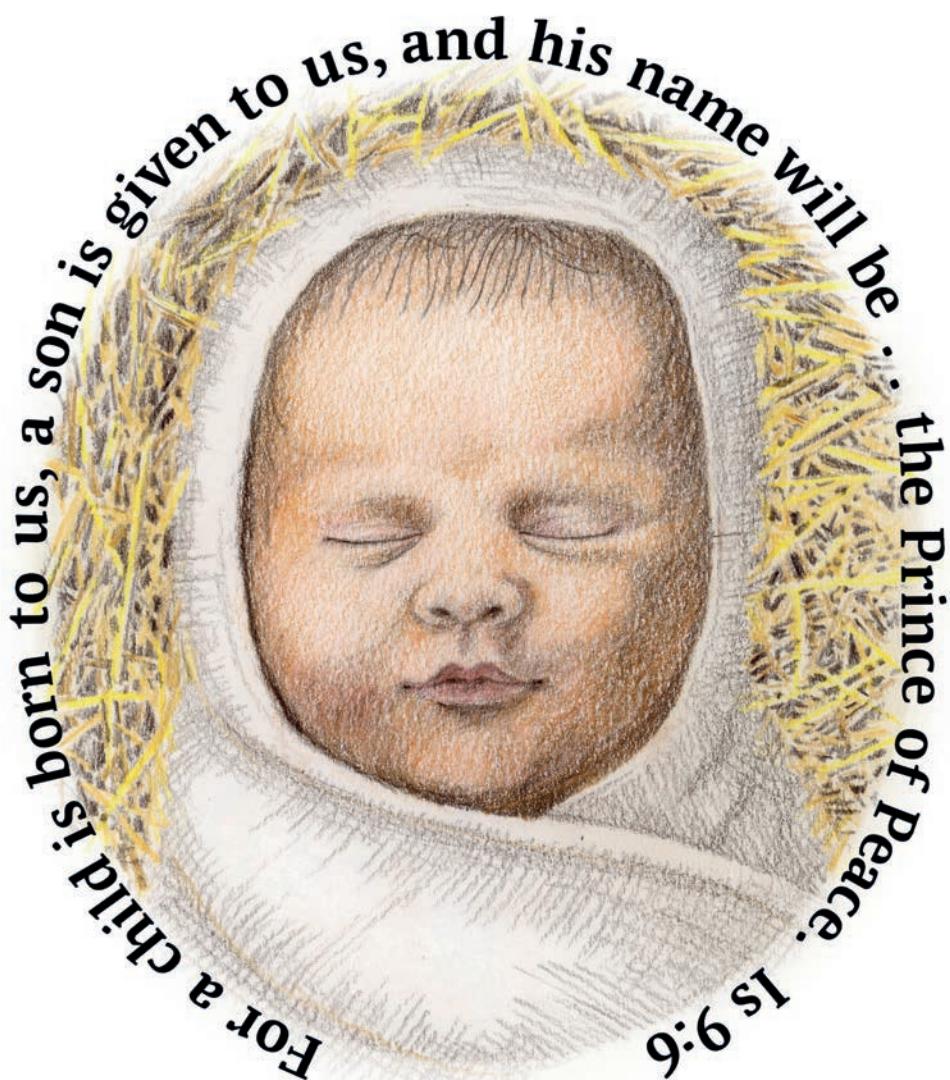


The Herald

50p



December 2023

Reservoir Group of Churches
Downham Benefice
The parishes of St Margaret Downham
St Mary the Virgin Ramsden Bellhouse and
St Peter South Hanningfield

Ministry Team

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St Peter South Hanningfield

Currently vacant

- for information about St Peter's please contact the Revd Jacqui Pearson

Contents

What's on when and where	2
From the ministry team	5
And there were shepherds...	6
St Margaret's Downham	6
Downham WI	8
St Mary's Ramsden Bellhouse	8
Ramsden Heath Social Club	9
Community Cuppa & Cake afternoon	9
Ramsden Heath Horticultural & Allotment Society	10
St Peter's South Hanningfield	11
South Hanningfield Village Coffee Mornings	12
South Hanningfield Village Hall	12
All in the month of December	15
Nativity Quiz in 20 Questions	17
Follow the Star	18
What sort of a Christmas card person are you?	19
Puzzle corner	20
Children's pages	22
Smile lines	32
Contacting The Herald	33

The Herald is published monthly by Downham Parochial Church Council on behalf of the churches in Downham, Ramsden Bellhouse and South Hanningfield. Views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of Downham PCC.

The Herald is on sale in St Margaret's, St Mary's and St Peter's at 50p per copy. Alternatively you may purchase an annual subscription for £5.00. If you wish The Herald to be delivered to you please contact Robert Andrews on 01268 733817 or email distribution.theherald@downhamchurch.org.uk

What's on when and where

Sunday 3 December - Advent 1

- | | | |
|---------|---------------------------------|----------------|
| 10.00am | St Peter's South Hanningfield | Holy Communion |
| 11.00am | St Margaret's Downham | Family Service |
| Note: | No service at Ramsden Bellhouse | |

Sunday 10 December - Advent 2

- | | | |
|---------|----------------------------------|----------------|
| 10.00am | St Mary's Ramsden Bellhouse | Morning Prayer |
| 11.00am | St Margaret's Downham | Sung Eucharist |
| Note: | No service at South Hanningfield | |

