

Parish Link

**The Parish Magazine for the Benefice of
Bagendon, Baunton, Coberley and Cowley, Colesbourne,
Elkstone, North Cerney, Rendcomb and Stratton**



Children from Coberley C of E Primary School making Christmas cards to be given to patients in hospital on Christmas morning along with a gift.

December 2020 - January 2021

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Please forward any items for inclusion in the February 2021 edition of *Parish Link* to the Editor, Corinna, by 15th January 21: editor.parishlink@gmail.com
Thank you.

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Pastoral Letter - *Revd David Minns*

As we crawl our way painfully to the close of what has for most of us been a 'difficult' year, it would be easy to allow ourselves to be swamped by the negativity of all we've been through in 2020. This is far from what we hoped for when, amid the fireworks and the singing we wished each other 'Happy New Year' back at the start of 2020. This year has been so far from what we were hoping for that it has sometimes felt like an awful film or story - something that happens to other people.

And yet here we are - living and picking our way through abnormal times in an unfamiliar landscape, living with loss and sadness and seeking as best we can a good way forward for ourselves, our families, friends and communities. And, as Christian people, asking ourselves how we live out our relationship with God when we are separated from each other, kept out of our much-loved church buildings and feeling so lost?

I've spoken before about my own fascination with the time in the Old Testament of the Bible we know as the Exile. Almost 3,000 years ago God's people faced their own pain and asked those same questions. The people of Israel and Judah had seen their land invaded and the best of their society carried off into exile in Babylon, where they found themselves having to navigate a new landscape, far from the home they longed for. They had to ask hard questions about what it meant to be God's people in such an unfamiliar setting.

It was their faith that gave them hope; faith and the assurance that, looking back through their history, God had always brought them through hard times. In their stories from the past and the promise of God for the future they found hope in the most unlikely place. And the people set about using their exile as a time for reassessing and looking forward. Looking back only to learn more about themselves and to ask what they could do better in the future. They gained a new sense of who they were as a community and what their potential was, and who they were in relation to God. And, sustained by their hope and trust in God, they prayed and dreamed dreams with God about what the world could be when they finally went home.

Well, go home they eventually did, just as God and the prophets had promised, and it turns out that the exile - a national disaster and tragedy, became one of the most fruitful times in Israel's history, one which taught them new ways to live as a nation and as God's people.

I have turned to those exile stories in the Bible more than ever during our own experience of Pandemic and lockdown, drawing on the hopes and experience of those long-ago people. Hope is what sustained them and, many years after their return, God blessed the world through them as he had promised by sending his own son into the world, born to a peasant family in a stable in Bethlehem. Hope for the world found in the most unlikely place.

The birth of a child is always a sign of hope in the future, and the child we celebrate at Christmas is a much-needed sign of hope for the world. That gift of a baby, so tiny, so fragile, yet so full of potential. The Christ child we gaze so lovingly on at Christmas is the same Christ St. Paul writes of to the Colossians: *"In him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things"*. That's you and me, among others, reconciled to God through that little baby who would go on to die on a cross for the forgiveness of our sins.

So, despite the restrictions of distancing and facemasks, let's do our best this year to fully embrace the lovely, familiar story of shepherds and angels, Inn keepers and Wise Men. A story of hope. Because this Christmas a child is born for you. Through him God draws you to himself, even though the world may seem a painful place at the moment, even when your life is a painful one physically or mentally, and sometimes a place of spiritual turmoil, nevertheless that child was born for you, to draw you close to God.

We hope of course for a better year next year; for a vaccine that will protect us all and allow us to return to a more familiar life. My hope too is that, like God's people of old, we will have learned new ways of living better together, with more respect, care and kindness.

So have a happy Christmas this year as we give thanks for God's gift of love and peace and hope; the baby in a manger, Jesus Christ. And let's look forward to a very Happy New Year.

Gloucestershire Constabulary

Local Contacts:

PC Neil Lightfoot Neil.Lightfoot@gloucestershire.pnn.police.uk
PCSO Andrew Biddell Andrew.Biddell@gloucestershire.pnn.police.uk

101 = 24-hour number for non-emergency crime and anti-social behaviour issues as well as general enquiries.

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Benefice news and events

Advent Course



As in previous years we will be running an Advent course, though it will necessarily be of a different form. Meetings will be on-line via Zoom on Monday evenings (23rd and 30th November and 7th and 14th December). They will start at 7pm and last for 45-60 minutes. We will be looking at the "Advent Songs" from Luke's Gospel, starting with the song of Zechariah, known as the *Benedictus*. The song itself can be found in Luke 1, v 67 - 80, but useful background reading occurs earlier in the chapter in verses 5 - 25, 39 - 45 and 57 - 66. Some introductory material, and general details, will be available on the Benefice website. The Study will be accessible from the Benefice *YouTube* channel or via: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9582609654?pwd=ZnAya24vcC8vL0duU044aVg0eGZGQT09> If you have any questions about the course please contact Mark Venn on: 01285 831209, or e: mark.w.venn@btinternet.com

Connection, Community & Christmas

It is possible that, in the two weeks running up to Christmas, a 'small' group of singers might be out and about around Stratton singing carols outside houses where it is known residents are housebound, sick or feeling isolated.



If you are one of these, or know of someone else who is, and such a visit would be appreciated, please contact the Revd Jan on 01285 640077 with name, phone number and address of the home to be visited. Obviously, this initiative will be totally dependent on the Government's Covid Safe Rules at the time, but we remain hopeful!

Drive in carol service!

