SPIRE

St. Stephen's Community Magazine
Christmas 2014
Issue 18

InSpire:

We have stories to tell...
Nightmares, angels and shepherds,
Credit Unions and much more!





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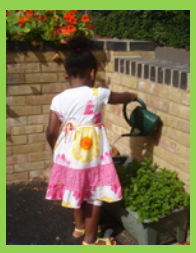
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WELCOME

Angela Emmott
Editor



As the Christmas season comes again we send you our sincere greetings from all at St Stephen's, and share a few stories with you here in Spire.

Lights twinkle in shops and streets: indeed central London in the evening is dazzling to behold. These festive decorations draw us into thoughts of preparations to celebrate with family and friends, and of course to remember those not with us.

But Bernhard, our Vicar, surprisingly shares his 'nightmare'- could this really be a Christmas Story? Well, he has been walking on the church roof! Christine tells us about the Christmas Eve Crib Service; a relaxed focus on that special journey to Bethlehem.

This time of year brings its share of worries too, with so much to buy, limited budgets and so much to do. Bernhard talks of 'The Slavery of Debt' highlighting the renewed focus on heading off those 'loan sharks' by the Church of England. Katie brings us up to date with a local alternative for saving and lending that you too can join.

We meet Joe, a playwright and member of the congregation and learn from Rebecca about the 'behind the scenes' activities that make St Stephen's ready for Services. Lastly, Linda 'points the finger' to alert you to great things ahead... So, Be Prepared!

We welcome one and all to join with us over this Christmastide and wish you a happy and healthy New Year.



Bring your family to our Church:-

The congregation at St Stephen's welcomes and looks forward to children and their families attending services. In particular, the regular 10am Sunday service is always full of families, with children; young and older.

During school term time, there is a Sunday school called "Footsteps" that runs during part of the 10am service. A self-help crèche is available to all children under 3 and their parents, in the hall, with a screen showing the service. On the last Sunday of each month, DBS checked volunteers who are more than happy to look after babies and toddlers whilst their parents take part in the main service, host the crèche. Children are a hugely important part the St Stephen's family. Apart from Footsteps they also contribute to the 10 am service by singing in the church choir (more volunteers please!) and older teenagers assist as servers during the service. Children may also be baptised and confirmed at St Stephen's: please do speak to our Vicar or Curate if you would like to know more about this. If you are thinking of coming for the first time, please do! We look forward to meeting you and your family.

We especially welcome you to our Crib Service on Christmas Eve... read more about it in this edition of Spire.

Be one of the first to like our new Facebook page and be kept up to date with our events! Go to

https://www.facebook.com/ststephenssouthdulwich

Looking for a venue for your party or group?

St Stephen's Millennium Hall: available to hire from £40/hr.
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St Stephen's Church
College Road, Dulwich, London SE21 7HW
Tel: (020) 8766 7281
Office open on Saturday 10.30-11.30
Vicar - Revd Canon Bernhard Schünemann
vicar@ststephensdulwich.org
Curate - Revd Dr Rebecca Lloyd
curate@ststephensdulwich.org
Reader - Mrs Trot Lavelle
t.lavelle181@btinternet.com
Director of music – Jonathan Turner
dom@ststephensdulwich.org
Churchwardens
Sandra Potter & Patrick Robathan
churchwarden1@ststephensdulwich.org
Parish administrator - Sarah Bucknall
parishoffice@ststephensdulwich.org

The team:

Angela Emmott, Bernhard Schünemann, Rebecca Lloyd, Katie Preusser, Gemma Birt, Christine & John Murrell, Maria Anguita, Linda Inniss, Caroline Sawle & Sarah Bucknall.

