

SPIRE

St. Stephen's
Community Magazine
Christmas 2010
Issue 7

InSpire:

No Crib For A Bed
A message from the Vicar's desk

Have Yourselves A Merry Little Christmas
Taking the Stress out of Christmas

Rocking Around The Christmas Tree
Christmas Party Games

I'm Dreaming of a Green Christmas
Recycling for Christmas

Freeze Thy Blood Less Coldly
Help For The Homeless



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WELCOME

Peter Benton
Editor



In this, our Christmas issue, we offer you a variety of reflections on the festive season.

Bernhard takes a look at the part the crib scene plays in our celebrations and offers us a Christmas challenge, while Nick pays a visit to the Manna Centre in Bermondsey which works with the homeless.

Elsewhere our piece on party games strikes a traditional note and there is also valuable advice on how to make the festive season as peaceful as possible.

Whilst we may all be hoping for a white Christmas, our article on making it as green as possible will perhaps help us to minimise the environmental impact of our celebrations.

We look forward to welcoming you to St Stephen's this Christmas and details of all of our services can be found on the back cover.

P.S. Many thanks to those of you who expressed their appreciation of the article on our war veterans in the previous issue of Spire. We shall be looking at the exploits of some of our ex-servicewomen in a future issue.

Concert by Göttingen Boys Choir





Michael Daub, Goettingen Boys' Choir parents' representative wrote: "After the trip to Dulwich, Facebook was alive with chatter about how much the visitors had enjoyed themselves. Each of the 49 boys really enjoyed staying with their host families; this will be a lifelong memory for them. They loved the freedom of roaming in small groups around London, they loved singing to a packed church twice during their visit – and they loved the fish and chips provided by St Stephen's Social Committee."



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.



Christmas Bazaar

Saturday 4th December
12-3pm in the church hall

Father Christmas, cakes, home produce, stalls, tombola, raffle





St Stephen's Church
College Road, Dulwich, London SE21 7HW
Tel: (020) 8766 7281
Office open on Saturday 10.30-11.30
Vicar - Revd Bernhard Schünemann
vicar@ststephensdulwich.org
Curate - Revd Nick Davies
curate@ststephensdulwich.org
Reader - Mrs Trot Lavelle
trotl@ukonline.co.uk
Churchwardens
Joan Greenwood & Patrick Robathan
churchwarden1@ststephensdulwich.org
Vicar's secretary - Gill Burdett
ParishOffice@ststephensdulwich.org

Looking for a venue for your party or group?

St Stephen's Millennium Hall: available to hire from £35/hr. To book contact Mrs Joy Parkinson on (020) 8670 5373 or hallbookings@ststephensdulwich.org