Thursday 14 December

- | | | |
|--------|-----------------------------|---------------|
| 7.30pm | St Mary's Ramsden Bellhouse | Carol Service |
|--------|-----------------------------|---------------|

Sunday 17 December - Advent 3

- | | | |
|---------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 11.00am | St Margaret's Downham | Benefice Holy Communion |
| 3.00pm | St Peter's South Hanningfield | Carol Service |
| Note: | No services at Ramsden Bellhouse | |

Saturday 23 December

- | | | |
|--------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 3.00pm | St Margaret's Downham | Christingle Service |
|--------|-----------------------|---------------------|

Sunday 24 December - Advent 4

- | | | |
|---------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 11.00am | St Margaret's Downham | Said Holy Communion |
|---------|-----------------------|---------------------|

Sunday 24 December - Christmas Eve

- | | | |
|---------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 9.30pm | St Mary's Ramsden Bellhouse | Christmas Eve Communion |
| 9.30pm | St Peter's South Hanningfield | Christmas Eve Communion |
| 11.30pm | St Margaret's Downham | Midnight Mass |

Monday 25 December - Christmas Day

- | | | |
|---------|-----------------------|----------------|
| 10.00am | St Margaret's Downham | Holy Communion |
|---------|-----------------------|----------------|

Sunday 31 December - Christmas 1

- | | | |
|---------|---|-------------------------|
| 10.00am | St Peter's South Hanningfield | Benefice Holy Communion |
| Note: | No services at Downham or Ramsden Bellhouse | |

Sunday 7 January 2024 - Epiphany

- | | | |
|---------|---------------------------------|----------------|
| 10.00am | St Peter's South Hanningfield | Holy Communion |
| 11.00am | St Margaret's Downham | Family Service |
| Note: | No service at Ramsden Bellhouse | |

The Churches of

St Margaret Downham with St Peter South Hanningfield and St Mary Ramsden Bellhouse

wish you
a Happy and Blessed Christmas



We invite you to join one or more of our Christmas celebrations

Thursday 14 December

7.30pm Ramsden Bellhouse Carol Service

Sunday 17 December

11.00am Downham
3.00pm South Hanningfield Holy Communion & Carols
Service of Lessons & Carols

Saturday 23 December

3.00pm Downham Crib and Christingle Service

Sunday 24 December - Christmas Eve

11.00am Downham
9.30pm Ramsden Bellhouse
9.30pm South Hanningfield
11.30pm Downham
Holy Communion (Said)
Christmas Eve Communion
Christmas Eve Communion
Midnight Mass

Monday 25 December - Christmas Day

10.00am Downham Christmas Communion

Sunday 31 December - Christmas 1

10.00am South Hanningfield Holy Communion

Christmas Bazaar



**St Margaret's Church
Castledon Road
Downham CM11 1LG**

**Saturday
2 December**

11.00am to 3.00pm

**Stalls, games, refreshments
The place to buy your Christmas gifts**



**Come and meet
Father Christmas**

From the ministry team

The Prince of Peace

A few years ago I had the opportunity to go to the Holy Land. It was January, and it was cold, wet, and windy! Some of the sites we visited were in Israel; others in the West Bank - including Bethlehem and the Church of the Nativity. It was stunningly beautiful, and the Christmas tree in the square outside made it particularly festive. Yet not too far from the Church of the Nativity is 'The Wall' - the large, imposing, concrete wall, that separates The West Bank from Israel.

Jesus was born into a land of turbulence, political unrest, and violence. Just next door to the Church of the Nativity is the Church of the Holy Innocents - the church that honours the children who were killed when Herod found out that a 'rival' king had been born there. Jesus stepped right in to the messiness of people - into the tragedy of what humans can inflict on each other.

The chances are that, at some point over the festive period, you will hear Handel's 'Unto us a child is born.' Written in 1741, it has been a pretty firm fixture in the build up to Christmas ever since. Here are the lyrics:

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given:
And the government shall be upon His shoulder;
And His name shall be called
Wonderful, Counsellor,
The Mighty God, the Everlasting Father,
The Prince of Peace.

It comes from the words of the Prophet Isaiah, in the Old Testament (Isaiah 9:6) - who wrote his prophesies hundreds of years before Jesus' birth. Writing in a time of great uncertainty and upheaval himself, Isaiah writes of a Messiah, a saviour - someone who will show, by example, how we can live in love and peace with one another and with God.

Two thousand years after Jesus' birth, our world is still in desperate need of that peace - not least in the very land where he lived.

He showed us, in his life and teaching, that peace is a costly thing. Costly to ourselves, because it requires us to put the needs of others above our own. It means treating others with love and kindness - especially those whom we may not even like!

We ourselves may not be in a position to solve the crisis currently engulfing the people of Israel and Gaza; we may not be able to stop the war in Ukraine, or indeed any of the other conflicts currently taking place across the world - but we can pray. We can pray for world leaders, politicians, military leaders, diplomats, etc., that peace can be found. We can give to charities and

organisations who are helping and supporting those caught up in war and conflicts, and we can pray that, following the example of Jesus, the Prince of Peace, we can, in our own communities, be people of peace to each other this Christmas.

Revd Jacqui Pearson

And there were shepherds...

Luke's story of the birth of Jesus is brilliantly told – the angel's visit to Mary to tell her she would be mother of the long-promised Messiah, the old priest in the Temple told by another angel that his wife would have a son to be called 'John', who would prepare the people of Israel for that event, and then Mary and Joseph making the 60 mile journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, as required by the Roman census. When they got there, no room at the inn, and they settled instead for a convenient stable, where Mary gave birth to a boy child.