A Christmas story: Nightmare at Christmas

by Revd Canon Bernhard Schünemann



I was walking through the streets of London; festive preparations were in full flow. Some neighbourhoods had started Christmas markets with mulled wine and biscuits on offer. People seemed to be rushing from shop to shop, getting last minute Christmas shopping done. Some schools had developed their own businesses selling Christmas trees. Christmas carols played in the shops and in shopping centres elaborate grottos were harbouring what seemed to be Father Christmases of Hollywood proportions.

And yet it seemed to me that people were just going through the motions. When I looked into faces, their eyes looked empty, the joy seemed to have gone out of them. There was something almost zombie-like in the way that they moved, slowly, as if on some sort of automatic Christmas pilot, through the streets.

I looked into the window of an expensive restaurant; a Christmas party was under way. People were sitting around their tables in fine clothes but poking listlessly at their expensively produced nouvelle cuisine dishes. With pale faces, their festive clothes had no radiance, their hair no shine.

Suddenly behind me in the reflection of the window I saw it: a black column of whirlwind, which appeared to be sucking up things from the earth. It was sucking up colour and life itself.

I fled into a church; candles were flickering; carols being sung. A preacher got up into the pulpit and – when I looked into her face – she also was grey and having to labour to get the words out. In horror I ran out, the door behind me closed itself without a noise and I jumped onto a number 3 bus to take me home.

The bus driver appeared to be as lethargic as all the passengers. Somehow he managed to keep the bus moving but when the bus stopped, the driver got out of his seat and sat down on the floor! None of the passengers seemed to want to leave the bus!

So, I got into the driver's seat; he had left the key in the ignition. The bus started up and I drove and drove. To my horror I discovered, looking into the mirror, that the black whirlwind was following me, like a great big black hole swallowing up endless energy into itself. I drove the bus to King's College hospital and got off. As I rushed into the hospital, I became vaguely aware that all the doors were open, and an ambulance stood in front of the A & E ward, its doors open too.

I ran up to the maternity ward, where a light was coming in from one of the rooms. I opened the door and there it was! A baby was lying in one of the cots who smiled at me with arms outstretched. Behind me the dark whirlwind pushed into the room. The black nothing was rushing towards the baby, the black seemed even blacker as it drew closer to the baby. I could not believe what I saw: the baby grabbed hold of the darkness, and in its hands, it appeared to subside. For a moment there was silence.

Then life and colour seemed to return to this world.



Crib Service

By Christine Murrell



It's 4 o'clock on Christmas Eve and St Stephen's Church is buzzing with excitement. This night is like no other night. It is a time to dream and sing our way to Bethlehem. If you come to our Crib Service you might find yourself sitting next to an angel or a shepherd because all the children are invited to dress up in their own costumes. During the service they will be involved in the telling of the Christmas story and will help to make a 'human crib'. Our aim is to remind families of the real meaning of Christmas and for the children to take part in a meaningful way.

We begin as usual with the older ones narrating the story of Mary's and Joseph's travels to Bethlehem; no room at the inn, the shepherds and the arrival of the wise men interspersed with carols. We have beautiful crib figures, which the children carry up to the altar to be placed in the stable and gradually a tableau of the Christmas story is built up. A young girl and boy dress as Mary and Joseph and sit beside a baby Jesus. We are always hopeful that there will be a newborn baby in our congregation at this time of the year! Everyone sings very enthusiastically and we choose carols that the children will all be familiar with, which means many are modern rather than traditional, and the young people seem to know the words, better than their parents!

Our church is full to the brim and this is a chaotic, noisy and fun service and for many it is the one time in the year when they come to church. The families can bring gifts to this service and these are placed around the huge decorated Christmas tree at the front of the church. These gifts are distributed to those who are less fortunate and in this way, the children are saying Thank You for all the good things that they are blessed with.

The story we tell on Christmas Eve is of course only the beginning. It is the beginning of Christmas for all the children and they go home feeling excited and eager with anticipation for the next day.





So, where will you find Jesus this Christmas night? He is now in every time and every place, walking the roads of this world, comforting the sad, healing the sick and walking beside the lonely. On Christmas Eve we begin that miraculous story.



