# SPIRE

St. Stephen's Community Magazine
Christmas 2015
Issue 21



## InSpire:

A time for preparation

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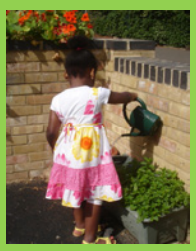
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# WELCOME

**Angela Emmott**
**Editor**



Did you ever learn that 5P Rule: 'Prior Preparation Prevents Poor Performance'?

It's not easy to say, let alone to do!

Yet as Christmas comes upon us and lights and decorations appear on our streets we cannot ignore that growing need to prepare: to get ready! Whatever our beliefs Christmas is a time to reflect on the past year, and to prepare, hopefully, to spend time in the company of friends and family.

As Bernhard, our Vicar reminds us the 4 weeks before Christmas itself, the 24th December, is Advent, a time of waiting, preparation, anticipation and sometimes fasting before the Birth of Christ.

Now, many of us buy a Christmas tree at this time, but do we know how to look after it? We offer some advice from the team at the Secret Garden in Crystal Palace where the Church buys its tree each year.

Did you know we have an eminent Chocolate maker in Dulwich? Read about their delicious preparations for Christmas fare. I certainly plan to visit their local shop,

Diana shares with us the path of preparation in deciding that their son would be baptised in the Church of England. A decision that can shape his future. Shavaun too shares some personal thoughts, on preparation for future life decisions, as she studies for a Bishop's Certificate in Discipleship.

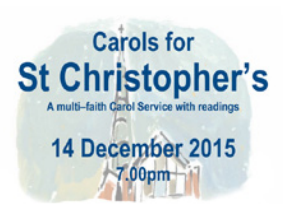
What a surprise for Rebecca our Curate, to find herself unexpectedly amongst a huge crowd of refugees this summer. Was she prepared for this... read on to find out.

Staff at Belair Mansion in Gallery Road have been preparing for Christmas for months. Their hard work enables many to enjoy their Christmas meal away from home and the kitchen!

If you would like some quiet time for reflection then see the news of 'Secular Mindfulness Meditation', that St Stephen's is hosting. If however you prefer a challenging discussion over a pint or glass then, read on, 'Theology in the Pub' could be for you!

Whatever your plans and preferences we send our best wishes to you, your families and friends. Please remember there is a warm welcome awaiting you at St Stephen's, every day, and especially this Christmas.

We will be ready to greet you!




Carols for St Christopher's at St Barnabas Church

## Choir

Our choir rehearses regularly (children, Friday evenings during term time and the adults on Friday evenings monthly & every Sunday before the service). If you are interested please speak to our Director of Music for further information.



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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 –** Rupert Perkins
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, Diana Stoney, Christine & John Murrell, Linda Inniss, Caroline Sawle & Sarah Bucknall.

# Advent is full of expectancy

**by Revd Canon Bernhard Schünemann**



As Church of England Vicars we have to celebrate Advent in two modes. On Sundays the church is penitential and austere, with no decorations apart from our lovely Advent wreath. But on weekdays full scale Christmas celebrations by schools and other organisations tend to be in full Christmas swing and they are welcomed at church with all their carols and Christmas readings and nativity plays.

Most people have forgotten that Christmas really only begins on the evening of the 24th December, and the four weeks before Christmas, the period called ADVENT is a period of preparation and of patient waiting. It is almost like Lent, in that some Christians even observe a bit of fasting before the feasting!

On Sundays there is also a progression towards Christmas in that one contemplates significant aspects of our salvation history; first in the Old Testament with the patriarchs and prophets and then in the New Testament with John the Baptist and finally with the Virgin Mary on the fourth Sunday.

Of course there are commercial pressures on us all at this time of the year. Shops want to get their hands on our money in the name of Christmas, from October onwards. But as churches we should not be too judgemental about all that. After all Christmas itself is a gift by the church to the whole world, and it is in the nature of a gift that we don't hold on to it or that we put conditions on it on how people are to unwrap such a gift. Christmas will always look after itself because it has its own magic: the simplicity of joy.

**Here is the middle section of John Betjeman's poem entitled 'Advent 1955'**

And how, in fact, do we prepare
The great day that waits us there -
For the twenty-fifth day of December,
The birth of Christ? For some it means
An interchange of hunting scenes
On coloured cards, And I remember
Last year I sent out twenty yards,
Laid end to end, of Christmas cards
To people that I scarcely know -
They'd sent a card to me, and so
I had to send one back. Oh dear!
Is this a form of Christmas cheer?
Or is it, which is less surprising,
My pride gone in for advertising?
The only cards that really count
Are that extremely small amount
From real friends who keep in touch
And are not rich but love us much
Some ways indeed are very odd
By which we hail the birth of God.