Suddenly, Luke changes the tone. 'And there were shepherds ...' – that's what he actually wrote, just like that. 'And there were shepherds', doing exactly what shepherds do, looking after their flocks by night. But this night was different: yet another angelic message – a call to abandon their sheep and go into Bethlehem to see the baby Messiah. They were given directions and a 'sign' to identify Him. He would be lying in a feeding trough. Well, at least they would recognise that.

And why the shepherds, in this glorious story of our salvation? Because the event needed witnesses, and the chosen witnesses would be this bunch of scruffy, smelly shepherds straight from the sheep-pen. Nothing could speak more eloquently of God's purpose than that. This was not a Saviour for the strong, rich and powerful, but for everybody. The carpenter and his wife guarded the Saviour of the world, and the very first witnesses were not kings or priests but a handful of shabby shepherds.

St Margaret's Downham

Remembrance Sunday

We were pleased to welcome Councillor Kevin Black, Chairman of South Hanningfield Parish Council who laid wreaths at the war memorial and war grave at the start of our service on Sunday 12 November. Many members of the congregation braved the rain to join in the ceremony. The lych gate provided shelter for those without umbrellas.



Christmas Bazaar

Don't forget our Christmas Bazaar on Saturday 2 December. See page 4 for more details.

New nativity set

As we approach the Christmas season, we will be introducing the representation of the nativity scene in front of the altar. You may notice it being somewhat different this year. The figures in the stable that we have used for many years were looking somewhat tired. Shepherds with fingers missing, wise men having lost their presents en route to Bethlehem.

At its recent meeting, the Parochial Church Council decided to purchase a new set of figures. They are a more diverse ethnic mix, representing the people who live in the Middle East. There are more animals, with a selection of sheep, an ass and each wise man having his own camel. There is real gold, frankincense and myrrh in the wise men's boxes (for this year at least). The baby Jesus is tiny as we might expect, being a new born child.

Do take an opportunity to come up to the altar and take a closer look at the stable. We are sure that children visiting the church during the Christmas season will be fascinated by the scene.

Christmas services

Our Christmas services commence on Sunday 17 December when we will be singing carols during the Benefice Communion Service. Our ever popular Christingle service will be at 3.00pm on Saturday 23 December. As Christmas Eve is a Sunday this year there will be a short said Communion service at 11.00am, then our Midnight Mass will commence at 11.30pm. There will be a service of Holy Communion at 10.00am on Christmas Day. We have no

services at Downham on Sunday 31 December, but there will be a Benefice Communion Service at South Hanningfield at 10.00am.

See page 3 for details of Christmas services across the benefice.

Downham WI

Hopefully most of you went through Downham in November and saw our WI knitted poppies on display. Despite the wind and rain the poppies stood firm. It was good to hear from the members how well received they were. Well done ladies once again!!

The Tuesday Club has its last get together on 5 December. It will reconvene on 9 January 2024.

We are all looking forward to our Christmas lunch and festivities on 12 December. Much fun and laughter was had last year and we are fully expecting the same again.

At the time of writing we have not had our November meeting (21st) but we are looking forward to hearing our speaker, Maggie Piper who will be talking on " Essex Curiosities".

The new WhatsApp group for members has proved to be a great success with most members now on board.

If you would like to join our friendly group then come along on the third Tuesday of each month.

It just leaves me to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Contact Wendy on 07778 809723

Wendy

St Mary's Ramsden Bellhouse

Remembrance Sunday

Despite the wet weather on Remembrance Sunday a good number of people from the village and the congregations from the Baptist Church and St Mary's filled the village hall.

The cubs led the congregation to the war memorial for the reading of the names of the fallen in the two world wars followed by the 2 minutes silence.

The service then continued in the village hall lead by the Revd James Hamilton from the Baptist Church and the Revd Jean Andrews from St Mary's. The proceeds of the collection were sent to Blesma (British limbless ex service men's association)

Christmas Carol Service

Our Carol Service this year is on Thursday 14 December at 7.30pm. Please join us to hear the familiar Christmas story and sing the carols once again, followed by refreshments. If you feel you would like to do a reading I would be pleased to hear from you. Call me on 01245 601298.

Beryl Clements

Ramsden Heath Social Club

Our monthly BINGO EVENING will be on Friday 1 December at 8.00pm. Just £1.00 to play & £2.00 for each book you want to play. All are welcome. FREE tea & coffee at the half-time break, but please feel free to bring other drinks/snacks of your own.

Our final event of the year is our MULLED WINE/PRIZE GIVEAWAY night on Friday 15 December at 8.00pm. Tickets ON SALE NOW: £5.00 for Members, £7.50 for Guests & £2.50 for Children (please book in advance). Lots of Festive Fun including Mulled Wine, Mince Pies, Prize Giveaway Games & some seasonal Music.

If anyone would like to join the Social Club, membership at just £12 per adult is now available.