On Sunday 13th December at 3.00pm in Colesbourne village the four Northern parish churches are planning to unite for a short carol service with a difference. The Covid-19 restrictions are forcing us to be more imaginative and for the first time you will be able to worship from the warmth and safety of your own car! We are very grateful to Sir Henry Elwes for granting permission to



use the gravel area down the lane to the parish church and alongside *Foodworks*. Please come early or you may be turned away since space is quite limited. We estimate there is room for about 20 cars. The order of service will be available to view or download from the CVB website and you can have a paper copy on the day if you prefer. A suitable amplification system will be provided. Come let us praise the Lord! Further information is available from the Revd Arthur: T: 01242 870402 or e: championarthur@gmail.com



Next United Benefice Service - Sunday 31st January

Unfortunately, the latest United Benefice Service, which had been planned for Sunday 29th November at Rendcomb, has had to be cancelled due to the national lockdown. However, we hope that government restrictions allowing the next United Benefice Service will take place in St Peter's, Rendcomb, on *Sunday 31st January 2021* starting at **10am**. We are very pleased that a speaker from *The Children's Society* will be coming to the service to give a short talk about the charity's work: <https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/> Please keep an eye on the calendar section of the CVB website for the latest news about services during December and January: <https://www.churnvalley.org.uk/calendar/>.

Do you have an old laptop you no longer use?



If you have an old laptop sitting idle on the side, but which is still in working order, would you consider donating it to Stratton CofE Primary School? It would be lent to families whose children could make good use of it during this time when so much learning is happening online and at home. Please get in touch with Beth Hamid, Churchwarden and School Governor, if you have something to donate. If you are a family with children at Stratton School and would welcome the use of a laptop to enable your child to carry out schoolwork at the present time, again please contact Beth to express your interest.

Beth Hamid: e: bethhamid@googlemail.com or T: 01285 644895.

Recycle your Printer ink cartridges via St Peter's, Stratton

We can continue to send used ink cartridges off for recycling and receive funds for St Peter's for doing this. However, the process is changing. The Freepost envelopes, which some people who have



been doing this to date may still have, can only be used up until 31st December to qualify for a donation. Instead, in future please can used printer ink cartridges be placed in the toothpaste recycling box in the porch at St Peter's. I will be able to send these off, using a free postage label available for download, and receive funds for St Peter's in a similar way. Some brands of printer cartridge attract a £2 donation- as well as being processed for re-use. Many thanks for your support with this.

Sue Hudson.

Thank you...

To outgoing and incoming PCC Members!

At the recent APCMs several PCC Officers stepped down and, happily, new volunteers came forward to take on their roles. We would like to express the church community's huge gratitude to all these individuals.

A big thank you, firstly, to the following people who are stepping down for all the time and effort they have put into helping run their local parish churches:

Sue Herdman - long standing Church Warden for All Saints, North Cerney. We thank you and wish you all the very best for the future Sue!

Penny Taylor - who has stepped down as PCC Secretary in Bagendon after a number of years of dedicated service.

Sue Fawcett - who is stepping back as PCC Secretary in Rendcomb, again after several years of loyal service.

You will all be missed.

At the same time, thank you and welcome to the following people who have kindly and generously come forward to take on the following roles:

Barry Koch - New Churchwarden for North Cerney

Caryl Barefoot - New PCC Secretary in Bagendon

Linda Wilkes - New PCC Secretary in Stratton.

Carol Bailey - Carol has very kindly agreed to temporarily cover the role of PCC Secretary for St Peter's, Rendcomb, until another volunteer comes forward. If you are interested in volunteering for this role please get in touch with Carol (01285 831836 or e: wrensorttwo@gmail.com).

Elkstone PCC also continues to seek a PCC Secretary. So, if you enjoy being the first to know what's going on and are able to take a few notes at meetings, please get in touch with the Revd Arthur! T: 01242 870402.

To those who responded to the Christmas Shoe Box Appeal

A very big *Thank You* to the people of the Churn Valley Benefice (and beyond) who have supported this year's Christmas Shoe Box Appeal with such generosity and kindness. I have been overwhelmed by the warmth and love from so many. You will have helped bring Christmas cheer to the families in the Women's Refuge in Stroud (the only one in Gloucestershire); also, shoe boxes have been given to *Signpost* in Cirencester which supports disadvantaged families in the local area. Although I do not have all the details of your generosity at the time of writing, I wanted you to know that many families will enjoy a happier Christmas because of you. If you are reading this at the beginning of December and have not had the opportunity to support so far, it is never too late! Thank you.



Pauline Farman paulinefarman19@btinternet.com 01285 831891
I will give fuller details in the February edition.

News from around the Benefice

St Peter's Church, Stratton

Carol Service plans for 13th December

Despite the uncertainties of our times St Peter's will be holding a carol service this year if government restrictions allow.

Our team has created a service of Bible readings, poems, music and carols sung by our usual Christmas choir. It will be socially distanced, and the choir may be wearing face visors. However, it promises to be a special event to celebrate Christmas so do join us if you can at 3.30pm at St Peter's Church, Stratton on Sunday 13th December.

PS - We may be outdoors for part of it if we are able to sing outdoors - so wear something warm!



Rendcomb round-up - Ruth Edy

A handful of us found ourselves at the headstone of Howard Edmund Gawthorne in the churchyard at Rendcomb at 11am on Remembrance Sunday, so we held an informal two-minute silence there. Howard's gravestone is the only Commonwealth War Graves Commission stone in the church yard (*photo right*). Originally from near Newbury, Harold married Fanny Trinder in Rendcomb Church on January 14th 1916. On their marriage certificate, Harold is described as a chauffeur and Fanny as the daughter of a labourer. Fanny was a member of a large Rendcomb family, the sixth daughter of Thomas and his wife, Frances.



In November 1915 Harold enlisted in the Army Service Corps in its Motor Transport division. In June 1916 he was admitted to hospital and diagnosed with tuberculosis. He was discharged from the army as unfit for service, and presumably returned to the village and his previous job. Harold's address on his medical records is given as Ivy Cottage, Rendcomb. He died on April 10th 1919, aged 31.