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

No crib for a bed

Revd Bernhard Schunnman

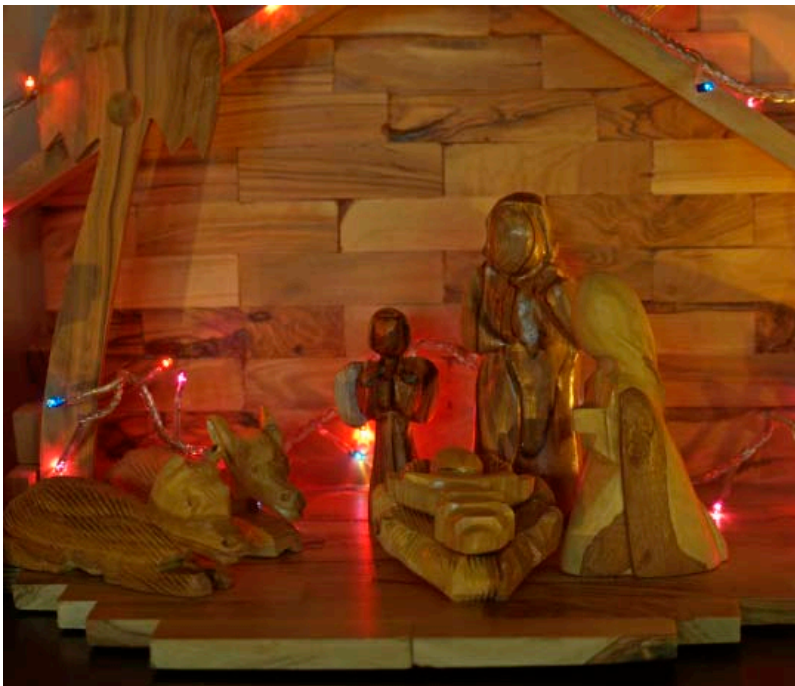


It was St Francis of Assisi in the early 13th century who popularised the idea of putting together a crib scene as a tableau, a painting or with special figures. He felt that the intimacy of the story of Christmas could really only be brought home to people by presenting it in strong and vivid visual terms.

From his day onwards building crib scenes in churches and homes, as well as in public places, has become popular and a challenge to designers and artists of every age. When I was a priest at St Martin-in-the-Fields I recall the public outcry when we could no longer guarantee the erection of the public crib in Trafalgar Square, because the people who had been storing it for us over the years were longer able to do so. 'No room for the crib' ran the headlines. I also remember an exhibition of cribs at my local museum, which was very moving indeed. There were beautifully carved cribs and crib figures from Bavaria and from all over the world, real works of art representing the crib devotion of the last 500 years. The African ones were new to me and very interesting, as they were generally carved in one piece from a large piece of wood, with all the figures close together, almost intertwined in relief. But the one that I remember as most moving was from a prison, made by an inmate who had moulded the figures out of left-over bread and let it dry, a touching expression of a fragile faith and a deep longing to be intimate again with God.

What is the point of all this? The point is surely this: at Christmas everything focuses on the one event that is both most ordinary and most extraordinary – the birth of a human being. I will certainly never forget the births of my own children, arguably the most special moments of my life, and yet babies are born everywhere, all the time, all over the world. I would like to leave you with this challenge: it is at Christmas that God became human – but what about us? Isn't it time that we did the same? Let's do it like God, let's become human. There is so much inhumanity in our world and in our neighbourhood and we, as individuals, must take some responsibility for this. Perhaps Christmas might inspire us to take the time to re-think some of our own inhumanities and become human again?

Have a wonderful Christmas and many blessings to you and your families.



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Taking the Stress out of Christmas

by Linda Christian-Edwards

"..the angel said to them, "Don't be afraid! I am here with good news for you, which will bring great joy to all the people. This very day in David's town your Saviour was born – Christ the Lord!"" **Luke 2.10 – 11**

"A lovely thing about Christmas is that it's compulsory, like a thunderstorm, and we all go through it together." **Garrison Keillor**



Christmas can be a difficult time, whether you are a stressed out mother trying to give the perfect experience to your family, or someone who is unable to be with family or friends. Whatever your situation, I believe the pressure and lack of joy comes from the gap between our expectations and our experience. Whether you have faith or not, it is possible to have a more spiritual and peaceful Christmas by stepping back and reflecting on what is important.

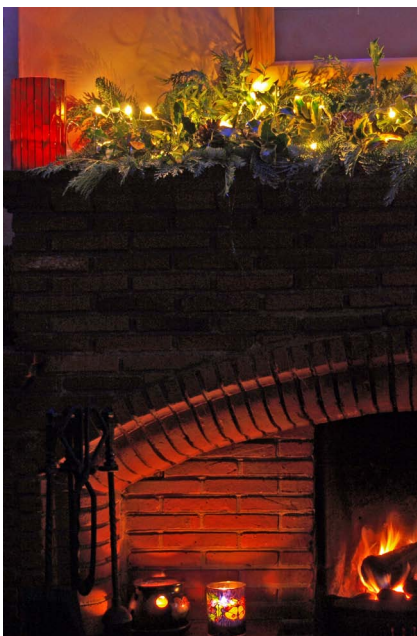
This year try for a Christmas which is just 'good enough' rather than perfect. Scale down everything, from the budget to the meals - aim to spend less and feel more. Why not have a green or recycled Christmas, or try out some of the parlour games on the page opposite. Aim to spend less and feel more.

