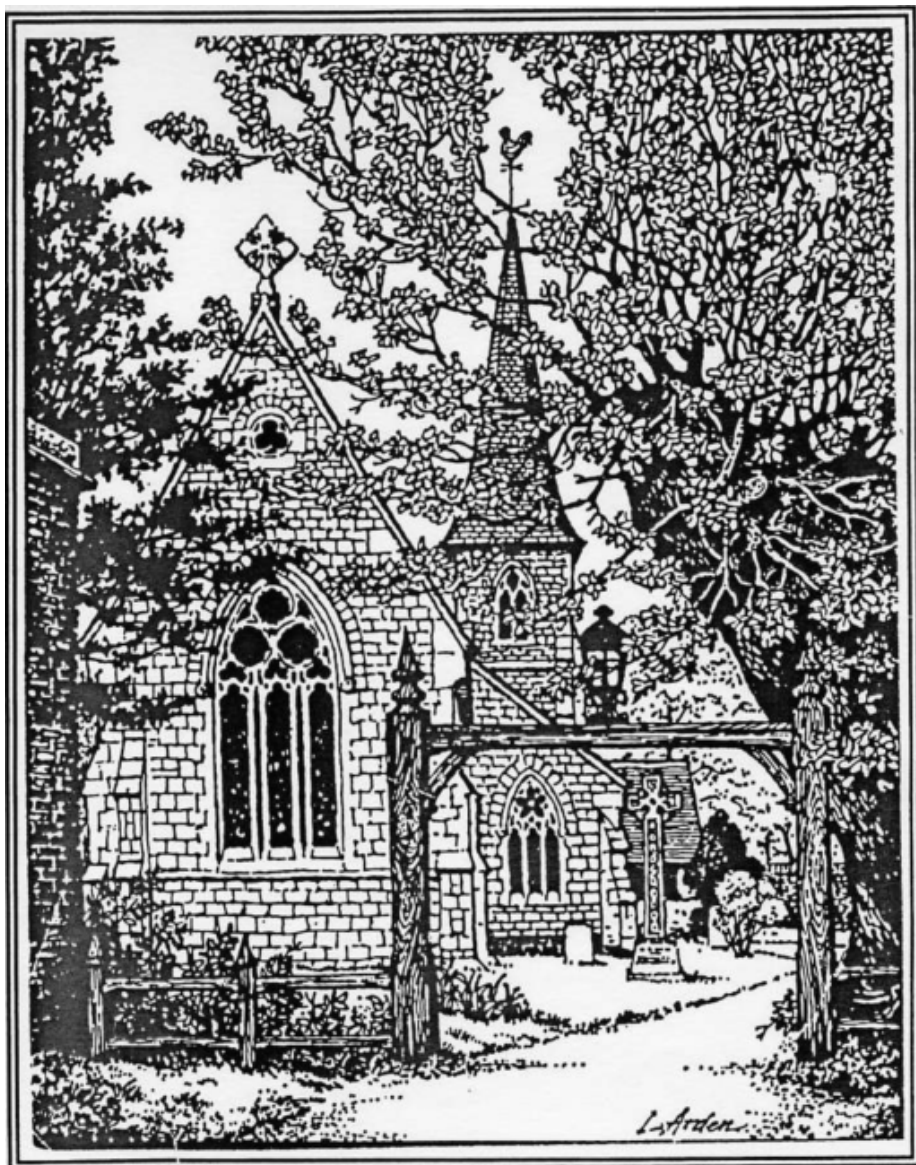


**The Parish Church of** **50p**  
***St. James, North Cray*** ***December, 2020***

*(Part of the Bexley Team Ministry)*



## St JAMES, NORTH CRAY PARISH STAFF

**Team Vicar:** Reverend Ren Harding 01322 528923  
The Vicarage, 6 Tile Kiln Lane,  
Joydens Wood, DA5 2BB  
renharding@hotmail.co.uk

**Lay Reader:** David Stevens 020 8300 0867

**Church Wardens:** Suzy Higgs 020 8302 5719  
suzyjhiggs@gmail.com

Maxine Heath 020 8468 7895  
maxinejheath@gmail.com

**Treasurer:** Position vacant

**PCC Secretary:** Rhonda Collins 020 8300 3797

**Sacristan:** Stephen Hills 020 8302 7236

**Bothy Bookings:** Lynne Meads 07966 315518

**Parish Safeguarding:** Rhonda Collins 020 8300 3797

**Magazine Editor:** Steve Blake  
sblakestjames@virginmedia.com

### St James Sunday Service

9.30am

Holy Communion

(All age service with Uniformed Organisations on second Sunday)

## TEAM RECTOR'S LETTER DECEMBER 2020



The Christian Church has been celebrating Christmas for many years.

The nature of the way we have celebrated has varied over the centuries, and the traditions have been different for different communities and cultures. At the heart of each one of them is the remembrance of the Christ-Child, born into the mess and muddle of human existence. God made man, God with us, Emmanuel.

So I can't agree with those who argue that Christmas is Cancelled this year. The Truth of Christmas can continue to be held in our hearts and in our homes, even though we cannot keep with our usual traditions.

At St James Church North Cray, things won't be the same as in other years, but we are determined to have the church building beautifully decorated and our Christmas Crib figures carefully placed, and (regulations permitting), we hope to have the church open for *either* Public worship or private prayer, on Sunday 20th December from 3pm to 5pm and on Christmas morning at 10am.