One of those present on Remembrance Sunday 2020, shared these thoughts:

Even though it was not possible to do the normal formal Remembrance, there was something very special and poignant about being able to do it at all in this extraordinary year.

The bird song during the two minute silence will stay with me for a long time, both the glorious tunes of the robin, punctuated by the nuthatch and supported by the family of long tailed tits as well as the discordant note of the crow somehow summed up all that we were there to remember and are living through at the moment.

Rendcomb College had an Act of Remembrance on Wednesday, 11th November. At 10.50am, the whole school stopped what they were doing. The Junior school children came over from the main building to stand in front of the Griffin theatre, and the senior school students stood outside their boarding houses. One of the church bells was tolled by the chaplain, the Reverend Bob Edy, and then Year 10 student, Fred Walmsley, played the Last Post on the bugle. After the two-minute silence, he played the reveille. Some residents from the village were able to be part of the event - at a distance.



The church members are planning to have a Christingle and Christmas carols event based at the village hall, on Friday evening, 18th December. This will be dependent on whatever the restrictions for socialising are at the time. Similarly, a Christmas Day morning service is planned for 11am on December 25th and the Benefice Service for Sunday 31st January at 10am. There will be *no* Sunday service at Rendcomb on 24th January.

Churchyard surveys at Coberley and Cowley

An article by the Revd Arthur Champion

There is more to Christian ministry than putting on Sunday services in the parish churches and more recently online. We are called to care for parishioners who slip into church during the week for private prayers and others who visit our churchyards. We are caught up in God's mission down the centuries to everyone within each parish and beyond!

Furthermore, we have a responsibility to those who have died and been laid to rest in our churchyards. Villagers often have fond memories of "those who have gone before" (Hebrews 12: 1-2). As we walk into church their headstones and tablets are a reminder of their Christian witness and example. It's as if they are sleeping until that great Day of Resurrection

(Matthew 24 - 25; Mark 13; Luke 21: 5–26; John 14:25 - 29) which will happen at God's appointed time.

As you might expect, the CofE has lots of rules about churchyards! For example, the ashes of a cremated body shouldn't just be scattered in the churchyard but rather they must be reverently disposed of by a minister in a specified place. Those who currently live in the parish or have died there or who are listed on the electoral roll, have a legal right to be buried in the churchyard.

Furthermore, if you can demonstrate a strong family connection with a particular church you can apply to reserve a specific plot. The first step in [the formal process](#) of applying for a faculty is to gain the PCC's approval. Next, public notices must be displayed for at least 28 days. There are fees to be paid: about £255 to the Diocesan Registry and £150 to the PCC for churchyard maintenance.

Quite recently churchyard surveys have been completed at St Giles at Coberley and St Mary's at Cowley. The survey at Coberley was undertaken two years ago by Duncan McGaw, Rick Kedge and myself over several bitterly cold November days (*see photo below*).



By contrast the survey at Cowley was conducted during the first Covid-19 lockdown by Margaret and myself when the weather was hot and sunny!



Coberley appears to be without a survey of any kind whereas Edward Hollingworth had a fairly good survey which just needed updating. In both cases the headstones and slabs were plotted with links to a table giving details (as far as could be deciphered) of each inscription.

The survey of Coberley churchyard certainly found plenty of space available for future burials. The situation at Cowley is even better since a few years ago Edward had the churchyard “rodded” to identify the exact location of available plots. Our new surveys are presented in PowerPoint for ease of updating and they can be easily viewed or downloaded from the CofE’s national website; known as “*A Church Near You*”:

- ·Coberley [survey](#) and [table](#),
- ·Cowley [survey](#) and [table](#).

Anyone who makes time to linger in our churchyards can be well-rewarded with interesting observations, for example:

- The oldest known burial at Coberley is that of “Sir Giles Berkeley” in 1294 whose heart is embedded in the wall of the sanctuary whilst, quite uniquely, Lombard his charger is buried a few yards away in the churchyard!
- Coberley has another unusual burial... a millennium time capsule which was placed there by Coberley CofE primary school.
- Coberley has a military grave for “AW Partlett” of the Gloucestershire Regiment who died on 8th June 1918 aged 19. His name also appears on the Roll of Honour inside the parish church.
- The oldest known burial at Cowley is that of “Daniel Wills Y” in 1753 in a table-top tomb. The capital letter “Y” could indicate “yeoman”.
- Cowley has at least two military graves: “Harold Leach” who died on 24th January 1915 aged 24 and “R. Grzegorz” a member of the Polish Forces who died on 6th December 1941.
- The south west corner of Cowley churchyard has the graves of two previous owners of Cowley Manor: “James Hutchinson” (died in 1873) and “Sir James Horlick Bart” (died in 1925).
- Perhaps the most unusual inscription is that of “William Bethell” who in 1851 was “killed by a falling tree 240 yards away”.

Margaret Davies is most knowledgeable about Coberley churchyard. We are also fortunate to have a photocopy of Cowley’s “Register of Burials” (from 1813 to 2018) which can be borrowed from Cowley rectory. I’m sure there’s more than enough material for a follow-up article by anyone who enjoys researching these things!

Schools’ News

Coberley C of E Primary - *Andrew Milner, Headteacher*



Autumn has brought a feeling of change to school life - change, however, can be good. We have evolved the way we learn using a combination of traditional methods and technology; virtual meetings have proved to be convenient and efficient and the children’s willingness to adapt has enabled us to hold onto our close community with friendship and kindness.

We continue to use St. Giles' Church weekly to combine the Open the Book assemblies, award presentations and have time to reflect. This week we were able to have a Remembrance Day service, hosted ably by the Year 6 pupils. With the absence of poppies this year, the children made their own using plastic bottles, glitter and tissue paper - they looked stunning. We have also endeavoured to raise money for the British Legion by collecting leaves in the school grounds.



