Services at St. Stephen's

College Road
next to Sydenham Hill station
www.ststephensdulwich.org

Sunday services

8am Holy Communion
Book of Common Prayer

10am Parish Sung Eucharist
with Sunday School for children during term-time



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