We can't have our usual packed Crib Service on Christmas Eve, but if you come to the churchyard anytime, on any day from Saturday 19 December, you will be able to join in with the Christmas Trail we are running jointly with the other three churches in the Bexley Team. There will be a simple Christmas Activity for you to join in with.

May you enjoy a very special and blessed Christmas!

**Reverend Ren Harding (Team Rector)**

contact me at Joydens Wood Vicarage,

6 Tile Kiln Lane, Joydens Wood, Bexley, DA5 2BB

01322-528923

[renharding@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:renharding@hotmail.co.uk)



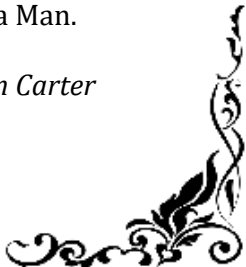
## **Christmas Foretold**

From untold glory to a manger of straw  
Who could imagine such a thing?  
From Eternity stepping down into Time  
With very few to welcome Him in.

Mary and Joseph, shepherds and wise men,  
In His mother's arms the Baby lies,  
Scripture describes these amazing events  
As prophecy unravels before our eyes

The Books of the Bible all tell of His coming  
His life, His death, redemption's plan,  
The King of glory revealed in God's Word  
Touching our earth in the form of a Man.

*By Megan Carter*



## **THE BOTHY**

**Are you looking for a small hall for a function?  
The Bothy (in St James Church Grounds) has all the facilities  
you need and can seat 35 people.  
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Lynne Meads on 07966 315518**

## BEXLEY TEAM MINISTRY

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. .”

**2 Corinthians 1:10-11 (NIV)**

### PRACTICAL ADVICE

**Wash hands frequently** with soap & water or alcohol-based hand rub. It has been suggested that instead of singing Happy Birthday to ensure we wash our hands for long enough - that we say the Lord's Prayer!

**Avoid touching eyes, nose & mouth** as this can transfer the virus.

**Stay informed (but not obsessively so!) on the latest developments about COVID-19.** Follow advice given by your own healthcare provider, your national and local public health authority or your employer. National & local authorities have the most up to date information for your area.

### A CALL TO PRAYER

*Wherever you are, and whatever your personal circumstances, we invite you to pause at midday each day, to join with your brothers and sisters across the Bexley Team Ministry to pray for our churches, our community, our nation and the world. We pray the prayer that unites all Christians, the Lord's Prayer. This is the Traditional version:-*

***“Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory; for ever and ever. Amen.”***

You may wish to use this prayer written by Malcolm Duncan of Spring Harvest: -

***“May you be given the gift of simple faith. When the world around you is full of uncertainty, may God remind you that you are not alone and you do not need to be dominated by fear. May you find peace amidst chaos from God's promises. Hold onto the God who holds you.”***

### **Pray for those infected or in quarantine**

*Loving Jesus may they feel your power of healing through the care of medical staff. Take away fear, anxiety, and feelings of isolation from people receiving treatment or under quarantine. Protect their families and friends and bring peace to all who love them.*

### **Pray for those at high risk**

*Dear Lord, we lift to you the elderly and people with chronic health conditions. Protect them from harm and be their comfort in this time of uncertainty.*

*Adapted from prayers of World Vision*

<https://www.worldvision.org/disaster-relief-news-stories/prayer>

## **WORSHIPPING AT HOME**

The following are resources which you may like to use as aids to your own personal prayer and worship. As the weeks progress we will make additions to the list via a weekly newsheet, and will endeavour to make these prayer resources available in paper form in the coming days.

If you have access to the internet this is a good site to visit.  
<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-liturgy-and-prayer-resources>

### **Radio 4**

Prayer for the Day @ 5.43 am – if this is too early for you it can be found at a time to suit you online at [bbc.co.uk](http://bbc.co.uk)

Daily Service Monday to Friday @ 9.45 am – on Longwave and DAB

Sunday worship @ 8.10am

Lent Talks Wednesday @ 8.45pm

### **Radio 3**

Choral Evensong Wednesdays at 3.30pm or Sundays at 3pm

### **Radio 2**

Pause for thought at 5.45 am and 9.20 am

### **Television**

Songs of Praise BBC1 Sunday at 1.15pm

Church of England. [churchofengland.org](http://churchofengland.org)

Live Lent Daily Reflections via internet, app or print. Daily Prayer via internet, app or print

The Bishop of Rochester has recorded a podcast, offering a theological reflection on the current situation. He explores where can we find refuge and comfort and how as Christians we can support others. Listen to it here:

<https://soundcloud.com/user-727736776/bishop-james-a-reflection-during-the-coronavirus>

There is an 'Alexa' smart speaker app to be used with a smart speaker  
Offers Prayer for the Day,  
Enables you to ask the Church of England for Prayers  
Enables you to ask questions of the Church of England

Other online resources which may be of interest:  
corrymeela.org has under its media tab some interesting and a wide range of short programmes based on biblical texts.

Northumbriacommunity.org has morning, midday and evening prayer for each day of the week.