We were lucky to be able to show many parents around the school for Reception places in 2021 before the recent lockdown. If you would like any information about our school for your children, please get in touch - we are always happy to help.

Find us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram...

Scrubditch Care Farm's Christmas Fair

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Thank you for the wonderful generosity you have shown through your donations to *Cirencester Foodbank* during 2020. They have been very much appreciated. If you are able, please continue to lend your support to the *Foodbank* during the coming months. Collection boxes are available in the porches of each of our parish churches in the Churn Valley Benefice and will be regularly emptied. If it is difficult for you to get out, donations can be collected (please ring Beth Hamid: 01285 644895 or Ghislaine Venn: 01285 831209. Ghislaine is also happy for donations to be dropped at her home). Alternatively, it is possible to make a financial donation via the Foodbank's Virgin Money Giving page. To access this go to: <https://cirencester.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-money/>

Unfortunately, Foodbanks have generally received far fewer donations this year due to Covid; the different arrangements at Harvest services have also had an impact. Demand is greater with so many families affected by the need to shield, being placed on furlough and redundancy.

A list of the items which are most urgently needed by *Cirencester Foodbank* can be found on their website:

<https://cirencester.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-food/> At the time of writing in mid-November, the items listed include: long life sponge pudding, instant mash/tinned potatoes, rice-pudding, long-life juice, sanitary items, jars of instant coffee, teabags (40s/80s), chocolate treats for the children, toiletries (don't forget toiletries for men!). Christmas treats would also be welcomed.

Thank you again for your ongoing support.

Sunday Roasts and Christmas Dinner

This might be useful for singles or couples who would appreciate a break from the cooker!

Jonathan's Catering (on the Cirencester Business Park) provided good Sunday Roast Dinners delivered to your door, or for collection, in the March-May lockdown. I ordered once during that period and found the food to be good and the quantities large.

After a summer break, *Jonathan's* have restarted this service. And they are now also taking orders for Christmas Day!

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for further information

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An Adult Main & Dessert costs £10; a Child's Meal is Half-Main and a full size Dessert and costs £5. (I know of someone in her 90's who found the Child Meal more than sufficient for her).

Sunday Main options are: Roast Beef, Lamb, Pork, Chicken or Vegetarian with lots of different vegetables.

Sunday Desserts are: Apple Crumble & Custard or Sticky Toffee Pudding & Salted Caramel Sauce. Yummy!

Christmas Day options are: Traditional Roast Turkey or Vegetarian Roast.

Desserts are: Christmas Pudding & Brandy Sauce or Lemon Cheesecake & Lemon Curd Sauce.



The food is freshly cooked and plated, not frozen. All you do is put it in the oven according to the instructions.

Delivery is £3 - maybe get together with neighbours to share delivery to one house?

Phone number to ring is: 01285 407307 or 07876773902 and orders need to be placed by 12 noon on a Saturday.

It's quite mouth-watering just to write this piece! I hope you enjoy it if you use it.

Regards and Stay Safe....

Revd Jan

Stratton Educational Foundation

Applications are invited once again by the Trustees for grants in aid of persons under the age of 25 years who, or whose parents, are resident in the Ecclesiastical Parishes of Stratton with Baunton, and who require financial help towards the cost of preparing for a profession or trade or in furthering their education, or in providing group facilities for recreation and social and physical training. Individual applicants might wish to apply for a grant to help with the cost of textbooks or equipment, for example, which they need for a college course.



Please contact: Mrs C Bramley: e: corinna.bramley2@gmail.com

Completed applications should be returned by 18th January 2021.

Christmas Card Recycling for the Cobalt Unit



As the situation, and government regulations, are constantly changing please can you check the *Cobalt Unit's* website for an update about Christmas Card recycling at the end of December:



<https://www.cobalthealth.co.uk/>



Thank you for your support, it is so important to us.

Kirsty Bradbury, Cobalt Unit Fundraising Engagement Officer.

Winstone and District WI - Moira Cima

Our Annual Meeting, held every November, was a bit of a challenge this year. However, as all our members have done throughout this year, we rose well to that challenge! The meeting was held via Zoom, and fifty per cent of our members took part, though all members were contacted in advance and given the opportunity to have their voices represented. The current committee were willing to stand for election again and this was agreed unanimously.



After the serious business of our Annual Meeting we traditionally have our annual photography competition and this year, amazingly, we had a record number of entries. The title was "New Life!" and couldn't have been better for brightening all our lives, with some beautiful interpretations of the theme - giving us all hope for 2021. This year's winner was Penny White, with a stunning photo of some baby birds in a nest she came across in her gooseberry bush earlier this year!



In December we hope to have an online demonstration from Joanne Copsey of *Aqua Wedding Flowers and Events* on how to make a Christmas wreath; and sometime in the next few weeks we may have another quiz from one of our members... intriguingly on the theme of "Toilets"!

*NB To hire Winstone Village Hall please contact Moira on:
07960 466348 or moira@take2-music.co.uk*

‘And is it true?’A seasonal article

by the Revd Philip Morse

Methodist Minister (now retired and a Stratton resident)

This most peculiar year draws to its wintry close and I am faced with the rather shocking realization that I began to study academic theology fifty-two years ago. I have spent fifty-two years trying (amongst other things) to answer Pontius Pilate’s question: “What is truth?” (John 18.38)

I began my quest in the tumultuous time of the Swinging Sixties when Bishop John Robinson had not long published “Honest to God”. The title sounded promising, but the argument of the book shocked a lot of people when Robinson informed his readers that it was unlikely that God was an old man with a long beard sitting on a cloud. In the United States Thomas Altizer went even further proclaiming that God was dead. That claim never persuaded me, nor obviously did it persuade the wonderful graffiti artist who painted his riposte to Altizer on a wall: “God is not dead - he has merely gone away to work on something a little less ambitious.”

