



Christmas 2019

THE MESSENGER

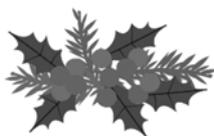
Story time

A four year old child can understand something the most sophisticated form of artificial intelligence can't. They can understand a story. A story doesn't just convey information, it takes you on a journey. And when you listen to a good story your eyes widen, your pulse quickens, your breathing changes, and maybe your stomach churns. In other words, to understand the meaning of a story you need a body, and an imagination. A four year old has those and a robot doesn't.



At Christmas we remind ourselves of the greatest story ever told. The story that makes sense of our lives, and of all the other stories we tell. All of us have to decide what story we are ultimately characters in. Are we each unique and precious, created by a God who stepped into history in a stable in Bethlehem to save the world? Or are we an accidental meeting of molecules that come together for a while, but end up in an infinite, dead void?

Which is your story?



Christmas Diary for St Michael's

Throughout December, January and March we are helping to run the Greenwich Winter Night Shelter project. 7 churches in Greenwich come together to provide shelter, food and warmth to the homeless during the coldest months of the year. "Our" venue is OneSpace in Kidbrooke which runs on Wednesday evenings to Thursday mornings. Volunteers are very much needed please visit www.gwns.org.uk to find out more and hopefully perhaps offer help if you can. You would be so welcome.

The Spire' is a weekly community space for local people, on Wednesday afternoons 1:30-3:30pm in the church hall. Tea, Coffee & board games (scrabble /cards /jigsaws) are available. A warm welcome awaits. More information from the church office. It will be particularly cosy coming up to Christmas.

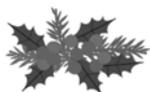
1 Dec	10.30pm: Advent Carols and Toy Service
2 & 3 Dec	Christmas Journey at St Michael's – we are sorry but only for booked schools.
22 Dec	10.30am: Children's Nativity 6.30pm: Carol Service —A traditional carol service with mince pies & mulled wine afterwards in our halls
24 Dec	3.30pm: Christingle Service 4.30pm: Follow the donkey through Blackheath then carols outside All Saints Church 11.15pm: Midnight Communion
25 Dec	9am: Book of Common Prayer Communion Service 10.30am Worship Together-A 45min service for all ages

CHURCH SERVICES

St Michael's is a Church of England Church. Our main morning service is at 10.30am. The first Sunday of the month is a shorter all age service, and on the other Sundays children leave for their own groups after about 15 minutes. There is a crèche for under 3's.

On the second and fourth Sunday of the month the service includes Communion.

The evening service is at 6.30pm and it is quieter and more reflective. Communion is celebrated on the first and third Sundays of the month. There is a Book of Common Prayer Holy Communion service at 9am on the fourth Sunday of each month.



From the Registers

Baptisms

- 5 May - Jonah Maxwell
McKenzie Antonio
- 7 July - Petra Moyosore
Ajayi
- 7 July - Ezra Ifeoluwa Ajayi
- 22 Sept - Dottie Patricia
Mary Mahoney and Elodie
Yasmine Veall
- 27 Oct - Constance
Rosemary Dockar
- 3 Nov - Ella Fourie
- 24 Nov - Percival Francis
Corcoran

Wedding

- 1 June - Frankie John
Raymond and Jemma Louise
Wines

Funeral

- 28 November - Tim Morgan

It Came upon a Midnight Clear

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests." (Luke 2:13)

As we enter Advent, it is not long before we will hear Christmas carols all around us - whether carol singers at train stations or on the street, shops hoping to put customers in a festive mood, or carol services in churches throughout London. The carol 'It came upon the midnight clear' has a beauty as it is, in a sense, a carol about Christmas carols and their eternal significance.

It was to the shepherds on a 'midnight clear' that the first true Christmas carol breaks out: that is, the song of the angels announcing the birth of Jesus, singing "Peace on the earth, goodwill to men". The peace on earth is both 'vertical' and 'horizontal': the angels are announcing that through Jesus we can have peace with God, and from that flows the possibility of true and lasting peace with one another.

In God's presence there is always singing; delight in who He is and all He has done, a place of peace and joy. The song of the angels is the song of eternity, the veil of heaven momentarily lifted for the shepherds to glimpse the glory of God and delight in his goodness. The song of the angels breaks into a world that is often far from peace and joy. The song jars with how we treat each other and how we treat the world, far from "peace on earth" and "goodwill to men". It continues the song is sung "o'er all the weary world; above its sad and lowly plains". The third verse reads;

"Yet with the woes of sin and strife
The world has suffered long;
Beneath the angel-strain have rolled
Two thousand years of wrong"

In fact, the wrongs of the world 'deafen' us to the promise of the love and peace that God offers us:

"And man, at war with man, hears not
The love-song which they bring"

The glorious final verse, though, completes the story. For the "days are hastening on" when despite the seemingly endless wrongs of humanity there is a future hope. That is the second Advent, when God himself will establish "peace...over all the earth".

"When peace shall over all the earth
Its ancient splendors fling,
And the whole world give back the song
Which now the angels sing."

As we sing carols this Christmas, we join in the song which the angels have been singing from eternity, singing out the glory of God and his promise of peace. And as we do so, we imagine that future in which the "whole world give[s] back the song, which now the angels sing".