Come along and see this wonder for yourselves, come and join in our inspiring Crib Service.

Everyone is welcome and if you're very young then you might like to become an angel or shepherd for the night!

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messy lives

by Joe Hammond



"What kind of plays do you write?" That's the question I'm often asked. Why not! I'd ask that question myself if I ever found myself in a social situation exchanging small talk with myself. But I don't know. What kind of plays do I write? Well, I'm a new Dad. A full-time Dad. So the answer is, not much of any kind at the moment.

Funny, brutal and short. Actually, that would be a fair answer. In 2012 'Where the Mangrove Grows' was the first play I had professionally staged (at Theatre 503) and the first to be published (by Methuen). That was two years ago. My son was five months old. And the play was funny, brutal and short. Well, it was brutal and short. That much is beyond dispute.



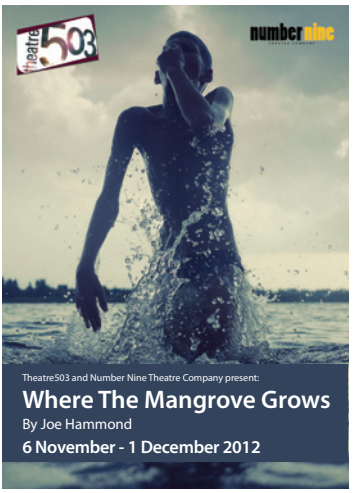
An interesting time for me. A first time Dad. A first time playwright. And if that's sounding droll and matter of fact, the truth of that time was dizzying and magical. It was the arrival of a giant wave that had started mutely when I was far out at sea in my life and had now reached land.

I married Gill at St Stephen's when I was forty one. I became a father to Tom two years later. Family life came relatively late to me. And unexpectedly. The story of the two or so decades of adult life leading up to that point was a little confused and drawn out. It wasn't that funny, not particularly brutal and definitely not short.

And my debut play also had the longest of gestations, going back to a six month spell, as a teenager, working as a nursing assistant in a children's psychiatric hospital. I'd carried something with me from that time that, many years later, became the story of an unloved boy finding solace in the pages of a picture book.

The staging of my play. The arrival of my son. 2012 was a fertile year following years of apparently fruitless meanderings. Many of my long held desires materialised that year. Experience and striving distilled into these tiny forms. A baby. A play. It was a rare time. A coming together. I don't think life happens that way. It doesn't usually fall out that way.

It's a mess. Even a blessed life is a long drawn out mess. Funny, brutal and short it never is. One of these, maybe. Perhaps two, if we've contended with the worst of luck. But never three. Surely not. Because the stories we tell, the plays we write, the anecdotes we return to, the gossip, the nostalgia – these are such imperfect, incomplete extractions from the sum of our lives. Imperfect extractions. Is that it? What kind of plays do I write? I don't know. But the truth is messier. So is yours. We'd be lost without it. And more than that, without the mess, we wouldn't have any stories.





Picture from Theatre503

Joe Hammond is a freelance writer and published playwright. His debut play, 'Where the Mangrove Grows', published by Methuen Drama, was produced at Theatre503 in November 2012.

and the merciful lender

by Revd Canon Bernhard Schünemann



At one of our recent meetings of the Council for Christians and Jews (CCJ) of which I am our local chair, we had two prominent public intellectuals talking about the fact that we have in England a new Chief Rabbi, a new Archbishop of Canterbury and on the wider international horizon a new Roman Catholic Pope, and what this may mean for the position of faith in society. Bishop Richard Harries reflected that one early development since the new Archbishop of Canterbury had arrived was that the public discourse around the Church of England had become 'less preoccupied with sex and more concerned about money'. Justin Welby, the new Archbishop of Canterbury, with a background in international business, had been sitting on the Parliamentary Banking Commission and seems to understand the complexity of our banking crisis more profoundly than most church figures. When he talks about the lack of a moral basis in modern banking and much of city activity he is listened to by people that matter.