For more information please contact:

Dave Charlton on 07940 540819 or Dave Quinney on 07950 309524

Community Cuppa & Cake afternoon

Tuesday 5 December 1.45 - 4.00pm

**Ramsden Heath Village Hall
Dowsetts Lane CM11 1HX**

Thank you so much to all our ‘customers’ who came along to our Coffee Afternoon on 14 November. It was an awful day with pouring rain and some flooding. but so many turned up that we have managed to raise £100 to donate to the Poppy Appeal at the British Legion in Wickford, plus £50 to carry over to our December charities. We have picked two charities for December. The Aspire Community Cafe which is held at The Downtowner Youth Centre, Irvin Hill Road, Wickford SS12 0AQ Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday 10.30am - 2.30pm. This is for students with learning difficulties to gain invaluable hands-on experience in a real world work setting. The other is TLC Teddies for Loving Care which donates teddies to seriously ill children in Essex hospitals.

Our December Coffee morning is always a week earlier than usual so that we can invite the Choir from Downham School to get us all in the mood for Christmas with their lovely singing. We will start our Coffee afternoon a bit earlier at 1.45pm. The children will be coming at 2.30 but you are more than welcome to creep in while they are singing. When the Coffee Afternoon finishes at 4.00pm for those who can stay we will make our way outside and light up the Christmas tree with a few carols.

Can we take this opportunity to thank you all for your support over the year and wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a very Healthy New Year.

Best wishes

Ramsden Cupcakes

Ramsden Heath Horticultural & Allotment Society

On Wednesday 1 November we were entertained by the Mayflower Morris Men who performed a number of sets as well as giving us a potted history of Morris Dancing. There was also the opportunity for our members to take part, fortunately without the bells and sticks. A great evening was enjoyed by all.



Our last event of the year is our eagerly awaited Christmas Party which will be held on Wednesday 13 December, 7.30pm at Ramsden Heath Village Hall.

The price for the evening is £15 per person (members only) and if you haven't yet ordered your tickets, please telephone Trevor Elcock on 01268 733283, or email t.elcock@talktalk.net

We look forward to another fun evening with lots of good food and drink and a glass of punch to welcome us in. Please bring your own choice of liquid

refreshment, and a glass to drink it from. This year we are being entertained by a professional magician who will hopefully have lots of ‘tricks up his sleeve’. This will be followed by the popular ‘12 days of Christmas’ singalong, so be sure to be in good voice to see who can sing the loudest. A great end to our horticultural year.

Please note that from January 2024 our monthly meetings will be taking place on the first Thursday of the month, starting on Thursday 4 January. This will be our usual social get together and ‘Bring and Buy’ sale, a chance to offload some of those unwanted items cluttering up your cupboards – and then go home with something else.

**On behalf of Ramsden Heath Horticultural Society
we would like to wish all Herald readers
a very merry Christmas
and a happy, healthy and peaceful 2024.**



St Peter’s South Hanningfield

Christmas services

We have our normal Sunday morning service at 10.00am on 3 December which will be followed by tea/coffee and cakes.

On Sunday 17 December at 3.00pm we have our service of Nine Lessons and Carols. This marks the start of our Christmas celebrations and we hope you will come and join us. We will be serving mulled wine and mince pies after the service.

Our service on Chrismas Eve will be held at 9.30pm, but we hope you will join us for mulled wine before the service from 9.00pm.

Carol singing in South Hanningfield

We are pleased to announce that there will be Carol Singing on the Village Tye on Friday 15 December commencing at 7.00pm. Please join us for an hour of festive song accompanied by mulled wine and maybe a mince pie or two around the Village Christmas Tree. All donations to St Peter’s Church.

In addition there will also be a small group singing carols in the Old Windmill Pub on Wednesday 13 December at 7.00pm should anyone like to go and enjoy a drink or even a meal with some Christmas cheer. Again all donations given to the Carol singers will go to the upkeep of our beautiful village church.

Merry Christmas to you all from

St Peter’s Church Mission Control team

South Hanningfield Village Coffee Mornings

Thank you very much to everyone that has supported our village coffee mornings this year, we are so pleased that it continues to be so well attended and such a success. As you are aware all the cakes are homemade and are donated by our coffee morning team which has allowed all the proceeds of the event to be donated this year as follows:-

- Christmas 2022 - £115 donated to Chelmsford Food Bank
- February 2023 - £263.10 donated to the Red Cross (Turkey Earthquake Appeal)

The Coffee Morning pays a monthly contribution to the upkeep of our Village Hall and the remaining £223 has been given to St Peter's Church.

Everyone is welcome to join us, you don't need to live in South Hanningfield. If anyone would like to come but needs transport please let us know and this can be arranged (Anne Marie 07956 960929)

Thank you for your generosity and continued support.
A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

The Coffee Morning Team

The Christmas Coffee Morning

Wednesday 13 December 10.30am -12.30pm

We are extremely grateful that South Hanningfield Parish Council has this year kindly donated some money to the Village Coffee Morning for the benefit of the local community. As a result we are planning to provide a very Christmassy feel to this month's event. Please join us for the usual homemade cakes alongside mulled wine and mince pies. We look forward to seeing you there.

South Hanningfield Village Hall

No Parking on Pavement by Hall - South Hanningfield Village Hall

Management Committee request that anyone using the hall facilities doesn't park up on the pavement or road outside the building because of the health and safety risks. Neighbouring residents will have seen hi vis volunteers outside the hall supervising parking at our own fundraising events. Unfortunately, recently there have been some private party hirers of the hall where a few of their attendees parked on the pavement. Our booking form clearly states that once the car park is full, they park on the street down Middlemead. The committee have put up signage and strive to use other measures to stop this from happening. Please alert the volunteer committee if

you see such vehicles parked in this way outside the hall on 07396 546050 or 07891 653238.