24-7prayer.com lots of ideas on ways to help you pray and some interesting articles based on journeys of faith

Hillsong Worship - for those who enjoy modern worship there are plenty of YouTube videos

**Live streaming services** - users can watch live streams of services from a range of churches

[All Hallows by the Tower](#)

[Buckingham Parish Church](#)

[St Nicholas Church, Canvey Island](#)

[St James' Church, Clitheroe](#)

[St Mary's Kenton](#)

Canterbury Cathedral YouTube channel will stream The Daily Eucharist and Evening Prayer each day

Ren, is available to talk to anyone who is feeling the need of a church minister at this time, to talk over a difficult circumstance or to ask for prayer. We also have a resource that can be used at home if you are unable to attend a funeral because of the current restrictions, and a weekly newsletter that is going out on email, with news, reflections and prayers. All you need to do is ring, or email me (see inside cover) and I will do what I can to help, and I can also put you on the circulation list so you receive weekly information. Your email will not be given to anyone else.

Suzy Higgs, Churchwarden

## SERVICES AND EVENTS FOR DECEMBER 2020



*These times and dates may be changed in line with government guidance. Social Distancing and Hand Hygiene will be observed throughout the church buildings. Face masks **MUST** be worn.*

### **Wednesday 2 December**

10.00am

Bexley Team Midweek Communion at  
St John's Bexley

### **SUNDAY 6 December**

9.30am

Informal Communion with Baptism

### **Wednesday 9 December**

10.00am

Bexley Team Midweek Communion at  
St Mary's Bexley

### **SUNDAY 13 December**

9.30am

Toy Service

We will once again be supporting Bexley Women's Aid by donating the gifts from our Toy Service. They have particularly requested smaller toys, gift cards, stocking fillers and sweets or chocolates. Please bring your new, unwrapped gift to church on 13 December, you are welcome to leave it in the porch if you do not feel able to join us inside.

**PLEASE NOTE, WE HAVE POSTPONED OUR CHRISTINGLE SERVICE UNTIL EARLY NEXT YEAR, HOPEFULLY ON Sunday 31 January (Candlemas)**



### **Wednesday 16 December**

10.00am

Bexley Team Midweek Communion at  
St John's Bexley



### **Saturday 19 December**

Bexley Team Churches Christmas Trail for Families begins today!

For all the family to enjoy together, at whatever time suits you.

This replaces our Crib Services this year.

Follow an activity trail across the churchyards of each of our four parish churches.

### **SUNDAY 20 December**

9.30am

Communion Service

3pm to 5pm:

The Church will be open, decorated for Christmas and lit with candles. Please come and go as you please, to enjoy a quiet moment of reflection, and listen to a selection of Christmas music and readings

### **Thursday 24 December      CHRISTMAS EVE**

11.15pm

JOINT Midnight Communion at  
St Barnabas, Joydens Wood

### **Friday 25 December      CHRISTMAS DAY**

10am

Christmas Day Communion at  
St James North Cray

### **SUNDAY 27 December**

9.30am

A Simple Communion Service



# News and Issues



## **“God is with us in our pain and fear” – Bishop of London’s message of hope**

The Bishop of London, Rt Revd Sarah Mullally, has said that despite this being a time of “great uncertainty and challenge” as the world struggles to “overcome a devastating pandemic that has cut short earthly lives, destroyed livelihoods, and separated us from the people and activities we enjoy,” yet still “we are not without hope.”

Speaking recently in St Paul’s Cathedral, she said: “Through word, prayer, song and symbol, we are reminded that God’s love for us can never be destroyed. God is with us in our pain and fear and will lead us to a yet more glorious day.”

Bishop Sarah also praised the ongoing work of the “real heroes and heroines at work in intensive care units, the Emergency Department, oncology and elderly care wards.”

These people have been “giving their all, and are continuing to give their all, because we are still very much in the midst of the Covid pandemic.”

“Yet,” she went on, ‘The hope we have in our hearts as Christians is eternal. Hope that is in Christ will not be disappointed.’”

## **Parishes serving their communities**

Recently published Mission Statistics for 2019 show that parishes were already running or supporting 35,000 social action projects before the pandemic, serving communities across the country from lunch clubs for older people to parent and toddler groups and food banks.

More than 4,000 parent/carer toddler groups are run or supported by Church of England churches, while more than 5,000 churches run or

support lunch clubs, coffee mornings or similar hospitality for older people.



The figures also show the extent of church support for people living in food poverty, with nearly 8,000 food banks run or supported by Church of England churches. Nearly 60% of churches are involved in food bank provision, while nearly one in three reported either running, hosting or supporting a parent/toddler group. Other figures showed 2,700 churches involved in community cafes, 2,400 in night shelters and 2,300 in holiday or breakfast clubs. The findings show Church of England churches were involved in 35,000 social action projects, compared to 33,000 recorded in 2017. These figures for social action have been released alongside statistics showing that the number of regular worshippers attending church once a month or more decreased by 1% in 2019 to 1.11 million.

On average, 854,000 people attended Church of England services and acts of worship each week in October 2019, a decline of 2.1% compared to the year before. The additional number of people attending services for schools in Church of England churches rose by 3% to 182,000. Usual Sunday attendance fell by 2% to 690,000 in 2019. In 2019 there were nearly eight million attendances at Christmas and Advent services, and more than a million people attended Church of England church services at Easter.