As well as being respected by city insiders, Archbishop Justin is also working at the other end of the spectrum where credit is being traded and the needs of people who are in desperate financial straits are being exploited. He publicly attacked 'loan sharking' and even the activities of legitimate payday loan companies such as 'Wonga'. He feels that the Church of England, with its great and evenly spread network of parishes, is well placed to help provide an alternative approach to this. He is encouraging parishioners to get involved in the Credit Union movement.

As he said in a speech earlier this year: There's a story that Jesus tells of two debtors, one who owes a huge sum of money, the other owes a little. The one who owes a huge sum of money is summoned by his creditor, who says, 'You're going to pay or you're going to prison.' The guy begs for forgiveness and gets it, and goes away and beats up the guy who owes him a little sum of money in order to get repaid, and Jesus points out the injustice of this.

There are a lot of meanings to that parable, but one of them is that debt is a form of slavery - and debt to a bad lender, is a particularly unendurable form of slavery. The credit unions are trying to be the merciful lender, the one who has a clear system of values and ethics, and builds what they do around a value of the common good.

The Archbishop further suggested that we – as a church – should use our network of Church of England Primary Schools, to teach about the danger of living beyond our means and more particularly of the dangers of falling into the bad habits of borrowing and dependencies on debt. To this purpose savings clubs are being set up in church primary schools administered and run by the pupils themselves.

We here at St Stephen's have thrown our weight behind an initiative of our local neighbours the 'Copleston Centre' (an Anglican and ecumenical church in East Dulwich) who are supporting and publicising a Credit Union in Peckham under the umbrella of the London Mutual Credit Union, with 148 applications on the same day!



The Duchess has already!

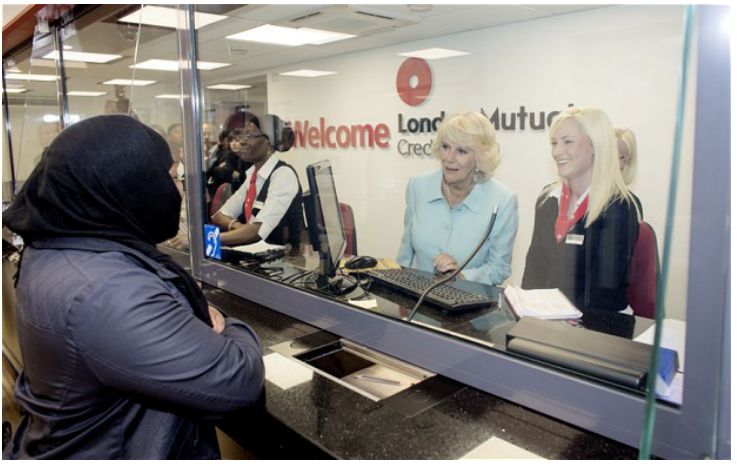
by Katie Preusser

Credit Unions have come of age. They have been around for decades but only recently have they really hit the headlines amid a crackdown on rival lenders like payday loan companies and also thanks to some high profile support, including from the Duchess of Cornwall at our own local scheme.

Camilla said she joined the London Mutual Credit Union to highlight the practical help that credit unions offer their communities in these strained economic times.

The non-profit organisation is one of London's largest and provides services to anyone who lives or works in the Southwark, Lambeth, Westminster and Camden boroughs. It runs by lending out its members' savings and encourages customers to take control of their money and only borrow amounts they can afford to repay. Established in 1982, the credit union aims to offer a local, ethical and affordable choice of financial services

The Duchess is in good company as a member of the scheme. As part of a Church of England campaign to highlight the value of credit union services, over a hundred Peckham residents recently joined up on the same day, delivering their applications together.