Afternoon Tea Party update This recent charity event at the village hall was very well attended. It was in aid of Teenage Cancer Trust and part of the fundraising for Fleur to run the London Marathon. Fleur thanks her family and friends for all their help with the preparations; everyone who donated a raffle prize; South Hanningfield Village Hall for the use of the facility and everyone who attended the Afternoon Tea Party. Together a fantastic sum of £1,042.52 was raised for this worthy cause.

Our next events coming up:

Fundraising Ball at Stockbrook Manor on Saturday, 27 January 2024

There are some spaces still available if anyone else is interested in this charity event. £77 per person Posh Evening Frocks and Dinner Jackets.

Proceeds to South Hanningfield Village Hall and St Peter's Church. Tables of 8-10 and cost includes pre-dinner drinks reception. 4 Course Luxury Dinner Menu including wine, beers and soft drinks, DJ entertainment. After dinner all-inclusive evening bar including house spirits, wines, beers, lagers & soft drinks. To book, call 07396 546050 or email shvhall@gmail.com

Table Top Sale We have reintroduced Table Top Sales which were popular a number of years ago at the village hall. The date of the Table Top will be Sunday, 25 February from 9.00am to 1.00pm. There will be a variety of crafts, pre-loved items, bric-a-brac and food stalls. If you have items to sell and are interested in booking a table, please get in contact. The cost is £10 for 4ft table and £15 for a 6ft table. Entry will be free for shoppers and there will be refreshments and breakfast sandwiches available for sale. For more information, email vallisc@aol.com or phone 07891 653238.

St Patrick's Ceilidh We are planning a ceilidh on Saturday, 16 March from 7.00pm with The Yardarm Ceilidh Band in attendance, ceilidh dancing and a raffle. Tickets cost £8 per person.

For further information, email vallisc@aol.com or phone 07891 653238.

Christmas Wreath Workshops on Saturday, 2nd and Sunday, 3rd December 10.00am to 1.00pm and 2.00pm to 5.00pm

Three hours of creative festive fun taught by two qualified florists. Price covers all materials and refreshments will be provided. £50 for a traditional round wreath and £20 non-refundable deposit required when booking.

To book, contact Julia 07399 116848 or 01245 445349 or Debbie 07508 073007 or 01245 710060.

A Magic Evening on Saturday, 28 September. More details to follow in future editions of *The Herald*.

Raffle prizes needed If anyone has any suitable items for raffle prizes they can donate to us for use at future events, please let us know. The committee would be very grateful.

Mobile Library

The Mobile Library visits South Hanningfield Village Hall every three weeks.

Day of visit: Tuesday Time of visit: 12.25pm to 12.55pm

Next visit date is 5 December.

Regular Activities

Coffee Morning

Second Wednesday of each month from 10.30am – 12.30pm (Wednesday, 13 December).

The January's coffee morning (Wednesday, 10 January) will have a visit from the Essex Police Fraud Officers to give advice and information to those attending.

Puppy Dog Training Classes

Monday from 6.00pm and 7.00pm

Dog training for puppies of all ages

Contact Rachel on 07484 706085 or

email Rachel@PuppyPotentialDogTraining.co.uk

Pilates & Keep Fit

Monday 9.45am – 10.45am

Thursday 10.00am – 12.00 noon

Contact Hayley on 07758 427379

Strollercise Dance

Monday 11.15am – 12.15pm

Tel: 07952 791183

Email: lynne.strawford@sky.com

No booking is required, just turn up.

Kid's Role Play (children 0 to 6 years)

Tuesdays and Wednesdays (except the 2nd Wednesday of the month)
9.45am to 11.30am

Christmas special on three dates in December 9.45am to 11.30am.

Wednesday 6 December, Tuesday 12 December and Tuesday

19 December. Amazing Christmas Crafts available, making handmade gifts for the family, prepping Reindeer food to take home and little gift for each child.

For more information, visit the Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100094542279687>

To book visit <https://bookwhen.com/kidsroleplay>

Yoga and Zumba - Sakura Yoga Studios

Thursday nights

Zumba 6.20pm to 7.15pm and

Vinyasa Flow Yoga 7.30pm to 8.30pm

Pay as you go

Tel: Charlene on 07772443028 or email info@sakurayogastudios.co.uk

Upholstery Class

Friday morning 9.30am – 1.00pm

Contact Fiona on 01621 776586 or 07887 507208

If you would like to book the South Hanningfield Village Hall for any regular activities or events, please call Sandra Graves, our Bookings Secretary on 07396 546050 or email shvhall@gmail.com to check availability and prices.

Please continue to support our local village hall in 2024 and if there are any other ways you can help us, let us know. Please contact the Chairman, Clive Vallis for further information on 07891 653238.

Website <https://e-voice.org.uk/shanningfieldvillagehall>

Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/southhanningfieldvillagehall>

Happy Christmas from South Hanningfield Village Hall Management Committee

All in the month of December

It was:

800 years ago, on 25 December 1223 that St Francis of Assisi created the first nativity scene, in Greccio, Italy, after visiting Jesus' birthplace in the Holy Land. It proved enormously popular and inspired other communities to stage their own nativity scenes.

250 years ago, on 16 December 1773 that the Boston Tea Party took place in Massachusetts. American patriots boarded ships and threw chests of tea belonging to the British East India Company into Boston Harbour, as a protest against the British tax on tea.