Half a century of listening to, participating in, and being bored by the labyrinthine debates about the nature of the “authority” of the Bible! The only observation that I can make on that matter is that it appears that those who most wish to diminish the authority of the Bible tend to be the people who wish to make and implement life-choices that the Bible suggests are not terribly good ideas as a foundation for a stable society.

What is truth? What indeed is *the* truth! In the nineteenth century a new generation of biblical scholars were forced by the scientific techniques and rigour that the Enlightenment had set in train in the field of science to develop the Church’s own methods and rigour to examine its own texts and doctrines. “The Quest for the Historical Jesus” began, with some success, using texts, traditions, and references outside of the New Testament to build a picture. Many scholars wrote a “Life of Christ”, but the possibilities were limited until twentieth century biblical scholars developed further and far more subtle means of analysis.

One month before my London Finals our New Testament tutor told us to find out about the brand new technique of Redaction Criticism because he was sure the university would ask us about it - it did (and thankfully, I had!). Redaction Criticism seeks to discern and analyse the editorial techniques that the gospel writers used to form the distinctive message of their own gospel. Why, for instance, does only Saint Luke use the story of

the shepherds of Bethlehem, and only Saint Matthew use the story of the astrologers from the east and the flight into Egypt? Above all, in Advent, we are faced with the question posed by John Betjeman...

*And is it true? And is it true,
This most tremendous tale of all
Seen in a stained-glass window's hue,
A Baby in an ox's stall?
The Maker of the stars and sea
Become a Child on earth for me?*



Before you are tempted by the secular agenda and the atheist worldview to reply, “No, it isn’t,” consider the following. The fact that Saint Luke uniquely chooses his particular version of the Nativity Narrative for his own theological purposes does not prove that it is not true. The fact that Saint Mark and Saint John omit Infancy Narratives completely (we can discuss why on a future occasion), or indeed why Saint Paul omits them, does not make them fictitious.

In a world where the majority of people could neither read nor write, the accuracy of a retentive memory for oral tradition was of significant and highly prized importance. Ask any Scot about how in former centuries the stories of a clan’s great deeds were remembered and recounted orally by the clan bard at the bidding of the clan chief. Witnesses do differ in their accounts of events (ask any policeman at the scene of a traffic accident to confirm that), but a synthesis of accounts usually gets pretty close to the truth. As is often observed, history is “fact plus interpretation”, but that does not equate to an *untruth*.

Biblical scholars have unearthed some very interesting references outside of the New Testament. We are familiar with the tradition that recounts that Jesus was thirty-three years old when he died upon the cross. You may not be familiar with the tradition (from one of the apocryphal gospels) that Mary was sixteen years old when she gave birth to Jesus. That does not *make* it true, but the fact that the tradition was maintained is interesting. Put the two figures together, and then remember that the man who wrote the Gospel of Luke also wrote the Acts of the Apostles. What do you find? The suggestion is that Mary was forty-nine years old when she saw her son die. Luke says of the scene in Jerusalem after the Ascension that those present numbered the Apostles “and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.” (Acts 1.14)

Do you not think that over the coming days Mary and her other children would have shared their stories? Mary knew. It happened to her. After all, as the comedian, Max Boyce, used to say of the great deeds of the Welsh rugby team in the nineteen-seventies, "I know, because I was there!" Of course, Saint Luke was probably writing his gospel forty years after the events (to record the testimony of the first-hand witnesses, very few of whom were left to convey their witness in person), and it is unlikely that Mary would have lived until she was nearly ninety, but the "retentive memory for oral tradition" would have already come into play.

What may we say of Saint Matthew's account? Most obviously, Saint Matthew does not specify the number of astrologers from the east; extra-canonical tradition records that as three, probably on the grounds of there being three gifts. Sadly, also, for churches who like a good nativity play, it is unlikely that the astrologers turned up at exactly the same time as the shepherds and elbowed them out of the way - which rather blunts the point of John Hegley's lovely poem...

*there came three wise men from the East
and so it came to pass
the wise men found the shepherds
a bit working class*



A two-year window of possibility between the birth of Jesus and Herod's ordering of the Massacre of the Innocents could accommodate their visit and some religious art on the subject actually depicts Jesus as a toddler.

And is it true, as Betjeman asks? I think that you may answer "yes", and all year round live out the truth *That God was Man in Palestine / And lives today in Bread and Wine.*

Scrubditch Care Farm - Emma Costley White

CHRISTMAS FAIR - Saturday 5th December, 10am - 2pm!

We are holding our very popular annual Christmas Fair here in 'The Ark' and in the Barn, on Saturday 5th December; following Covid guidelines. We will have an 'in and out' system operating in the Ark, with limited numbers inside, and a 'take away' coffee, tea and cake walk through in the Barn, along with stalls. Christmas Trees will also be available. We will be selling all our favourites: wreaths, pots of cyclamen, narcissi bulbs, jams, jellies, chutneys, Scrubditch honey, Christmas cards, Cookery books, mugs,



Festive bunting and labels. New this year is our very own Apple Juice, picked and bottled on site! There will be several other stall holders there so please look at our website for more information and photos: www.scrubditchcarefarm.org.uk. If you are unable to get to the Fair, you can pay online and then collect at a later date / we may be able to deliver locally. Any queries please ring: 01285 895790

Also, don't forget that if you are Christmas Shopping please use *Amazon Smile*. We are one of the many charities that *Amazon* is supporting. So when you buy anything from *Amazon* always start at smile.amazon.co.uk type in *Scrubditch Care Farm* and *Amazon* will donate 0.5% of the net purchase price (excluding VAT, returns and shipping fees) to the eligible charitable organisation of your choice.