The Duchess meets staff and members during a visit to the Peckham Branch of the London Mutual Credit Union Photo: Ian Jones

Revd Paul Collier from the Copleston Centre Church, who helped organise the event said: "Debt is a huge problem in Peckham, and destroys people's lives. I see the repercussions every day. And it's heart-breaking when if only they went to a credit union instead, they would be much, much better off."

Other members of LMCU include Bishop of Southwark Rt Revd Christopher Chessun, Labour Leader Ed Miliband, and it has set up a scheme whereby anyone working in the Palace of Westminster can now join London Mutual Credit Union and save or repay loans direct from their wages. The growth in London is part of a wider pattern in the UK where credit unions more than doubled membership and loans over the decade from 2002 to 2012.

We'll be reporting back in the next edition of Spire in the spring on take-up of the credit union scheme in this parish and how it is helping our local community.

Anyone in this parish with questions about joining the scheme can talk to the vicar at St Stephen's, Bernhard Schünemann. The church also has forms to join up or you can do this online at Southwark Credit Union - www.creditunion.co.uk/ or - www.cuonline.org.uk

Young people under 16 can also open their own personal savings account. £5 is all anyone needs to start, plus an initial £2 admin fee!



Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall meets Lucky Chandrasekera, Chief Executive of LMCU






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a place where stories meet

by Revd Dr Rebecca Lloyd

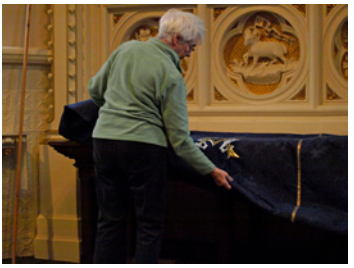
Until I was training for ordination I didn't realise just how much work goes into producing an average Sunday morning service, never mind keeping a church running or putting on special services and events. At St Stephen's I love hearing the stories of the many ways people give of their talents and interests for the Church and wider community. Together we hope to create a beautiful, quiet and spiritually refreshing place where people can relax, reflect and be nourished and strengthened for our daily lives.

Every Sunday when I arrive for the early service I am conscious of the work that others have done that week. Some people have created beautiful surroundings, whether through flower arranging, gardening, looking after the fabrics of the altar cloths and vestments, or cleaning and maintaining the Victorian building. Later, before the main service, the choir and organist arrive to put polish on the hours already spent rehearsing the music, which will enrich our worship. The servers then put everything in place to ensure the service itself runs smoothly – the Communion vessels, hymn numbers, collection plates, and more. The sides people get ready to welcome people to the service and help newcomers understand



what is going on. And just before the service starts, those who will be taking an active role – reading, leading prayers, teaching children, preaching, serving Communion – line up.

So every large-scale service at St Stephen's is a testament to the talents and stories of a whole range of people. Some have always loved flowers, or fabrics, or doing practical things to create beauty. Others are drawn to music and want to share that, or enjoy welcoming, talking to and encouraging those who need it. Still others love assisting in creating liturgy, ritual or prayer and offering that. And others just quietly bring themselves, as they are, and our community would be poorer without each of them. All these talents and desires come from the stories of our lives, the



very stuff of ourselves, which we want to give to others.

Our stories continue on out into the week, well beyond Sunday morning. I am constantly impressed, for instance, by the amount of generous service in which the members of our congregation and parish engage. People's faith and sense of community, expressed in our worship, is also demonstrated through loving service to others. So many people's stories involve care for their families and friends, especially those who are ill or in distress, or working conscientiously at their jobs for the benefit of all, or volunteering to support local social action, arts and leisure institutions to make our local community stronger, or advocating for human or animal rights.

St Stephen's, then, is a place where all our stories meet, where we bring our talents and histories and share them with one another to create a story bigger than any of us, but one in which we all take part. It is the story of our community, a community which seeks to define itself by worship and by service to others.