200 years ago, on 23 December 1823 that the poem The Night Before Christmas was first published (anonymously) in the Sentinel newspapers in

Troy, New York. It was written by Clement Clarke Moore.

175 years ago – on 19 December 1848 that Emily Bronte, British novelist and poet, died of tuberculosis, aged 30. Best known for her only novel, Wuthering Heights.

100 years ago, on 6 December 1923 that Ramsay MacDonald became the first Labour Prime Minister. The General Election had resulted in a hung parliament, and the Labour Party had formed a coalition with the Liberal Party.

Also 100 years ago, on 31 December 1923 that the BBC broadcast the chimes of Big Ben for the first time, to welcome in the New Year. The tradition continues to this day.

80 years ago, on 22 December 1943 that Beatrix Potter, children's writer and illustrator, died. She created animal characters including Peter Rabbit, Squirrel Nutkin, Mrs Tiggy-Winkle, Jemima Puddle-Duck, and many more.

75 years ago, on 10 December 1948 that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly.

Also 75 years ago, on 24 December 1948 that the first Midnight Mass to be televised was broadcast from St Patrick's Cathedral in New York City.

70 years ago, on 10 December 1953 that former US Secretary of State George Marshall was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for creating the Marshall Plan. The aid package helped Europe rebuild after WW2.

65 years ago, on 5 December 1958 that Britain's first motorway, the Preston By-pass, was officially opened. (It is now part of the M6 and M55.)

60 years ago, on 21 December 1963 that the Daleks made their first appearance on the British science fiction TV series Doctor Who.

50 years ago, on 21 December 1973 that the Geneva Conference opened in Switzerland, aimed at finding a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

No agreement was reached, but Israel signed a military disengagement agreement with both Egypt and Syria in 1974.

40 years ago, on 10 December 1983 that Polish Solidarity leader Lech Wałęsa was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. (It was accepted by his wife, as he feared he might not be allowed back into Poland if he travelled to Norway to accept it.)

30 years ago, on 10 December 1993 that Monkwearmouth Colliery in Sunderland closed down. It marked the end of more than 800 years of coal mining in the region.

Also 30 years ago, on 30 December 1993 that Israel and the Vatican City agreed to recognise each other and established diplomatic relations.

25 years ago, on 10 December 1998 that the UN General Assembly listed anti-Semitism as a form of racism.

Also 25 years ago, on 10 December 1998 that the Palestine Liberation Organisation voted to remove clauses in its charter that called for Israel's destruction.

20 years ago, on 1 December 2003 that using a handheld mobile phone while driving became illegal in the UK.

Also 20 years ago, on 13 December 2003 that during the Iraq War, former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein was captured by US forces, who found him hiding in a hole at a farmhouse in ad-Dawr, near his hometown of Tikrit.

10 years ago, on 5 December 2013 that Nelson Mandela died. This anti-apartheid revolutionary and politician had become President of South Africa 1994-99. He served as President of the African National Congress (ANC) 1991-97. Winner of the 1993 Nobel Peace Prize.

Nativity Quiz in 20 Questions

1. Where did Mary and Joseph live before Jesus was born?
a) Nazareth b) Bethlehem c) Jerusalem
2. What was the name of the angel who told Mary she would have a child?
3. What did Joseph do for a living?
4. Who was the Roman ruler when Jesus was born?
5. Why did Mary and Joseph go to Bethlehem?
6. How did Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem?
7. Why couldn't Mary and Joseph find a place to stay?
8. Where does the Bible say Jesus was born?
a) In a stable b) In hay c) In a manger
9. According to the Bible, which animals were specifically mentioned as being present in the stable when Jesus was born?
a) sheep and a donkey b) cattle and a donkey c) donkey, sheep and cattle
d) None
10. What does the angel say to the shepherds when they tell them to go to Bethlehem?
11. The wise men travelled to Jerusalem.
a) northward b) southward c) eastward d) westward
12. What did the Wise Men follow to find Jesus?
13. How many Wise Men visited baby Jesus?
14. What gifts did the Wise Men bring for Jesus?
15. Who spread the news about baby Jesus throughout Bethlehem?

16. What is the City of David also known as in the bible?
17. Which of the gospels tell the story of the Nativity?
18. What does Jesus' other name, "Immanuel", mean?
a) God with us b) Son of God c) He who is God d) Chosen One
19. How many days after the birth of Christ did Joseph and Mary give him the name Jesus?
20. Jesus was born on the 25th of December. True or false?

Answers on page 19

Follow the Star

Jesus' welcoming committee included Eastern scholars who learned about His birth through their study of astrology. I can't help thinking that the arrival of these people at Bethlehem is a link between a very early form of science (albeit mixed in with their own form of religion) and Christian faith. What better way to discover God than to explore the world and follow the evidence wherever it leads? But what exactly was the star of Bethlehem? Scientists have investigated this question over the centuries, coming up with a variety of answers.

First, there is the idea of a supernova: the massively bright explosion caused by a dying star. On rare occasions a supernova can be seen from Earth with the naked eye, remaining visible for several months. We now know that Herod the Great died around 4BC, so the actual date of Jesus' birth must be a little earlier. The supernovae that might match this timing were one in the Andromeda galaxy between March 8BC and September 7BC, and another in the constellation of Capricorn in the Spring of 5BC.

Next, comes a planetary conjunction. The alignment most commonly associated with the star of Bethlehem was between Jupiter and Saturn in the constellation of Pisces in 7BC, but not everyone is sure whether this would be extraordinary enough to be the 'star' mentioned in the Bible.