*However you celebrate and however you prepare for it, I wish you all a very peaceful and joyful Christmas this year.*

# Theology in the Pub

at The Wood House 39 Sydenham Hill London SE26 6RS

A new monthly informal discussion group
Come and chat over beer or your favourite tipple - a chance to talk about important things, with interesting people.

Look out for the next meeting!





All viewpoints welcome

Hosted by St Stephen's Church

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# We need 'Hassocks'!

*Can you help?*



Have you sat in a pew at St Stephen's, for a wedding, christening, a regular service, or sadly for a funeral and had to kneel on the wooden floor?

*We have 24 pews - we need to replace 240 agèd hassocks (kneelers)*

*£25 will buy a new one: - could you?*

*Thanks to those who have sent in donations already, we have 25% of monies needed.*

*Please help us to reach our target soon!*

Monies or cheques made payable to St Stephen's PCC, in an envelope marked 'Hassocks', will be gratefully received. Gift aid envelopes are in the pews if you would like to add this too.

Then, when our congregation swells at Christmas and for those Carol Services, as well as all our weekly services, we will be able to proudly provide comfort for those moments of peaceful prayer, on your knees! Thank you.

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# Preparations that may change my life

**by Shavaun Shodeinde**



St Stephen's Church has become a focal part of life for myself, and my husband. Preparing for our wedding opened up many areas for thought and discussion, and has led me on to attending Confirmation Classes too.

But I felt I wanted, even needed, to dig a bit deeper and learn more about faith and Christian commitment. Our Vicars, Rebecca and Bernhard, steered me towards a more formal set of learning: 'Growing in Life and Faith - The Bishop's Certificate in Discipleship', offered by Southwark Anglican Diocese. It includes classroom teaching, reading, activities and assignments, such as keeping a reflective journal. It will last a year and includes residential weekends.

The Bishop's Certificate in Discipleship is a great platform for me to build my knowledge and to help in understanding who I am within my Christian faith. It comprises six modules that prepare you to explore, remember, follow, believe, challenge and respond. Those features were inviting and have given me so many different perspectives within Christianity



that still remain profound, right up to the present day.

The first module I completed was exploring our identity and the Church. Did St Stephen's provide all the answers? YES! Well only on the questions personal to our church. It was a great eye opener and it has magnified my interest even more in the traditions of the church, the way we do things and the history behind it.

Growing up within the Anglican faith; with it being the centrefold of my life as a child, I did not fully appreciate the importance that it would have when I became an adult. One important stepping stone in my journey was finding out if I was baptised as a child. I found the family pictures to prove it, but always knew within my family "IT WAS ESSENTIAL". Working towards receiving the important Sacraments ahead I needed to have the clarification.

Looking back, before I started the course, when in fact it was just an idea, to now being fully immersed in the content and community, I never would have expected it would give me so much. The confidence I have now, my ability to contribute more, is due in no small part to the outlook of my faith.

Today I feel I am a more robust representation of a Christian and look forward to further elevating my spiritual knowledge, education and experiences. I help at St Stephen's in as many ways as I can; such as serving on the Altar and supporting those who teach our children at the Sunday School, known as 'Footsteps'. If you want to know more about faith and Christian study, ask our Curate, Rebecca. She is one of the tutors on the Bishop's Certificate too!



# Preparations For Christmas

**by Christine Murrell**



Would the thought of cooking a Christmas Day lunch for 120 people totally unnerve you? The chef and her team at Belair House take it in their stride. Here at Christmas we can find roaring open fires, luxurious yet cosy surroundings and a warm welcome with a wonderful lunch and convivial company.

This new Bar, Dining and Social space is located in the heart of Dulwich set against the backdrop of the beautiful Belair Park. The handsome 18th century Georgian mansion has been revived to reflect its heritage, charm and legacy, and it has become a community hub.

*A POTTED HISTORY* - 1785-1818. The Estate was leased to John Willes, corn factor of Whitechapel who erected a house in the style of, or possibly by Robert Adam. He called it College Place.

1818-1859. Following John Willes' death, a new owner, Charles Ranken, solicitor, renamed the house Belair.

1859-1891. Charles Hutton expanded the original cube shaped ground floor by adding a substantial wing on the north side, an attic floor and a conservatory. In fact by 1892 there were 47 separate rooms!