This autumn we have been able to repair a large section of the St Stephen's church roof using the money from our recent very successful appeal. All slates on the lower section of the lower west roof were replaced and some other improvement work on this roof was carried out. The slate used had come straight from a slate mine in Ffestiniog in Wales, as was required by the special nature of our beautiful historic listed building! Many thanks to all those who have so generously supported our appeal!

Sadly recent rains have shown us there is more work to be done. We continue to maintain our inspiring church, but Rebecca our curate was surprised to find herself being rained on as she read from the lectern recently!

Our new 2014 Christmas card, featuring Elo Allik's drawing of the exterior of St Stephen's, is on sale now at the back of the church (60p per card with envelope, or £5 for 10 cards with envelopes). All proceeds to St Stephen's Church.

You can also order 10 or more cards (schunemann@btinternet.com) and we will deliver them free of charge within the parish boundaries of St Stephen's



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whether fat or thin, whether short or tall.

April 19th is our very first date;
for a three course lunch.....we can hardly wait!

If you live on your own or feel a bit frail;
you'll have transport to take you o'er hill and dale.

We've applied for funding, but there's no guarantee:
"Qué será será", "what will be will be"!

If you're 'strapped for cash' (as can be the case!!)
Then start saving now and "watch this space"!

By Linda Inniss (Volunteer organiser of new "Out and About" Club and member of "SPIRE" magazine team)

Christmas at St Stephen's

December

Sunday 14th

11.15am- **Christmas Bazaar** *sales in the church hall*

Monday 15th

7pm **St Christopher's Hospice Carol Service** *with celebrity readers, two choirs and hand bells – a free concert with a collection for St Christopher's Hospice*

Thursday 18th

7pm **Dulwich Choral Society Christmas Carol Concert** – a free concert with a collection for the Rathbone charity

Sunday 21st

6pm **Festival of Lessons and Carols** with the St Stephen's choir and readers from our community

Christmas Eve Wednesday 24th

4pm **Blessing of the Crib** with the St Stephen's choristers, a service of carols, readings and a procession to the crib. Children may wish to come dressed as one of the characters of the nativity story

11pm **Midnight Mass**

Christmas Day Thursday 25th

8am **Holy Communion** (Book of Common Prayer 1662)

10am **Christmas Day Parish Service** *Choral Eucharist with the St Stephen's choir*

St Stephen's Day Friday 26th

The people of St Stephen's are encouraged to support our local Roman catholic brothers and sisters on the day of the last Mass of their long serving and much loved parish priest Father Hearty at 10.30am on this day - details below

Regular Services

Sundays

8am *Holy Communion (BCP)*
10am *Choral Eucharist with Sunday School during term time*
12noon *Holy Baptisms*

Monday to Friday

8.30am *Silent Prayer followed at* **8.45am** *by Morning Prayer*

Wednesday

9.45am *Holy Eucharist*

St Margaret Clitherow RC Church

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Fr Sean Hearty (020) 8670 1639

Christmas Eve 11.45 Midnight Mass

Christmas Day 10.30 Mass

Boxing Day 10.30 Retirement Mass for Fr Hearty

Regular Services

Sunday Mass	10.30am
Portuguese Mass	9.00am
Wed – Fri Mass	9.30am
Holy Days: Mass	9.00am & 7.30pm



Kingswood Community Baptist Church

Dulwich Wood Federation Primary School,
Bowen Drive SE21 8NS
Pastor: Mawuli Doe
(info: Sandra Surrey 07986 002389)

Sunday 14 December – 10.30am Carol Service

Christmas Eve 7.30pm Evening Service

Christmas Day 10.30am Christmas Day Service

New Year's Eve 9pm New Year's Eve service

Regular Services

Sundays 10.30am
Wednesday 7.30-9.00pm Non-denominational Bible Study Ketra Rooms
Saturday Prayer Group 10am-12noon
37 Kingswood Drive, Pastor Mawuli's home