Finally, the bright astronomical object that drew the Magi could have been a comet. This idea came from Sir Colin Humphreys, Professor of Materials Science at Cambridge University, and Oxford astronomer WG Waddington, who found that a comet was recorded by Chinese astronomers between March and May, 5BC. Humphreys then speculated that the 'no room at the inn' scenario came about because Jesus was born during Passover, and the Magi visited Jesus in May or June.

People interpret the biblical account of Jesus' birth in all sorts of ways, but there's very little argument from serious historians that Jesus of Nazareth actually existed. Whatever the true explanation for the 'star of Bethlehem'

may be, there's plenty of evidence that an astronomical event could have happened at the time of His birth.

I think it makes perfect sense that if God was going to enter His own creation and take on the form of one of His own creatures, it should be marked by a very significant physical event!

Dr Ruth M Bancewicz

What sort of a Christmas card person are you?

The time to send and receive Christmas cards has come round again – time for our annual gasp at the cost of cards, and sheer disbelief at what the Post Office charges to send them.

It seems there are three kinds of people when it comes to Christmas cards: the total abstainers, the total givers, and the selective givers.

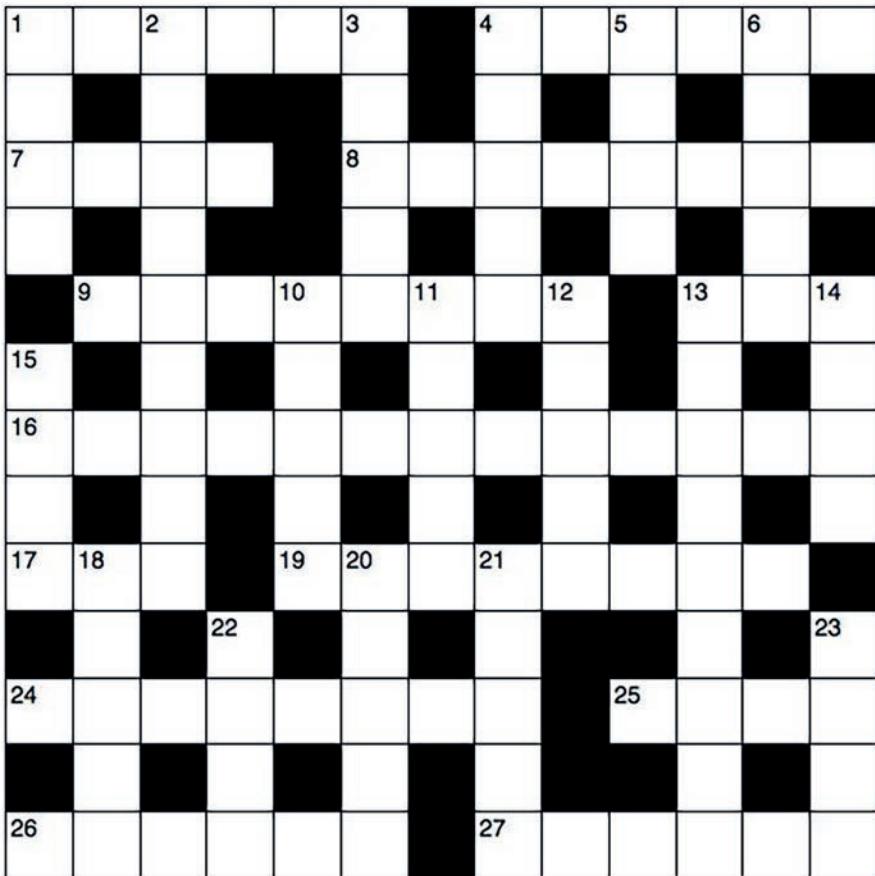
Abstainers write 'Happy Christmas everyone' on Facebook, and consider the job well done. Total givers spend a fortune on cards and stamps and send them to everyone they know. Selective givers try to cut corners, but then cannot remember who sent who what, and as the cards pour through their door, spend time worrying...

However you decide to do it, it is good to stay in yearly touch with your widest circle of friends and family. Proverbs points out that: 'Like cold water to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.' Proverbs 25:25. They will enjoy hearing from you!

Nativity Quiz Answers:

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Nazareth | <i>good will to all people'</i> |
| 2. Gabriel | 11. d) westward |
| 3. Carpenter | 12. A star |
| 4. Caesar Augustus | 13. The Bible doesn't say |
| 5. To register for the census | 14. Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh |
| 6. We are not told in the Bible | 15. The shepherds |
| 7. There was no room at the inn | 16. Bethlehem |
| 8. c) In a manger | 17. Matthew and Luke |
| 9. d) None | 18. a) God with us |
| 10. 'Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace, | 19. 8, according to the law |
| | 20. False; we don't know the date |

Puzzle corner



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 Jacob's first wife (Genesis 29:23) (4)

Answers on page 33

Children's pages

Mouse Makes

GOD'S PROMISE
Isaiah 9:6-7

CHILD • BORN • SON
GIVEN • WONDERFUL
COUNSELLOR
MIGHTY • GOD
EVERLASTING
FATHER • PRINCE
PEACE • LORD

AN ANGEL MESSENGER
Luke 1:26-38

ANGEL • GABRIEL
JOSEPH • MARY
FAVOUR • SON
JESUS • GREAT
THRONE • REIGN
FOREVER • HOLY
SERVANT • WORD

ADVENT
comes from
the Latin
'AD VENTO'
which means
ARRIVAL

In Advent we
celebrate Jesus' birth
and look forward to
the time when Jesus
will come again.