### **More than £10m in grants to 66 churches and cathedrals**

The Church of England has welcomed the award of grants from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Historic England for grants amounting to £10.7m to 66 churches and cathedrals across the country.

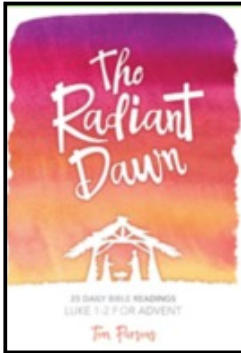
A total of 16 cathedrals and 50 parish churches will receive grants under the Culture Recovery Fund for Heritage. The grants will support churches and cathedrals, which would normally welcome millions of visitors each year, in ensuring organisational viability, covering costs incurred by Covid-19, and allowing for business planning and job retention.



# Book Mark



## **The Radiant Dawn – Luke 1-2 for Advent** **By Tom Parsons, 10Publishing, £3.99**



*You will conceive and give birth to a son ... And there were shepherds living out in the fields near by ... You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."*

Luke's opening chapters ring with the familiar well-loved lines that herald the warm solemnity of Christmas. This book on Luke's first two chapters will guide you through Advent in 25 daily Bible readings and prayers.

Lights sparkle in the darkness that enfolds the Northern Hemisphere at this time of year - until they are taken down and put back in the box in January. Luke points us to Jesus, the Radiant Dawn of a day that will never end. Let these Advent reflections direct your heart's gaze towards Him, who is the shining source of confidence and joy in whatever darkness we experience.

## **37 Kings and a Budgerigar** **By Richard Littledale, Authentic, £7.99**



For many of us, putting out a crib set is one of our treasured Christmas traditions. But what do these scenes really tell us about the original Christmas story?

Richard Littledale, a regular contributor to Daily Service and Sunday Worship on BBC Radio 4, shares reflections, Bible readings and prayers for each day of Advent, based on his own personal collection of nativity sets from around the world. Just like unexpectedly finding a figure of a budgerigar in one of his nativity sets, this accessible devotional will surprise you anew as you see the familiar nativity story with fresh eyes.

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**BRANCHES IN SOUTH-EAST LONDON, PETTS WOOD AND  
BIGGIN HILL**

## What Mary taught me

By Norma Murrain, of Silverfish Jewellery in Birmingham



*"And behold, you shall conceive in your womb and bring forth a son and call His name JESUS..."*

*(Luke 1:31)*

On 8<sup>th</sup> December Roman Catholics celebrate the feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. While non-Roman Catholics do not venerate Mary in the same way, we can still learn so much from the Mother of Jesus.

**Trust.** A woman's trust can only be built on an intimate relationship and strong communication over time. Mary therefore must have had a relationship with God for years prior to the visit by the angel Gabriel. She would have known the Jewish scriptures of the coming Messiah, and this enabled her to recognise God's will in the voice of the angel. (Luke 1:26-38) She trusted Him because she already knew Him.

**Willingness to obey.** She was willing to surrender to God's will, without even asking why He had chosen her. "Let it be to me according to your Word." (Luke 1:34) Her asking 'how' only reflected her willingness to obey Him. "How will this be," Mary said, "since I am a virgin." (Luke 1:34)

**Testimony.** It's one thing to say we believe God, but far harder to go and tell somebody about Him. Yet Mary did just that: "At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth" (Luke 1:39-40). And her cousin saluted her faith: "Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished". (Luke 1:45)

**Worship.** Finally, Mary worshiped, her poetic song full of love and reverence for God: "My soul magnifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my saviour..." (Luke 1:46)

This Christmas, as we remember Mary, what has God been able to conceive in us lately?

The Bible is clear that Jesus wants to implant His Holy Spirit into each one of us, so that we may live our lives in His presence, grow to become more like Him, and fulfil His particular will for our lives. Like Mary, our prayer can also be: "Let it be to me according to your Word" (Luke 1:34)



## 'The Christmas Trail' with the Bexley Team Churches

Christmas is going to look a little different this year, so we've decided to try a new and exciting adventure!

We're setting up four outdoor activity trails in the grounds of the churches. Each one will be different and will help us tell a part of the Christmas story.

From **Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> December - Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> January** you can visit each one of the church yards and take part in 'The Christmas Trail'. The trails are designed to be fully outdoors, family friendly and completely free. So we hope you come along and enjoy the Christmas story in a different way this year.

### Where can I find - 'The Christmas Trails

**'A Special Message!'**  
**St. Mary's Church,**  
Manor Rd, Bexley,  
DA5 3LX

**'Look to the Skies'**  
**St. John's Church,**  
Parkhill Rd, Bexley,  
DA5 1HX

**'Any Room in the Inn?'**  
**St. James's Church,**  
North Cray Road,  
DA14 5EU

**'Follow the Star'**  
**St. Barnabas Church,**  
Tile Kiln Lane,  
Joydens Wood, DA5 2BB

## #ComfortandJoy



# **MEETINGS and Events 2020**

Planning for The "Welcome to the Meadows"  
Educational Day which was scheduled for  
19th July 2020 is on hold.