Fresh Wiltshire Horn Lamb - your Christmas alternative! - We have lambs going off on 30th November and will have them back the second week of December. If you would like to reserve joints please phone / email us: T: 01285 895790 or e: info@scrubditchcarefarm.org.uk.

Website - www.scrubditchcarefarm.org.uk Our new look website it now live! We are particularly pleased with the aerial shots of the Care Farm. If you know anyone who needs some drone photography, please get in touch; we would be happy to pass on details. We also have a new direct line for enquiries: 01285 895790.

Feel Good Farming - 'Growing well together sessions' - This year, a lot of vulnerable people have been confined to their homes. If you / anyone you know is struggling with mental health problems and feeling isolated, *please* get in touch. Coming to the Care Farm really lifts the spirits, and you may be able to enquire about Social Prescribing via the NHS / your local doctor's surgery, or contact us directly at: info@scrubditchcarefarm.org.uk / 01285 895790. We have very small groups and follow all the Covid protocol. We work outside and base our sessions around gardening. Sometimes we may just go for a lovely walk around our beautiful woodland.

Dementia Sessions - These take place every Tuesday from 11am to 1pm. Please get in touch if you would like to find out more about them: info@scrubditchcarefarm.org.uk or have a look at our website.

Sheep news - You may have noticed if you've driven past our field near the main road, that there are a lot of orange bottoms grazing happily! Dennis has been working hard, and we are happy to see that he has

married nearly all his 27 wives, in less than a month! Hopefully we will now have lambs arriving the last week of March / first week of April.

Students - If you or anyone you know could benefit from spending time with animals, making new friends, learning new skills, or is struggling with mental health problems, please see: www.scrubditchcarefarm.org.uk, and contact Gerry to arrange a visit : info@scrubditchcarefarm.org.uk

Group visits - We are happy to host one off group visits to the Care Farm. So, if you are part of a group that would be interested in seeing what we do here, please get in touch with Gerry.

Talks - If you know a group that would like to hear one of our talks, they last about 40 minutes and we give a fun and informative overview of the Care Farm, then do email: info@scrubditchcarefarm.org.uk

DATES:

Tuesdays until further notice: *Dementia* sessions in the morning and *Growing Well* sessions in the afternoons. Please ring us for more information or look at our website.

Saturday 5th December: Christmas Fair at SCF. If you would like a stall please contact Emma: 07966 255 631_emma@scrubditchcarefarm.org.uk

Monday 4th January 2021: Spring term 2021 starts.

[Please check Instagram, twitter, facebook and our website for updates on the Christmas Fair](#)

News from our NHS Trust - Anne Davies

A reflection on 2020...

When the Covid pandemic broke in March 2020 the trust was ready with supplies and it put in various changes to accommodate the huge increase in patients being admitted, many of whom were critically ill. All the staff, including the board, nurses and doctors, and the allied health professionals responded magnificently as the pressure built up. Retired employees came back to work, the number of volunteers working in the hospitals increased and the public sector support was outstanding. The staff of our subsidiary company, *Gloucester Managed Services*, also worked constantly to ensure a clean and a safe environment, provide porters and keep patients fed.

The personal toll on the staff however was enormous as they worked long shifts, moved across wards and departments and into new roles to fulfil need and all the time wearing full PPE. Tired, anxious, concerned about their own health and that of their families they still went above and beyond to put patient care first. Those working in critical care had the added emotional burden of looking after critically ill and dying patients whose families could not be with them. Some wonderful messages of appreciation were received which boosted morale but even so, as the second wave comes in, many are still struggling to recover from what they have already been through.

A comprehensive wellbeing support hub was established and about 8,000 staff approached it for advice and care. Freedom to Speak Up Guardians are always there, with the aim of helping all staff to feel safe to raise concerns in a confidential and supportive environment and peer buddies also offer a support network. Staff were encouraged to rest whenever they could, and to break out for a while if they felt overwhelmed, and sanctuary rooms for this were made available.

The second wave of the pandemic has now hit and although the number of inpatients is rising rapidly fortunately very few are in critical care. Changes made to various services because of the pandemic have proved to be beneficial to both staff and patients and will continue. The innovative digital progress made has had a huge impact, freeing up staff time allowing them to be more 'on the ward', allowing consultants to assess patients without having to travel far, and enabling virtual visiting for families. The virtual ward will allow for earlier discharge for patients safe in the knowledge that their progress at home will be continuously monitored. Partners in the Integrated Care Services are working more closely together. The trust has also been selected as one of only 3 pilot sites in the South West to be able to introduce twice weekly tests for frontline staff.

Gloucestershire is currently the best performing system in the South West with respect to the national ask of restoring planned activity to pre-pandemic levels. Of note is our outpatient and inpatient activity levels which are currently exceeding activity done in the same period last year and our ability to still deliver CT and MRI imaging within the national 6-week standard. We have been rated once again with a 5* for food hygiene following a surprise visit from Environmental Health. Moving forward public consultation on *Fit for The Future* changes the trust is

planning has now restarted. A new website *Get Involved in Gloucestershire* has been established where you can see the details of the proposals and have your say <https://getinvolved.glos.nhs.uk>.

Finally, a governor's role includes not only holding the Non-Executive Directors to account, but also being an essential link between the communities that we represent and the board, ensuring that everyone's views are heard. I would therefore like to finish by saying firstly a huge thank you to the editors of various local newsletters who not only publish my news and give me timely reminders but who also feed back the comments they receive. I would also thank those of you who contact me personally. I will continue to keep you informed so that together we can help ensure that the services the trust provides reflect the need and priorities of those it serves. I send to you all my best wishes and keep safe.

