

## **PRESS RELEASE**

Subject: Christmas Events at Prince George

- Messiah
- Victorian Carols by Candlelight
- Special services on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day

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From: Prince George Winyah Episcopal Church

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Notes: This could be either a single piece or split into sections by event.

Photos are available on request: [jon@pgwinyah.org](mailto:jon@pgwinyah.org).

I have tried to provide something which might be immediately useable, but please edit / re-write as appropriate.

Thank you for your on-going support of Georgetown and the community's life here.

Jon Blamire

## **Faith, Family and Festivity – Christmas Traditions at Prince George**

### **Multigenerational Messiah**

For many people going to hear Handel's incredible and timeless masterpiece, 'Messiah', marks the start of Christmas. This year the Choirs of Prince George Winyah Episcopal Church invite the people of Georgetown to join them as they sing all of the Christmas section, plus popular solos and choruses, including 'Hallelujah', 'The trumpet shall sound', the 'Amen' chorus. In a 'tradition' started last year, there will be an opportunity for everyone to join in singing the 'Hallelujah' chorus as a finale and the church will even supply the music.

Singing in general and singing 'Messiah' in particular is something handed down through the generations at Prince George. This year there are three generations of the Doyle / Gates family, and many other two generation families. Mothers and fathers pass on their skills, love of the music and even specific solos from one generation to the next.

Soloists include Sarah Blamire (Alto), Jeremy Vause & Joe Nooft (Tenor) and Jason Hamshaw (Bass). Soprano solos will be sung by various members of the Junior Choir. Jim Calk will play the harpsichord and Joey Pittman is the trumpeter. The opening *Sinfonia* will be enhanced by strings, played the Gates family.

Whilst many love 'Messiah' simply as great music, it is the combination of the words (all taken from the Bible) and the music together that have made it so enduring in the church. In a full performance the whole Christian message is heard, the promise of, birth death and resurrection of the Savior, and a vision of the glory of heaven to come.

Speaking after a rehearsal, music director, Jon Blamire, said, “Every year the choirs and musicians here commit to singing the words of scripture in Handel’s great work. It’s hard work for everyone with a lot of extra practicing at home and I really admire the dedication of our singers. For weeks beforehand all some people seem to listen to in their cars are their practice CD, learning and perfecting the complex musical parts. In fact you could probably spot choir members as they drive around Georgetown – their the drivers singing ‘Messiah’! However, not everyone appreciates it – I recently arrived in the school parking lot to collect my daughter, and caused much embarrassment as I sang loudly with the windows open – oh well”.

‘Messiah’ will held 6pm on Sunday at Prince George Winyah Episcopal Church, followed by a reception in the Parish Hall. A nursery is available.

*Possible accompanying photos:*

*PG Messiah 01.jpg – Bass soloist Jason Hamshaw rehearse with his six week old son, Benjamin, accompanied by music director Jon Blamire*

*PG Messiah 02.jpg – Bass soloist Jason Hamshaw rehearse with his six week old son, Benjamin.*

*PG Messiah 03.jpg – Part of the Junior Choir in rehearsal. Back row – Jed -Susanna – Nathan. Front row Tomas – Delacy – Stellings.*

*PG Messiah 04.jpg – Part of the Junior Choir rehearsal with Jon Blamire at the harpsichord. Back row – Stellings - Susanna – Nathan. Front row Tomas – Delacy – Jed.*

*PG Messiah 05.jpg – Jed works on his solo with Jon Blamire at the harpsichord.*

*PG Messiah 06.jpg - Stellings working on her solo with Jon Blamire at the harpsichord.*

*PG Messiah 07.jpg - Susanna working on her solo with dad, Jon Blamire, at the harpsichord.*

*PG Messiah 08.jpg - Susanna at the harpsichord, working on her solo with help from here mom, Sarah Blamire*

*PG Messiah 09.jpg – Basses and altos enjoy rehearsing the ‘Hallelujah’ chous.*

*PG Messiah 10.jpg – Friends and family. Three generations of Gates / Doyles and two generation of Culbertsons rehearse together*

## **Victorian Carols by Candlelight**

By popular demand singers from Prince George Winyah Episcopal Church are donning Victorian costume again to present an evening of carols by Candlelight with compline. All the music would have been familiar to Charles Dickens, author of the Victorian classic ‘*A Christmas Carol*’. There will be a mix of carols for the congregation to sing, some sung just by the carolers and a selection of solos, including the ever-popular ‘*O Holy Night*’, recorded by countless artistes from Pavarotti to Celine Dion and Mariah Carey.

Laura and Gary Gates swap their normal role as Lowcountry Preparatory School teachers to sing Soprano and Bass, and are joined by Jeremy Vause (tenor) and Sarah Blamire (alto), accompanied by Jon Blamire. Costumes are courtesy of Hopsewee Plantation.

The event takes place in the beautiful setting of the Prince George church, lit by candles. Jon Blamire commented, “I don’t quite know what it is about music and candlelight that is so attractive, but everyone seems to love it. Maybe it appeals to our sense of nostalgia for an era when the pace of life appeared slower and Christmas was more peaceful and less complex. Whatever it is, I hope that people come and are blessed by what we have to offer”.

Admission is free and refreshments will be served afterwards. Tuesday December 21<sup>st</sup>, at 7pm.

*Possible accompanying photos:*

*PG Victorian 01.jpg – Victorian Carolers Gary and Laura Gates sing to each other accompanied by Jeremy Vause and watched by Sarah Blamire.*

*PG Victorian 02.jpg – Smiles all round as the Victorian Carolers Jeremy Vause, Sarah Blamire, Laura and Gary Gates try on their costumes, courtesy of Hopsewee Plantation.*

## **Christmas – Always A Special Time**

Christmas Eve is always a special time: children counting down the hours and minutes in anticipation of Christmas Day and all the joy of gifts shared – moms wondering whether they really have everything ready in time – others anticipating a rest on the long weekend. And in the middle of all this excitement, is the traditional opportunity to stop and reflect on ‘the reason for the season’. In fact Prince George has three chances to stop and reflect. At 5pm the Pageant service attracts whole families to come hear again the Christmas story and sing well loved carols. This year the pageant is directed by Kitty Morgan, (originally from England and a trained dancer and choreographer), and music is led by the organ and band. For those wanting a quieter time to reflect, there are two other communion services, at 7:30pm and 11:30 pm, both with traditional music and language.

For anyone wanting to worship on Christmas morning, there is the chance to join members of Prince George residents of Plantersville and Bishop Fitz Allison at the Prince Frederick Summer Chapel, Plantersville Road, in Plantersville just off 701. The historic Prince Frederick chapel, is only open a few times a year, and has a beautiful sense of peace about it.

Rector of Prince George, Paul Fuener, comments, “At Prince George we follow the historic Christian faith, in a historic building, with a message which is relevant to the lives of people today. Our prayer this Christmas is that everyone in Georgetown will know the “peace on earth, to people of goodwill” of which the angels spoke at the birth of Jesus and give glory to God. Our doors are open!”