With the death of the final private leaseholder in 1938 and the outbreak of war in 1939, the house became a storage space for the contents of houses that had been bombed in the local area. After the war the governors of Dulwich College granted the house and its grounds to Southwark Council, on a 99 year lease and it was opened to the public as a 'green lung for the people of London'. I used to take my daughter to ballet lessons there when she was younger!

In 1996, actor and West Dulwich resident Gary Cady acquired a lease from the council to create a restaurant as it was a way for the building to remain semi-public unlike other Georgian buildings in Dulwich, which are now private residences. He decided to renovate Belair House to its original Georgian style which is how we find it today.

*CHRISTMAS 2015* - Their menu for Christmas Day was in place by the beginning of October and bookings began in August! The 7ft tree will go up in December and the dining room and bars will be adorned with Christmas decorations. It's not just the three sittings on Christmas Day that take place in the two dining areas. There is the build-up to Christmas with parties booked from small local businesses, banks, estate agents and the biggest of all is the student party from King's College Medical School. The house is decorated as Narnia for this party and guests arrive to walk through a wardrobe of fur coats.

Christmas Day is special for everyone at Belair. As well as families coming to join in the festivities, it is also a special day for the staff. They are away from their families, so Eloise, the Manager, makes sure staff enjoy themselves too. She will have been working through Christmas Eve until 2 am, then back again by 9am on Christmas Day. At 5pm when the doors close, a long table is arranged in the main dining room and the staff have their own special Christmas meal and party.

If you have the pleasure of visiting this interesting building, look out for the cherubs holding dill flowers in reference to Dulwich 'where the dill grows' and the scroll at the bottom of the resident knight (located downstairs) which reads, 'Loyal, faith, joyous, laughter' reflecting the very heart and ethos of Belair House.



# Preparation for a Baptism

**by Diana Stoney**



For some, the decision to baptise your child is so natural, that it may require no deliberation at all. For others, a great deal of thought and contemplation is involved. Baptism provides an opportunity to reflect upon not only your personal faith, but that of your child's and your growing family. You are making decisions about the environment your children will grow up in. You're also acknowledging the values and beliefs that are important to your family. It is no wonder sharing that kind of intimate moment can seem daunting.

For first time parents, being thrust into new social circles such as NCT, play groups and postpartum fitness classes, you may find yourself bonding with wonderfully different people. This new found diversity can present unusual challenges. It might be uncomfortable to talk about baptism and religion with new friends. Are you at risk of jeopardizing these new relationships you've worked so hard to create? Honestly, I felt as though Christenings were not something my contemporaries considered anymore. Would friends and family understand our decision? But my anxiety soon vanished! Having been married at St Stephen's not so long ago, we quickly resumed a warm rapport with Bernhard. We felt so welcome and at ease.

We popped into the office one Saturday morning to discuss the baptism, organise dates, and outline the general process, and I was pleasantly surprised to find that it felt like a lovely catch up with a familiar friend. So after sorting some brief paperwork, and explaining our reasons for choosing to baptise our son, the main items to focus on were selecting Godparents and preparing for a 'home visit'.

Choosing Godparents allowed us to fold important people into the fabric of our family. We were also providing a broader network of love and support for our son, with people who would reinforce our values. It's such an awesome responsibility, and quite fun thinking about the impact they will have on shaping his future. Will they buy him his first beer some day!



As for the 'home visit', there was a bit of a subconscious sigh of relief upon realising that we weren't in trouble, or being inspected! The vicar wasn't coming to scold us – quite the opposite; we ate shortbread and had big-belly laughs at the misadventures of parenthood. Dare I say it was good fun! I'd be remiss not to add a word of wisdom to those who are preparing for such an occasion themselves; Bernhard prefers salty treats over a sweet tooth. You're welcome!

Of course there was a reception and celebration to organise, out of town guests to accommodate, a litany of wardrobe queries, a journey into the depths of IKEA for party decorations and three dozen double fudge cheesecake brownies to bake.

Perhaps slightly symbolic of his journey through life, nothing captures the essence of the day better than my son's clothes: he started the day in pristine white, and he ended it in double fudge cheesecake! What a wonderful way to begin his Christian life!






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# So how should we look after our Christmas Trees?

**By Roger Cocks, Secret Garden**



The nights are drawing in, and we huddle down for the Christmas season.

As the big day approaches, a lot of our attention turns to Christmas trees. These plants have been used to celebrate winter festivals for hundreds of years, as the evergreen branches symbolised the coming of spring during the long, dark days. In the modern days of electricity, when artificial light is constant and eternal, the tree can be turned into a shining focal point for family celebrations.