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# A QUIZ ON 2020



1. Which famous actor who died this year is associated with the phrase “I am Spartacus?”
2. In February the Church of England advised against the practice of ‘intinction’ – what is it?
3. In a world “where you can be anything, be \_\_\_\_\_” – what, wrote actress Caroline Flack on Instagram in December 2019?
4. What were we supposed to do in March while singing the National Anthem or Happy Birthday twice?
5. This year was a leap year. What do we call other years?
6. Which village in the Peak District is associated with self-isolation during a previous plague?
7. How long, literally, is quarantine?
8. Why did President Macron visit Britain on 18<sup>th</sup> July? What other Anglo-French anniversary could he have remembered but for some reason it was not mentioned?
9. How many countries launched space rockets to Mars this year?
10. Who, in their resignation letter in August, on Twitter posted, “I have championed our work, built our relationships and celebrated the diversity of our staff... and will always be an ambassador for the UK and the new Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office” after a four year

career in Downing Street which had included scraps with a neighbour? He was going to spend more time with a family in the country.

11. Which day is the furthest away from Christmas Day?
12. What was the Battle of the Tennis Court and why was it remembered in August?
13. The BBC banned singing the lyrics from which song from the Last night of the Proms, because it had a link in their mind with slavery and colonialism?
14. This year marked the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the voyage of the *Mayflower*. What event did they start which led to a public holiday?

(Answers on pages 34 & 35)

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Email: davis54@btinternet.com

## Mistletoe

By Kirsty Steele, a retired teacher and active church organist



This time of year you can see all sorts of traditions played out with regard to Christmas decorations. Strict adherents use holly, ivy and of course, mistletoe. While holly and ivy are to be found in gardens and hedgerows, mistletoe usually only appears in greengrocers' shops, or high in a tree well out of reach.



Mistletoe is *hemiparasitic*, meaning that although its leaves enable it to feed itself through photosynthesis, its roots invade the host tree or shrub to extract water and other nutrients. Its

favourite host trees are apple, lime, hawthorn, poplar or oak and it normally hangs as a large globe, tantalisingly high and totally visible once winter arrives and it is the only green left on the tree. There are some spectacular examples in Windsor Great Park, clearly visible from the path on the opposite side of the River Thames.

We all know about the almost translucent white berries, fleshy and sticky, which form in the forks of mistletoe's many branches. While they are toxic to humans, they are attractive to birds. When birds have enjoyed the juicy flesh, they wipe the remaining seeds off their beaks onto the nearest branch [somewhat like small children wiping sticky hands on any surface close by – mummy's face or clothes?]. With luck the seed remains stuck to the bark and solves mistletoe's problem of reproduction.

In Greek mythology, mistletoe gave access to the Underworld. Romans thought it represented Peace, Love and Understanding and perhaps that is how it has sidled into our Christmas celebrations. The earliest documentary evidence for kissing under mistletoe dates from the sixteenth century. Some people think a berry should be removed after each kiss. Given the small size of pieces generally available these days, perhaps that is a practice not to be pursued!

**BEXLEY TEAM MINISTRY**  
**“EXPLORING CONFIRMATION” 2020**



This series of informal sessions is designed to help you discover more about the Christian faith and to explore it in greater depth.

It is also designed to help you to decide whether it might be right for you to take the step of being ‘confirmed’ as a member of the Anglican Church.

**THE CONFIRMATION SERVICE ON 3 MAY HAS BEEN  
POSTPONED - TBA**

The preparation sessions will take place at  
The Joydens Wood Vicarage, 6 Tile Kiln Lane  
Joydens Wood, DA5 2BB

PLEASE NOTE... Coming to the sessions does NOT commit you to being confirmed. That is your decision nearer the time.

Each of the three sessions will help you to look at some aspects of the Christian faith, and give you plenty of opportunity to bring and share your own questions, doubts, hopes and uncertainties.

<b>Believing</b>	Who is Jesus? The Bible
<b>Belonging</b>	The Eucharist Christian Symbols
<b>Behaving</b>	Prayer and the wider church
	Preparing for the Service

There will be a Rehearsal at St Francis, Petts Wood nearer the time

Reverend Ren Harding (Team Rector)  
01322 528923  
07836644782

## **Journeys or lockdown this Christmas?**

*By Lester Amann*



Christmas is a busy time for travel, as many of us venture a great distance to see family or friends again. But this year coronavirus has put an end to all that. Seeing all our loved ones this Christmas will be difficult, if not impossible. Soon we may not be travelling anywhere very much at all.

Have you noticed that the Christmas story is about journeys? It begins with Mary and Joseph travelling from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Then, some shepherds receive news from an angel about a special birth. They travel through the night, across dark fields and down unlit streets to search for the baby Jesus.

After this, in an eastern country some wise men see a new star, one that heralds a new king. They leave home and set out with only the star to guide them, and their faith to reassure them that Someone special is waiting at the end of their journey.

All these travellers must have wondered what really lay ahead. Nothing was fully understood, carefully planned for, or safe. They all travelled with questions and uncertainties. But God had come unexpectedly into their lives, and suddenly they were given new roles to serve Him. Despite worldly circumstances that could have crushed them, they stood firm and trusted God all the way.

These travellers' tales tell us that God may suddenly enter into our familiar, or this year, unfamiliar circumstances. He may come in surprising ways, to prompt us into new avenues of service. At first His call on us may be uncomfortable and challenging.

If our response is anything like Joseph, Mary, the shepherds and wise men – to be obedient to His call in serving, witnessing and worshipping, we shall be greatly blessed and rewarded.