Whatever preparation means for you, start much earlier than you think necessary and give it a lot of thought. Consider invitations, gifts, the location of celebrations, and any areas of potential tension and their avoidance. Delegate tasks and assign roles – make sure everyone has something to do to contribute towards the celebrations.

Reflection: Whatever you need to do to be open to the possibility of joy and peace, take the necessary steps – I know I need to plan and prepare in order to slow down so that I can actually enjoy proceedings. For you it may mean keeping a well-meaning, but infuriating sister out of your kitchen. It may be finally tackling your mother-in-law about her habit of bringing an extra turkey to Christmas dinner, or forgiving her. Remember when you are in the midst of all that chaos that there may be those who would welcome it.



It can be hard to address the spiritual side of our natures, but whether you wish to serve God or to honour an ideal such as kindness, consider those around you. Don't be too proud or selfish to invite those who are facing spending Christmas alone. Perhaps make a donation of cash or time to a charity. Attending a church service is a lovely and familiar experience at Christmas time – this year do your best to listen with new ears.



Games for Christmas

by Jessica Davies



With all the present-wrapping, turkey-stuffing and bed-making required before guests arrive for Christmas, it is easy to forget how you all plan to get along in an over-heated house at a time of high emotion. Don't get me wrong – I know you all love your extended families – but the annual mix of batty great-aunt Beatrix, that lonely young American from the office, your truculent teenagers and the smaller kids high on toys and sugar can be pretty toxic.

Left to their own devices, this ill-assorted lot can turn Christmas into a disappointing, bad-tempered affair. Which is why they need organised entertainment in the form of old-fashioned parlour games. A round of charades is a brilliant ice-breaker. Two teams each compile a secret list of books, plays, films and operas. Team A then selects someone from Team B to mime one of the selected titles. Team B's job is to guess the title (very difficult if it's, say, "Coriolanus" or "Roget's Thesaurus"). The two teams then swap places and the game continues until everyone has had their moment on stage.



Another very funny acting game also involves two teams. One team leaves the room, while the other selects one of its number to act out a scene, such as bathing a baby, putting on its nappy, tucking it into bed. The exiled team now sends someone in to watch the mime, which they in turn have to act to a second member of their team. This person then mimes the scene (by now wildly different from the original) to a third team member, who mimes it to a fourth and so on. The last person to enter the room – having watched the final, hilarious version – has to guess what on earth the original mime was about. Needless to say, it's an impossible task.

"Are you there Moriarty?" where two blindfolded guests hit out at each other with rolled newspapers, will appeal to the violent, while more peaceable,



cerebral souls will enjoy Kim's Game, where players have to memorise assorted objects on a tray. Finding Your Partner is a superb way of kicking off a large Christmas gathering. First, compile a list of famous partnerships (eg Tom and Jerry; Dave and Nick); then stick a name on each guest's back as they arrive. Their task is to discover who they are and then track down their partner.

My personal favourite is the Poetry Game, which sounds high-minded – but isn't at all. Everyone sits down with a pencil and paper and writes a line of verse. They then pass the paper to their neighbour who writes a second line, before folding the paper over the first line and passing it on. The poems develop in this way to a pre-determined length, with each player having sight only of the one line written before theirs. The resulting poems are always completely mad – gales of laughter guaranteed.

Manna from Heaven

By Rev Nick Davies



In the weeks before Christmas St Stephen's, together with other churches in Dulwich organise an appeal for local homeless charities. This year, we are supporting the Manna day centre.