Anne Davies (Public Elected Governor Cotswolds)

From the Benefice Registers

Wedding:

31 st October '20	Madeleine Harriet Alice Clark	All Saints,
	David Richard Thompson	North Cerney

Funerals:

21 st October '20	Marjorie Lasbury	Cheltenham Crem.
28 th October '20	Robert Hawley	Cheltenham Crem.
5 th November '20	Vera Iris Dyson	All Saints, North Cerney (ashes burial)
12 th November '20	Eric Dollin	St Mary Magdalene, Baunton (ashes burial)

Thanksgiving Service:

23 rd October '20	Kenneth Gray	St Peter's, Stratton
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Did you know that The Barn Media and Enderley Pictures have produced a Cirencester Christmas advert? 'A Christmas Wish' is a short Christmas story featuring a family who live and shop locally in Cirencester. The video was developed to support local businesses by encouraging people to visit all year round, as well as at Christmas. Canon Graham from Cirencester Parish Church also makes an appearance!

'A Christmas Wish' can be viewed on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UO8E6aYtZDs&list=UUcQ221jSj-YEiHVPUDzA4tA>



A Christmas Poem

The First (*Covid*) Christmas

(with tongue in cheek, except for the last two lines)

The Nativity's been cancelled - the pandemic is to blame.
And Bethlehem's a ghost-town which really is a shame.
The Inn is closed to visitors - no restaurant and no bed,
But to keep afloat the Innkeeper does takeaways instead.
The Census has been mothballed until this time next year,
But that timescale's looking doubtful - put off again I fear?
The Stable too is out of bounds - a 'health hazard' 'tis said,
“The hay and straw a breeding ground which could help the virus spread.”
All donkeys have been commandeered for emergencies alone,
And everyone's instructed to **Stay Safe** and **Stay at Home**.
So Mary and Joseph must remain in Nazareth,
For the failure to comply with rules could lead to Covid death.
The sheep upon the hillsides are quarantined as well,
How long the shepherds furloughed for is difficult to tell.
'Tis sad the famous **Heavenly Host** are not allowed to sing,
So this year, even 'Peace on Earth' will have a silent ring.
Their concerts have been famous across the Universe,
But this year for Carol Singing they could be fined or even worse.
Due to International travel being brought to almost nought;
No flights, coaches or camel trains making journeys really fraught,
So the visit of the Magi cannot go ahead,
But they've made a BACs donation to the local Food Bank instead.
So if I've taken liberties with the 'greatest story ever told',
Let's smile and count our blessings, but most of all be bold.
We can do little better when everything seems odd:
Keep 2 metres from all humans, but stay very close to God.

Pauline Farman

Crossword

ANSWERS TO CROSSWORD BW66 (November 2020)

ACROSS:

1 BRIDLE	10 SLIM	15 AFRESH	22 ATOM
4 SWEETS	11 BUXOM	17 FIBRES	23 TELESCOPE
7 SAXOPHONE	13 TOWELS	19 HAVOC	24 TRUMPS
9 KING	14 LUMBER	20 SOFT	25 DUSTER

DOWN:

1 BUCKET	5 EONS	11 BLUSH	17 FORCED
2 DRAG	6 SUMMER	12 MUSIC	18 SIMPER
3 EXODUS	7 SNOWDRIFT	15 ABSENT	21 TEAM
4 SCHOOL	8 ELABORATE	16 HAZELS	22 APES

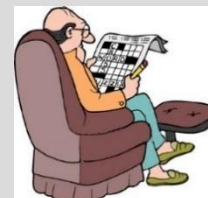
DECEMBER/JANUARY CROSSWORD: BW67 - *by Ben Woods*

CLUES ACROSS:

1 GROUND WHEAT (5);	16 PURSUE (4);
4 PUPIL WHO STAYS AT SCHOOL OVERNIGHT (7);	18 SADLY (4);
8 MULTICOLOURED ARC (7);	19 ATTEMPT (3);
9 SCARE (5);	20 CLEANSE (4);
10 SEA EAGLE (4);	24 COLOUR OF MILITARY UNIFORMS (5);
11 NOT MANY (3);	25 EVERLASTING (7);
12 EAGER (4);	26 DIPLOMATIC (7);
15 HOST (4);	27 MAUVE (5).

CLUES DOWN:

1 IT COMES TO CIRENCESTER ON 2 nd & 4 th SATURDAYS (7,6);	13 RASCAL (3);
2 VEGETABLE (5);	14 HEW (3);
3 DRESS (4);	15 THE LANGUAGE OF JESUS (7);
4 HAT (6);	17 TORMENT (6);
5 FIRST GARDENER (4);	21 CANCEL (5);
6 MOST LOVED (7);	22 SQUABBLE (4);
7 LARGEST CHRISTIAN DENOMINATION (5,8);	23 CURE (4).



1		2		3		4		5		6		7
8								9				
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26								27				

Services in December and January

The Service details set out here have been planned in good faith but will of course be subject to change if any further Government restrictions are announced during the course of December and January.

Assuming the lockdown *is* lifted there will usually be a Service of Holy Communion or Morning Prayer at **10am on Wednesday mornings** in St Peter's Church, Stratton during December and January.

The clergy are also planning to continue the online Zoom service of *Reflections and Prayers* each Sunday evening at 7pm, when there is the chance to chat to others before and after. Please contact David (01285 655199) or Arthur (01242 870402) to check the arrangements each Sunday.