We are all on life's journey. If we travel with God, He will be faithful and lead us to His heavenly Home.

## ALL IN THE MONTH OF DECEMBER



400 years ago, on 21<sup>st</sup> December 1620 the first landing party from the British ship Mayflower arrived at what would become Plymouth Colony (now Plymouth Massachusetts). They began building houses there two days later.

300 years ago, on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1720 Charles Edward Stuart, commonly known as 'Bonnie Prince Charlie' was born. Stuart claimant to the British throne and leader of the unsuccessful Jacobite rebellion of 1745-46. Grandson of King James II of England and Ireland (also known as James VII of Scotland).

250 years ago, on 16<sup>th</sup> December 1770 Ludwig van Beethoven, German composer and pianist was born.

90 years ago, on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1930 in his second State of the Union address, US President Herbert Hoover announced a huge public works programme to stimulate the economy and create jobs during the Great Depression.

80 years ago, on 29<sup>th</sup> December 1940 Germany dropped thousands of incendiary bombs on London, causing the worst fire damage since the Great Fire of London in 1666. About 200 people were killed.

70 years ago, on 14<sup>th</sup> December 1950 the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (also known as the UN Refugee Agency) was established.

30 years ago, on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1990 British and French construction workers on the Channel Tunnel broke through the last wall of rock separating the two halves, and Britain and France were linked for the first time in thousands of years.

20 years ago, on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2000 George W Bush finally claimed the US presidency, 36 days after the election was held, following a legal battle over disputed votes in Florida.

## Signs & Symbols

*By The Revd Dr Jo White*



### Reflected Faith Series: Grace for all



Last month we thought about one key element of gathered worship – the Welcome. It is for everyone, regardless of how they look, or dress, their faith or their behaviour. This month, being the month of Advent and Christmas, let's focus on Grace.

God, in Jesus, did not wait for us to become perfect or reach up to Him but rather He came to us, in the daily mess of our lives; as and where we are.

I recently heard someone say: 'God's nature is goodness', and the Bible confirms that this is true. He cannot help it. That's what He is. He is goodness, and grace, and forgiveness, and faithfulness, and all those wonderful attributes that come from the pure essence of love.

It's what we strive for – to be more like Him every day. Then our welcome to others will also be full of grace, His grace, and not guided by our own likes or prejudices. Instead, we can reach out to others spontaneously, from a heart of love.

This Advent and Christmas it will probably be harder to welcome people into our times of worship. Virtual is not the same as actual, and actual will include facemasks. But that does not mean that we should give up on reaching out to those who visit our church. This year, more than ever, they may need us. Many will be lonely this Christmas, far from their families.

So, although our normal church services may be disrupted, we have to remember that services are not the church; WE are the church. In what has been an extraordinary year, perhaps we can each of us find an informal way of sharing our Christmas joy with anyone whom God sends our way.



*This month: Have a think about what it is about Christmastime services that people love. How can we distil that into a socially distanced service or meeting, a virtual experience or into an envelope or maybe a box to their doors?*

## WORDSEARCH



Silent	First	Christmas	Young	Melody
Night	Sung	Eve	Priest	Single
Loved	Stille	Father	Organist	Bing
Carol	Nacht	Joseph	Midnight	Version
Austria	Heilige	Mohr	Mass	Third

Solutions on page 31

## DECEMBER CROSSWORD PUZZLE

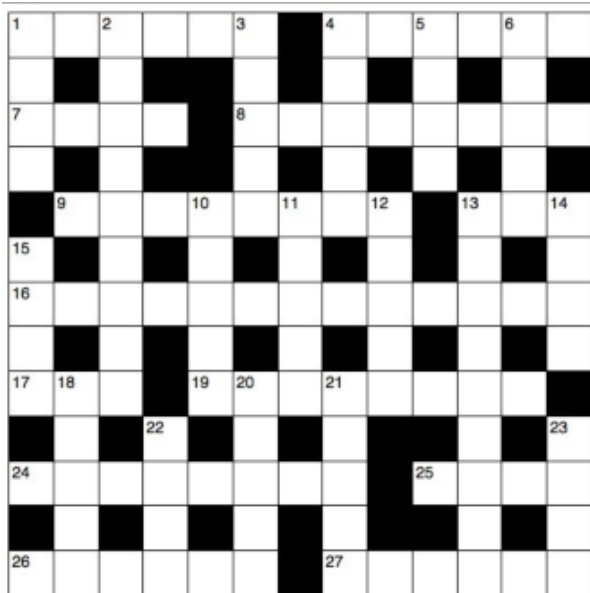


### Across

- 1 Rely (Psalm 62:7) (6)
- 4 'He stretches out the heavens like a — , and spreads them out like a tent to live in' (Isaiah 40:22) (6)
- 7 What the dove carried the olive leaf in, when it returned to Noah's ark (Genesis 8:11) (4)
- 8 Annoy (1 Samuel 1:6) (8)
- 9 Judah's last king, who ended his days as a blind prisoner in Babylon (Jeremiah 52:11) (8)
- 13 'They all — and were satisfied' (Luke 9:17) (3)
- 16 Eliphaz the Temanite was one; so was Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite (Job 2:11; 16:2) (4,9)
- 17 National Association of Evangelicals (of the USA) (1,1,1)
- 19 Popular song for New Year's Eve, Auld — — (4,4)
- 24 Able dock (anag.) (8)
- 25 The number of stones David chose for his confrontation with Goliath (1 Samuel 17:40) (4)
- 26 Elgar's best-known 'Variations' (6)
- 27 Soak (Isaiah 16:9) (6)