A LONG JOURNEY
Luke 2:1-20

BETHLEHEM
REGISTER • BIRTH
MANGER • INN
SHEPHERDS • FLOCK
ANGELS • JOY
GOOD NEWS • PRAISE
SAVIOUR • CHRIST

THE BEST GIFT OF ALL
John 3:16

GOD • SO • LOVED
WORLD • HE • GAVE
ONLY • SON
WHOEVER • BELIEVES
ETERNAL • LIFE

VRPRINCELROD
WORDCFATHERE
JAGMANGERGEREB
OWHOEVERWIIIJ
SJOYBORNOSGE
ESLSERVANTNS
PPYJCHILDEPU
HROSHEPHERDS
FAVOUREFRWSO
BIRTHSWOFODL
ISAVIOURURLO
FECOUNTELLOR
ANGELBJVKDVD
BETHLEHEMGES
LANGELSRGODV
IGABRIEELTDSM
FPGIVENAHUOA
EEHGAVESRWNR
SAEGREATONLY
OCHRISTINNJO
NEOGOODNEWSN
FLOCKMIGHTYB

Colour in one star each day until Christmas

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Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in
Luke 1:26-56 & Matthew 1:18-25

In Israel, about 2000 years ago, a young woman, Mary, was going to marry Joseph. The weddings were in two stages.

In one year we will complete our wedding



Then God's messenger angel came to see Mary.



You will have God's baby, and call him Jesus, 'God saves', because he will save people from what they do wrong.

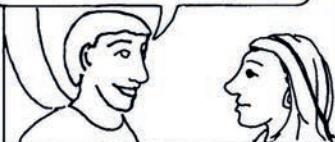


How can this happen?



With God, nothing is impossible.

Your cousin Elizabeth, who couldn't have children, is now 6 months pregnant.



Mary visited Elizabeth.



When Joseph heard that Mary was pregnant, he was very upset.



This will bring shame on me and my family.



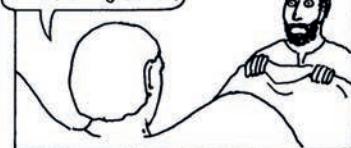
He always did what was right so he decided to end their marriage, but quietly.



But the angel came to him in a dream.



Don't be afraid to marry Mary. The baby is God's, and you will call him Jesus.



So Joseph and Mary completed their marriage.



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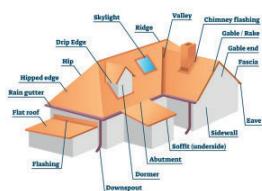


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Smile lines

The Everlasting Turkey

On the first day of Christmas my true love said to me
I've bought a big fresh turkey and a proper Christmas tree.

On the second day of Christmas much laughter could be heard
As we tucked into our turkey – a most delicious bird.

On the third day of Christmas people came from just next door,
The turkey tasted just as good as it had done before.

On the fourth day of Christmas came relations young and old
We finished up the Christmas pud and had the turkey cold.

On the fifth day of Christmas, outside the snowflakes scurried,
But we were nice and warm inside, and had the turkey curried.

On the sixth day of Christmas, the Christmas spirit died.
The children fought and bickered – we had the turkey rissoles fried.

On the seventh day of Christmas my true love he did wince
When he sat down at table - and was offered turkey mince.

On the eighth day of Christmas, the dog had run for shelter,
For he'd seen our turkey pancakes and the glass of alka-seltzer.

On the ninth day of Christmas, by lunchtime dad was blotto,
He knew that bird was back again, this time as a risotto.

On the tenth day of Christmas we were drinking home-made brew,
Anything to help us face that steaming turkey stew.

On the eleventh day of Christmas our lovely tree was moulting,
And with chilli, soy and oyster sauce, the turkey was revolting.

On the twelfth day of Christmas we had smiles back on our lips,
The guests had gone, the turkey too – WE DINED ON FISH AND CHIPS.

Children's version of the Christmas story

- When the three wise guys from the east side arrived, they found Jesus in the manager(sic).
- When Mary heard that she was the mother of Jesus, she sang the Magna Carta
- Jesus was born because Mary had an immaculate contraption.

Sums up Christmas

Three phrases that sum up Christmas are: 'Peace on Earth'; 'Goodwill to Men'; and 'Batteries not included'.

Contacting The Herald

Contributions to the January 2024 edition

Copy for the next edition of The Herald should be sent by email to Robert Andrews at theherald@downhamchurch.org.uk by **Thursday 7 December**.

Please note the earlier cut-off date because the printers will be closed from 15 December. Please send files in .doc, .docx or .rtf format. Because we wish to maintain a common house style please keep any formatting to an absolute minimum and do not embed photographs or other artwork. If you wish to include photographs or other artwork they should be sent separately in .jpeg or .pdf format. If you are unable to use email or are unsure about file types please telephone Robert on 01268 733817, but be aware that the telephone line has BT Call Guardian installed to deter nuisance callers, therefore you may have to announce your name and press the # key in order to be put through.

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Half page	£60 for 12 insertions
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If you have existing artwork your advertisements should be emailed to advert.theherald@downhamchurch.org.uk preferably in .jpeg or .pdf format. If you wish us to produce artwork for you this can be arranged for a small one-off fee.

Answers to the 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.

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