Having an evergreen tree has traditionally been a challenge, as the quick growing, thereby economic, Norwegian spruce would drop its foliage in hot and dry houses. Nowadays we have effective ways of preventing this problem, plus the availability of different and better varieties of fir tree, mean that needles all over the carpet are less likely.

So, how do we stop needles dropping? If you put cut flowers in water to prolong their longevity, why not do the same for a cut Christmas tree? The same idea applies. Some people use a bucket, or similar, which holds water and sand/bricks etc. Not an elegant solution.

The simplest way is with a tree stand, which holds water as well as maintaining the stability of the tree. Very easy to use, from one Christmas to another. The bigger the tree, the larger stand. At The Secret Garden we wrap your Christmas tree so that it is easy to take home. Place the tree in the stand, clamp it upright, remove the wrapping and finally add water. Easy!

Ideally, you should keep your tree outside in the cold and damp, taking it into your very warm home as late as possible.

Even the "non-drop" trees need water, and they will drop a few needles. The most common tree is the Nordman fir (Abies Nordmanniana), originally from the Caucasus Mountains in Turkey, which will grow into a lovely tree, unlike the Norwegian spruce. If you do buy a growing tree to keep and plant in the garden, this is the one to have.

Noble Fir (Abies Procera) is another conifer which makes a good Christmas tree. Not so easy to grow as the 'Nord', but it has more fragrance although a bit more irregular in shape.

'Blue Spruce' could be almost anything, although Picea Pungens Glauca is the bluest conifer, normally sold as a small pot grown tree. Pot grown, or container grown, trees have all their roots and will continue to live, but are rarely more than one metre tall.

'Potted' Christmas trees are usually dug up and then severely root pruned to fit the pot. Their chances of survival in the following year are slim.

Apart from trees, you can decorate your home with garlands and wreaths made from pine and holly. Ideally keep them in a cool place, away from heat and mist with water regularly.

The Secret Garden has lots of Gisela Graham decorations for your home and tree, plus lights of course. Happy Christmas! Let us help you to choose your best Christmas Tree ever, find us at... Westow Street, Upper Norwood.



# Well no, I was not expecting to find myself...

## By Rev Dr Rebecca Lloyd


http://www.caritas.org/2015/11/seas-and-walls-why-do-people-migrate/

We have all seen the distressing pictures on the news of refugees struggling across the Mediterranean only to be trapped at various holding points in Europe. In September I was visiting a friend in Vienna and saw the refugee crisis first-hand.

I hadn't planned it: I was on my way to the Haydn Museum, which happens to be near the Westbahnhof, one of Vienna's main stations. When my tram pulled into the station I realised that this was one of the places that refugees were stuck, since both Germany and Austria had just closed their borders. There were about 1000 refugees patiently waiting under signs for cancelled trains. Most seemed to be travelling in family groups, everyone from the elderly to babies, lots of women and children. Bizarrely, the normal life of the station continued around them: cafes, shopping, commuting.

I followed a sign for Caritas, the Austrian equivalent of CAFOD the Roman Catholic relief agency, and found a busy hub to the side of the station where young volunteers were collecting and distributing food, medicine and clothing. There were also volunteer translators helping the refugees deal with the city authorities or claim asylum. Local churches had been transformed into night shelters. The slogan was 'immediate and unbureaucratic help'. Anyone arriving to assist was asked to write a name badge and plunge in.

My German is terrible but I managed to ask what I could do and was sent in search of baby bottles and medication. Later I helped source food, bottled water, shampoo and other necessities. I never made it to the museum. That night I told several friends back home about the situation and they kindly sent a total of €550 which I gave to the volunteers the next day, to use as they thought best in meeting immediate needs. One thing the experience really brought home to me was the wide age range and demographic of the refugees. There were lots of women, children, and elderly people, contrary to some news reports, which have suggested that it is mostly young men who take this perilous journey.

Caritas, and the wider Church, are helping lead the response to the refugee crisis because they have the ability to organise volunteers quickly and the motivation to care. 'I was hungry and you gave me food... I was a stranger and you welcomed me... just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me' (Matthew 25).