### Down

- 1 Money owing (Deuteronomy 15:3) (4)
- 2 Conciliatory (Titus 3:2) (9)
- 3 'Do this, whenever you — it, in remembrance of me' (1 Corinthians 11:25) (5)
- 4 A group assisting in the governance of the Roman Catholic Church (5)
- 5 One of the gifts Joseph's brothers took with them on their second journey to Egypt (Genesis 43:11) (4)
- 6 'Reach out your hand and — — into my side. Stop doubting and believe' (John 20:27) (3,2)



- 10 Be outstandingly good (2 Corinthians 8:7) (5)
- 11 'What — — that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?' (Psalm 8:4) (2,3)
- 12 Horse's feet (Judges 5:22) (5)
- 13 Notice (Deuteronomy 17:4) (9)
- 14 Comes between 2 Chronicles and Nehemiah (4)
- 15 One of Israel's northern towns conquered by Ben-Hadad (1 Kings 15:20) (4)
- 18 Narnia's Lion (5)
- 20 One of the two rivers in which Naaman would have preferred to wash (2 Kings 5:12) (5)
- 21 Avarice—one of the evils that come from inside people (Mark 7:22) (5)
- 22 Knight Grand Cross of St Michael and St George (1,1,1,1)
- 23 J acob's first wife (Genesis 29:23) (4)

(Solutions on page 32)



## ST JAMES THE LEAST OF ALL



### **On the best ways for a vicar to disrupt Christmas**

The Rectory  
St. James the Least of All

My dear Nephew Darren

I am sorry I was not alive during that wonderful four year period when Oliver Cromwell abolished Christmas; no Christmas parties, no carol services, no cards to send and no frantic last-minute shopping. That man was a hero.

Planning for Christmas at St. James' normally starts on 2nd January. By Easter, the flowers for church have been colour co-ordinated, the seating plans and table decorations for the Christmas party have been allocated (with nominated reserves in case someone should inconveniently die in the intervening 8 months). Long before Summer is over, the tree lights have been tested, music for the 9 Lessons and Carols Service has been chosen and the service sheets printed. Way before the dark nights set in, car parking attendants will have been found, those who are to light all the candles will have been rehearsed to perfection and the brass lectern has had its annual polish.

We do not do spontaneity at St. James the Least. If ever there was a service when time for something unexpected was allowed, its place would be announced in the order of service, how long it would happen would have been decided by a committee and who was to be spontaneous would have been allocated on a rota.

The one person none of these well-meaning, efficient, committed Carols will (accidentally, of course) be announced in the wrong order; if verse 3 was to be omitted, I announce it will be verse 4. This keeps the organist on his toes while the choir hovers on the point of a

collective nervous breakdown. At the Christmas supper, my introductory welcome speech and extensive grace make those in the kitchen wonder if the vegetables being boiled should better be served as thick soup.

I offer the helpful suggestion that the tree, having been installed and decorated in the chancel, may perhaps look better in the sanctuary and I turn all the heating off throughout the season, explaining that it will help the flowers to last. All Services will start five minutes early (was my watch rather fast?) so I can look disapprovingly at those still coming in while we are singing the first carol and making it clear that I think they had spent too long in the pub next door.

And so we all reach Christmas morning, with 12 months of planning having gone yet again slightly awry, with parishioners exhausted and I exhilarated at the chaos that has been created with such ease. Mr Cromwell, your spirit lives on.

Your loving uncle,  
Eustace



"Nice idea, Amelia, but I don't think that the Angel of the Lord Zooming with the shepherds would have the same dramatic effect."

## GOD AND THE ARTS

*By The Rev Michael Burgess*



### **He gave us eyes to see them: St Kevin of Glendalough and the blackbird**

During this year we have explored the beauty and wonder of our world in the rich variety of all creatures great and small. In the months of



lockdown and restrictions, many of us have used the time to look afresh at the world of Nature and have learnt to value it once again.

When we look at the life of the 6th century Irish hermit saint, Kevin of Glendalough, we see someone who had that special relationship with the birds and animals. An

otter, the wolf and a wild boar were his co-hermits. We are told that during Lent as he was kneeling in prayer in his cell, he held his arm out of the window. A blackbird mistook the arm for the branch of a tree and built its nest in the saint's hand. The saint waited until the eggs were laid and hatched and the fledglings had flown.

One of the earliest depictions of this story is a marginal drawing in *The History of Ireland* by Gerald of Wales in the early 13th century and now in the British Library. He visited Ireland several times and was entranced by the marvels he saw and the tales he heard. To accompany the story of St Kevin, an unknown artist drew the saint sat in his cell, cradling the blackbird gently in his left hand. Seamus Heaney captured the story in a poem in which he wondered if the saint was self-forgetful in all those months or perhaps in agony. The poet praises St Kevin because he sought no reward, but offered time and patience to care for this sign of new life.