Hidden away in the back streets behind London Bridge Station and overshadowed by the fast-rising Shard skyscraper, the Manna day centre has been offering practical help to homeless people for over twenty years.

Each morning the doors open at half past eight for breakfast. Along with a hot meal, those visiting the centre can have a shower, see a dentist or a nurse, get housing advice or even choose items of furniture to help set-up home. Later in the morning lunch is served and most days over two hundred people come through the door.

The centre is run by Bandi Mbubi, "We try to offer a range of services to people here. If you have no fixed address it can be very hard to get to see a GP. For me this is a way of showing practical Christian love. As it says in James, what is faith without deeds?"

Bandi is enthusiastic – and he needs to be, as numbers visiting the centre seem to be rising. When asked about possible cuts in funding, Bandi remains optimistic, "We decided never to take more than 15% of our funding from the government. For the rest we rely on donations, particularly from the Christian community. We were championing the 'Big Society' long before the government. So, we hope for the best."

One of those using the centre is Tony, who has been on the streets for eight years. "At the Manna centre you get treated with respect. It is tough on the streets, there are a lot of people with mental health problems and people coming to London thinking that the streets are paved with gold, but it's not like that. A few years ago, I came to the centre in pain, saw one of the nurses, got to see a GP and ended up getting a hip replacement by a top surgeon."

The centre is open seven days a week, fifty one weeks of the year, only closing when Crisis at Christmas open-up their temporary shelters. Bandi explains, "Winter is hard for the homeless. Those on the streets become ill, those in temporary housing often cannot afford the heating. Before we close for Christmas we have a big Christmas meal, usually with three sittings. For those who come this really is special and everyone who comes receives a wrapped present – often donated by schools and churches. It's what Christmas is about."

Financial donations for the Manna Centre or wrapped Christmas presents can be left at St Stephen's during December. Gifts that help keep out the cold such as jumpers, socks or gloves, are always welcome, as are jeans or trainers, either new or second-hand. Presents that lift the spirits – good quality sweets or chocolate for example – are much appreciated. The Church is open for services and between 9-2 on Wednesday and Friday and 10.30 -11.30 on Saturday.









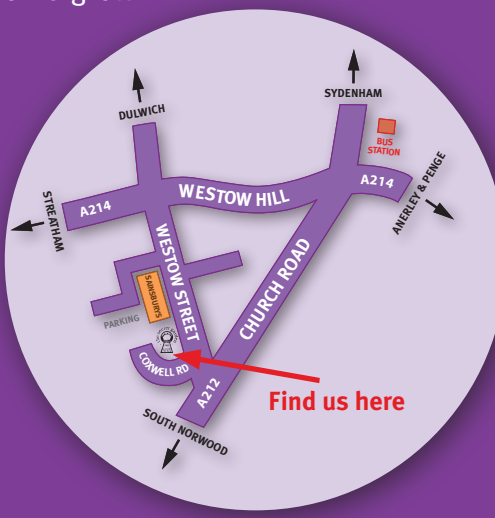



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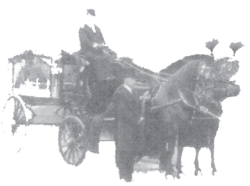
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St Stephen's day pie

Rachel Allen (BBC)

Ingredients:

30g butter, 1 large finely chopped onion, 275 ml double cream, 100ml chicken or turkey stock, 450g sliced mushrooms, 1tbsp tarragon or marjoram, 675g cubes of cooked turkey and ham

For the mashed potato: 1.2kg potatoes, knob of butter, 1 free-range egg yolk, 3tbsp milk, salt and freshly ground black pepper

Method:

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C/gas 4.
2. In a large saucepan, melt the butter and add the chopped onion. Season with salt and freshly ground black pepper and cook, without browning, on a gentle heat for 8-10 minutes, until the onions are soft.
3. Add the cream and stock and bring up to the boil and simmer for a few minutes to thicken.
4. Meanwhile, in a separate frying pan, heat the mushrooms with a knob of butter for 3-4 minutes, or until soft and golden brown.
5. Add tarragon or marjoram to the mushrooms and season. Add the meat to the mushrooms and stir well.
6. Meanwhile, place the potatoes in a saucepan of boiling water and cook until soft. Drain the potatoes and return them to the saucepan. Mash roughly and then add the butter, egg yolk and milk and mash to a thick paste. Season, to taste.
7. Pour the cream, mushroom and meat mixture into a shallow gratin dish and top with the mashed potato.
8. Place in the oven for about 20-30 minutes until the potato topping is golden brown and the filling is hot.

A Recycled Christmas

by Kate Shipp



I love Christmas. Mostly. A time for the family, for giving, sharing and being together. But for some Christmas has become an extravaganza of consumerism – all hail to indulgence and the cult of Santa. God may have made Adam the tiller of the land and yet this Christian festival has become an eco-disaster. Natural resources are turned into 3 million tonnes of festive waste in the UK alone.

If you would like to do something about it, perhaps some of the following ideas for reducing, reusing and recycling might help.

Incredibly, the UK uses enough wrapping paper each Christmas to cover the island of Guernsey. Most of it will be torn open, discarded and end up in landfill. What a waste. Nobody ever said "Rubbish present, but the wrapping was fantastic'. We use newspaper or tissue tied up with string or ivy and sticky tape. That way it goes straight into the recycling after its 30 seconds of glory. *(Ed's note: Ivy contains falcarinol, which may cause contact dermatitis in some people).*

The British throw away vast quantities of the food they buy at Christmas. Its only three days folks – is it really necessary to buy all that stuff? You can have a roast with extra trimmings and vegetables and the next day use the leftovers in a Christmas pie, a curry, or for soup. We make a chocolate Christmas cake and biscuits, but wait to receive chocolates as gifts rather than buying our own.

Crackers, paper napkins and table decorations can all become more landfill. We use a real tablecloth and holly and ivy to decorate the table. We customise our own hats instead of paper ones and have a Christmas bonnet parade. It's fun.

Gifts. We never buy new and funnily enough, never have complaints – after all, vintage is in vogue. Far better to really think about someone's interests rather than just spend money. Crystal Palace has a fantastic array of second-hand shops, from the modern antiques of Jasper Road to the Aladdin's cave of Hayes Lane market via Church Road, there really is something for everyone. Or we make presents – biscuits, jam and chutney, old framed photos, all made with love not money.

Children. Well, it's hard, with all those TV advertisements, but



think about what they're going to play with and what they need and do think twice about buying anything plastic. Have a selection box as a stocking filler. You can always buy on eBay or swap toys with like-minded parents. It does children no favours to be spoilt and after all, you will be giving them a more sustainable future for Christmas.



Teacher and film-maker, Kate Shipp has salvaged and bought second-hand items since the 1980s for both aesthetic and environmental reasons. The Recycled House, created with Mark Hill, promotes elegant living with minimal environmental impact and was featured in the Guardian Weekend in 2005

December and Christmas at St Stephen's

Sunday 12th

4pm Christingle Service
a service specially suited to children of all ages

Sunday 19th

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 & mince pies

Christmas Eve – Friday 24th

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 - Saturday 25th

8am Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer)
10am Christmas Day Parish Service

St Stephen's Day Sunday 26th

8am Holy Communion
10am St Stephen's Day Mass

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

Kingswood Community Church

Langbourne School

Sunday 19th

10.30am Carol Service

Sunday 26th

10.30am Christmas Service

St Margaret Clitherow RC Church

Christmas Eve

Midnight Mass - Carols 11.45pm

Christmas Day

Mass 10.30am

Boxing Day 26th

Mass 10.30am

Portuguese Mass each Sunday in December from 9am

Carol Singing Saturday 18th

3.30pm
Local Churches carol singing at the shops on Seeley Drive