Stuart and Joanna Ramsey

I'm Dreaming of a GREEN CHRISTMAS

Are you dreaming of a green Christmas? Follow our A-Z of tips and find out how you can enjoy the festive season without costing the earth.

A: Artificial trees might last longer but are non-recyclable, likely shipped great distances, and possibly made under dubious labour practices.



B: Batteries New gifts = new batteries. Batteries contain toxic chemicals, do not biodegrade and are difficult to recycle. Try using rechargeable batteries or AA/AAA USB rechargeable batteries.

C: Candles Candles made from soy, beeswax or vegetable-based wax will biodegrade and are smoke-free.

Cards Purchase charity cards which use recycled paper. Avoid glitter, it is a microplastic.

Clothes Over £12 billion of clothing is binned in the UK annually (The Times March 2018). Repair, swap, give away, buy less, give to a local charity shop.

Christmas trees Check your real tree is from a sustainable source e.g. British Christmas Tree Growers' Association, and, if possible, certified by The Soil Association as organic.

Recycle your tree after Christmas through your local council (it is free!)

D: Decorations Use recycled decorations, or those that are fairly traded and ethically sourced. Or get creative and make your own.

E: eco-bags Use cotton or hemp shopping bags and never forget to bring them with you

F: food shopping Think 'LOAF' Local, Organic, Animal Friendly.

Turkeys from Brazil, vegetables from Africa, wine from Australia - the food and trimmings add up to between 200,000 and 500,000 miles. That is between 4 and 8 times around the world!

Buy local, buy less. Buy fruit and vegetables loose from grocers or SWOP shops. Ditch that plastic packaging.

K: keep your curtains closed. This keeps heat in and saves energy and money.

L: Christmas tree lights are left on for an average of 10 hours a day during the Christmas period. Turn them off when not needed and switch to LED.

P: Plastic-free check packaging, use a cotton eco-shopper, reuse old plastic bags.

Presents: Buy local as it supports small local suppliers and the local community, while minimising your carbon footprint. Buy something that will help wildlife e.g. bird boxes, bee hotels, wildflower seeds. Buy an "experience" e.g. cinema tickets, club memberships, gift tokens. Sponsor an animal, protect a bit of rainforest, dedicate a tree, give to a charity in their name.

R: Recycle, recycle, recycle, recycle.



T: Turn off appliances - at the mains, rather than leaving them on standby.

Turn down the thermostat by 1C. This save carbon and money, and resurrects the Christmas jumper.

U: Use the right-sized pan for cooking, and boil the kettle with only the amount of water you need.

W: Wrapping Foil, shiny, or highly decorated wrapping is non-recyclable. Try wrapping your gifts in brown paper, recycled paper, or newspaper. Or use a repurposed fabric gift bags (available from St Michael's Church on Sundays) which can be used for decades.

Your Carbon Footprint is for life not just for Christmas.

Catherine Ashcroft

Silent Night? Probably Not!

The Blackheath Children's Choir at St Michael's

Well, there's nothing silent about The Blackheath Children's Choir! After all, silence would be highly unlikely with a group of 35 very lively and enthusiastic 6-11 year olds, who all love singing and having fun!

This email from one member seems to sum up the atmosphere: "I love our choir...it's such fun!! I've made new friends, and I LOVE singing all the new songs!"

Enthusiasm and enjoyment are vital, of course, but in addition to giving the children an enjoyable musical experience, we also aim to teach them how to sing well, how to read music, and how to sing in a group. We introduce them to a very wide repertoire of music from across the world, spanning many centuries, and we give them the experience of singing to an audience, when they sing in church.



Our choir is free to attend. It was funded initially by a legacy given to St Michael's, whose explicit aims were to support work with children and young people. Now it relies on donations to pay for the professional musicians whose expertise ensure that the children receive high quality musical education.

St Michael's is very clear that this work with children should be of high quality, and that it is made freely



available to everyone. We have children in the choir from nine local schools, and we are constantly trying to reach more children and families, to encourage them to become part of our new musical community.

The choir is led by our inspirational Choir Director and professional musician, Evangeline Graham, ARCM. We meet every Thursday in term-time after school to rehearse, and the children sing in church monthly, including at our annual Christmas Carol service. We offer free afternoon tea for the choir children from 3.45-4.45 pm, and the children rehearse from 4.45-5.45pm. No previous musical experience is necessary.

Some of our children have attended the Choir since it started three years ago. Understandably their musical ability has increased significantly, and as numbers have grown over time, and their musical standards have improved; the Blackheath Children's Choir has entered its first competition- the Beckenham Festival. The children are very excited about this challenge, and are eagerly rehearsing their repertoire. We are planning more competitions and external singing opportunities for them in 2020!

One of the main highlights for the choir is our annual Christmas Carol service at St Michael's. The children sing several carols during this service, and we hope that you will come along to see the choir for yourself this Christmas.

Some of these carols may be familiar to you, others may be new, but you can be assured that the sheer joy of singing, and the enthusiasm and spirit of the children and will be very clear to everyone listening that evening. If you know a child who may be interested in joining our choir, please do email me: sarah@rosepeach.co.uk

St. Michael's: making time for the things that matter.

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