The Church in this country, and in our own Diocese of Southwark, has been trying to do what we can to help. In November the Bishop of Southwark visited the Jungle camp at Calais to help distribute donated goods. The last thing I saw as I left the station in Vienna to return to the airport was a memorial giving thanks to the British people for the Kindertransport, which saved so many Jewish children in World War II. It felt very poignant in context. Europe is facing the biggest refugee crisis since then, and I feel we must do whatever we can to help.


http://www.amnesty.org.uk/refugees-welcome-UK-email-MP

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# How A Chocolatier Prepares for Christmas

**By Diana Stoney**

It was a rainy day. It was a sunny day. It was a typical London day. But behind the doors of Rococo Chocolates, quietly nestled on the edge of West Dulwich, it was anything but a typical day! Since Rococo Chocolates was founded in 1983 by Chantal Coady OBE, they have been at the forefront of the British Chocolate Industry.

Perhaps it's the influence of the beloved Roald Dahl story, but I couldn't help but feel like something quite spectacular was going to happen as I entered the bustling chocolate factory. I wasn't greeted by an 'Oompa Loompa,' but rather the lovely Natalie Kendall, Marketing Coordinator for Rocco Chocolates Ltd.

Whilst visions of chocolate bonbons swirled in my head, Natalie was kind enough to share some insight as to how the cherished chocolatier prepares for Christmas.

"What is Rococo doing to prepare for Christmas this year?" I asked.

"Our chocolatiers have been hard at work for months already, hand-piping our Christmas lollies and decorating our Couture Christmas trees. There have been lots of boxes to pack and ribbons to tie, so our packing team has been busy too. We try to get things done early as there are always last minute extra requests from the shops right up to Christmas Eve."



"So, what is the most popular item for this time of year, please Natalie?' "Chocolates for stocking fillers are very popular. Our bestsellers include our organic Mini Bee Bars (which come in 15 different flavours), our handmade Christmas lollipops and huge milk chocolate gold coins. Our special, seasonal hand painted figurines are always popular too, this year we have Santa in a shiny blue Bugatti car and snowmen wearing top hats and bright red scarves!"

"Are there any unique flavours you make for the occasion? Or extra ordinary treats?" 'This year we have created a collection of chocolate baubles, each festive design is made with a different type of chocolate - including a delicious caramel milk chocolate. You can choose your favourite colour, favourite chocolate and have a mixture on your tree this year."

"What is YOUR favourite chocolate tradition associated with this holiday?" I asked her. "The Director's Lunch at Head Office, hosted by our founder Chantal Coady OBE, is always a highlight for us. Of course, there's always a chocolate element to the dinner. This year, Chantal is already creating an infusion with cocoa nibs to make chocolate martini drinks!"

Where can our readers find your chocolates this December? "Our factory shop at C4 Parkhall Business Centre, SE21 8EN, will be open throughout the festive period. We're open Monday – Friday, 9am – 4pm. We also have 4 shops in London: Belgravia, Marylebone, Chelsea and our newest pop up shop, near St Paul's. Our Chocolate fairies are always on hand to help too, if you need gift advice or want to order over the phone, call 020 3691 5719."

"Yes we do sell vegan and low sugar treats!"

How amazing to find such wonderful Christmas chocolate choices being made here in Dulwich. I hope I find some in my Christmas stocking!





# Christmas 2015 at St Stephen's

## *December*

### *Thursday 3*

*7.30pm* **Theology in the Pub** - *'What is the point of Christmas? The Wood House, Sydenham Hill (the old Dulwich Wood House)*

### *Sunday 13*

*6pm* **9 Lessons and Carols** *with the St Stephen's choir and readers from our community*

### *Christmas Eve - Thursday 24*

*4pm* **Blessing of the Crib Service** *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** *with the St Stephen's choir*

### *Christmas Day - Friday 25 December*

*8am* **Holy Communion** *(BCP)*

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

## 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*

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### Kingswood Community Baptist Church

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

*Sunday 13th*
10:30am Christmas play

*Sunday 20th*
10:30am Christmas Carol Service

*Christmas Eve - Thursday 24th*
7:30pm - 9:30pm Christmas Eve Service

*Christmas Day - Friday 25th*
10:00am Christmas Morning Service

*Thursday 31st*
9:00pm New Year's Eve, Night Vigil

*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

### St Margaret Clitherow RC Church

4 Kingswood Drive, SE19 1UR
Fr. Leonard Tatt
Parish Priest (020) 8670 1639

*Christmas Eve - Thursday 24*
6.30pm Children's Mass
11.30pm Midnight Mass with Carols

*Christmas Day - Friday 25*
9.00am Brazilian Chaplaincy Mass
10.30am Christmas Day Mass

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

*www.stmargaretclitherowdulwich.org*



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