So much has happened to us during this year for good and ill, and we wonder what the new year will bring. Perhaps St Kevin can inspire

us to journey with faith and hope, and to travel through the months ahead with a renewed concern for the created order around. The Gaelic name Kevin means loved. Like him, we pray that we will love and cherish this planet, and care for the wonder and beauty of birds like the blackbird and all the animals. Then we can rejoice with him in the wonder of Creation that displays the handiwork of God the Creator.

## SOLUTIONS TO WORDSEARCH



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## 6<sup>th</sup> December St Nicholas – a much-loved saint



One account of how Father Christmas began tells of a man



named Nicholas who was born in the third century in the Greek village of Patara, on what is today the southern coast of Turkey. His family were both devout and wealthy, and when his parents died in an epidemic, Nicholas decided to use his inheritance to help people. He gave to the needy, the sick, the suffering. He dedicated his whole life to God's service and was made Bishop of Myra while still a young man. As a bishop in later life, he joined other bishops and priests in prison under the emperor Diocletian's fierce persecution of Christians across the Roman Empire.

Finally released, Nicholas was all the more determined to shed abroad the news of God's love. He did so by giving. One story of his generosity explains why we hang Christmas stockings over our mantelpieces today. There was a poor family with three daughters who needed dowries if they were to marry, and not be sold into slavery. Nicholas heard of their plight and tossed three bags of gold into their home through an open window – thus saving the girls from a life of misery.

The bags of gold landed in stockings or shoes left before the fire to dry. Hence the custom of children hanging out stockings – in the hope of attracting presents of their own from St Nicholas - on Christmas Eve. That is why three gold balls, sometimes represented as apples or oranges, are one of the symbols of St Nicholas.

### SOLUTIONS TO CROSSWORD PUZZLE

**ACROSS:** 1, Depend. 4, Canopy. 7, Beak. 8, Irritate. 9, Zedekiah. 13, Ate. 16, Job's comforter. 17, NAE. 19, Lang Syne. 24, Blockade. 25, Five. 26, Enigma. 27, Drench.

**DOWN:** 1, Debt. 2, Peaceable. 3, Drink. 4, Curia. 5, Nuts. 6, Put it. 10, Excel. 11, Is man. 12, Hoofs. 13, Attention. 14, Ezra. 15, Ijon. 18, Aslan. 20, Abana. 21, Greed. 22, GCMG. 23, Leah.





## HOLLY

We sing about the 'Holly and the Ivy', and prickly green leaves and red berries are everywhere in Christmas decorations.

In Scandinavian countries the holly is even known as the 'Christ-thorn' and it seems that the name of the holly actually came from the word 'holy'.

The holly reminds us of the death of Jesus – the sharp prickles on the leaves are like the crown of thorns that Jesus was forced to wear on the cross. The red berries remind us of the drops of blood that came where the thorns hurt his head.



Holly is an evergreen, which means that it does not lose its leaves in the autumn, but keeps them all year round. And because its leaves are always green it is a symbol of eternal life.

## SHARP PRESENTS

A quick way to make little presents for all your class and friends.

You will need pencils, glue (spray glue is best) and Christmas wrapping paper with a small pattern on it. Choose round pencils rather than the hexagonal type.

Cut a strip of wrapping paper wide enough to wrap around the pencil and as long as the pencil. Put glue on the back of the paper and wrap it around the pencil. When the glue has dried; trim away any excess paper with small scissors.



**What did the werewolf write on his Christmas cards?**  
Best vicious of the season.

**What do elves sing to Santa?**  
Freeze a Jolly Good Fellow!



## ANSWERS TO QUIZ ON 2020



1. Kirk Douglas was the famous actor who died this year and is associated with the phrase “I am Spartacus”.
2. In February the Church of England advised against the practice of ‘intinction’ – which is dipping the communion wafer in wine.
3. In a world “where you can be anything, be *kind*” wrote actress Caroline Flack on Instagram in December 2019.
4. We were supposed to wash our hands in March while singing the National Anthem or Happy Birthday twice.
5. This year was a leap year. We call other years common years.
6. Eyam is the village in the peak district is associated with self-isolation during a previous plague.
7. Quarantine is forty days long, literally, the word derives from the Italian expression quaranta giorni.
8. President Macron visited Britain on 18<sup>th</sup> July to commemorate De Gaulle’s broadcast to France in 1940. It was also the anniversary of the battle of Waterloo.
9. The United States, Europe, Russia and China have all launched space rockets to Mars this year.
10. The Foreign Office cat, Palmerston, in his resignation letter in August on Twitter posted, “I have championed our work, built our relationships and celebrated the diversity of our staff... and will always be an ambassador for the UK and the new Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office” after a four year career in Downing Street which had

included scraps with a neighbour. He was going to spend more time with a family in the country.

11. Boxing Day is the day furthest away from Christmas Day (because you cannot travel backwards in time - think about it)
12. The Battle of the Tennis Court was part of the Burma Campaign during the Second World War. It was remembered in August as part of VJ commemorations.
13. The BBC banned singing the lyrics from which Rule Britannia from the Last night of the Proms because it had a link in their mind with slavery and colonialism. The decision was since reviewed.
14. This year marked the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the voyage of the *Mayflower*. Their celebration of harvest gave rise to Thanksgiving.

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FROM THE REGISTERS

*Baptisms*

-

*Weddings*

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*Burials*

-

*Year's mind for December 2019*

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