December Services

Parish Church of St Margaret's, Bagendon

Sunday	6 th	9.30am	Matins (MG)
Sunday	13 th	9.30am	HC [BCP] (DM)
Sunday	20 th	<i>No Service planned at time of publication.</i>	
Friday	25 th	9.30am	<i>Christmas HC (MB)</i>
Sunday	27 th	<i>No Service</i>	

Parish Church of St Mary Magdalene, Baunton

Friday	25 th	9.30am	<i>Christmas HC (livestreamed) (AC)</i>
Please contact John Milner to book your place at this service, as space may be limited due to social distancing: 01285 643731 e: john.milner@btinternet.com			

Parish Church of St Giles, Coberley

Sunday	6 th		<i>Service at Cowley</i>
Sunday	13 th	3.00pm	<i>Drive in Carol Service Colesbourne (AC)</i>
Sunday	20 th	11.00am	<i>MP (CP)</i>
Thursday	24 th	4.00pm	<i>Crib Service (AC)</i>
Friday	25 th		<i>Christmas Service at Cowley</i>
Sunday	27 th		<i>No Service</i>

Parish Church of St James, Colesbourne

Sunday	6 th	10.00am	<i>MP (CH)</i>
Sunday	13 th	3.00pm	<i>Drive-in Carol Service (AC)</i>
Sunday	20 th	9.30am	<i>MP (AC)</i>
Friday	25 th	9.30am	<i>Christmas HC (CP)</i>
Sunday	27 th		<i>No Service</i>

Parish Church of St Mary, Cowley

Sunday	6 th	11.00am	<i>MP (MV)</i>
Sunday	13 th	3.00pm	<i>Drive-in Carol Service Colesbourne</i>
Sunday	20 th		<i>Service at Coberley</i>
Thursday	24 th	4.00pm	<i>Nativity (with Lucy Garbett)</i>
Friday	25 th	11.00am	<i>Christmas HC (CP)</i>
Sunday	27 th		<i>No Service</i>

Parish Church of St John the Evangelist, Elkstone

Sunday	6 th	11.00am	<i>Morning Worship (DM)</i>
Sunday	13 th	3.00pm	<i>Drive-in Carol Service Colesbourne</i>
Sunday	20 th	11.00am	<i>Crib and Carol Service (AC)</i>
Thursday	24 th	11.30pm	<i>Midnight HC (AC)</i>
Friday	25 th		<i>Service at Rendcomb</i>
Sunday	27 th		<i>No Service</i>

Parish Church of All Saints, North Cerney

Sunday	6 th		No Service
Sunday	13 th	11.00am	HC (DM)
Sunday	20 th		No Service
Friday	25 th	11.00am	Christmas HC (DM)
Sunday	27 th		No Service

Parish Church of St Peter, Rendcomb

Friday	25 th	11.00am	Christmas Service followed by HC (BE)
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Parish Church of St Peter, Stratton

Sunday	6 th	9.30am	HC (JM)
Sunday	13 th	3.30pm	Carol Service (Minister tbc)
Sunday	20 th		No Service
Thursday	24 th	3.00pm	Outdoor Crib Service in Churchyard (DM)
Friday	25 th	9.30am	Christmas Family/HC Service (DM)
Sunday	27 th	11.00am	HC (DM)

January 2021 Services

Please Note: On the 5th Sunday - January 31st - there will be a United Benefice Service at Rendcomb, at 10am, but no other services around the Benefice that morning.

Parish Church of St Margaret's, Bagendon

Sunday	3 rd	9.30am	Matins (MG)
Sunday	10 th	9.30am	HC [BCP] (DM)
Sunday	17 th	9.30am	HC [BCP] (DM)
Sunday	24 th	9.30am	HC [CW] (JM)

Parish Church of St Mary Magdalene, Baunton

Sunday	24 th	9.30am	HC (DM)
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Parish Church of St Giles, Coberley

Sunday	3 rd		Service at Cowley
Sunday	10 th	11.00am	MP (AC)
Sunday	17 th		Service at Cowley
Sunday	24 th	9.30am	HC [BCP] (AC)

Parish Church of St Giles, Colesbourne

Sunday	3 rd	10.00am	MP (CH)
Sunday	10 th	9.30am	HC [BCP] (AC)
Sunday	17 th	9.30am	MP (AC)
Sunday	24 th	9.30am	MP (MG)

Parish Church of St Mary, Cowley

Sunday	3 rd	11.00am	MP (AC)
Sunday	10 th		<i>Service at Coberley</i>
Sunday	17 th	11.00am	HC (CP)
Sunday	24 th		<i>Service at Coberley</i>

Parish Church of St John the Evangelist, Elkstone

Sunday	3 rd	11.00am	MP (MV)
Sunday	10 th	10.00am	Morning Worship (CP)
Sunday	17 th	11.00am	HC (AC)
Sunday	24 th		<i>No Service</i>

Parish Church of All Saints, North Cerney

Sunday	3 rd		<i>No Service</i>
Sunday	10 th	11.00am	HC (DM)
Sunday	17 th		<i>No Service</i>
Sunday	24 th	11.00am	Matins (MG)

Parish Church of St Peter, Rendcomb

Sunday	10 th		<i>Service at Elkstone</i>
Sunday	31st	10.00am	United Benefice Service (BE/DM)

Parish Church of St Peter, Stratton

Sunday	3 rd	9.30am	HC (AC)
Sunday	10 th	9.30am	Morning Worship (MV)
		3.00pm	<i>Christingle</i> (DM)
Sunday	17 th		<i>No Service</i>
Sunday	24 th	11.00am	HC (DM)

Christmas Cheer!

Ben Woods has shared a particularly uplifting video with us which can be viewed on *YouTube*. If you are feeling in need of some Christmas cheer do take a look at it!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXh7JR9oKVE>



CVB Website: <http://www.churnvalley.org.uk>

Facebook site: 'Churn Valley Benefice'

CVB YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8tFvSwMNjxmX1IK5sb59UA>

PCC Secretaries contd	North Cerney	Kate Thomas	
	Rendcomb	Carol Bailey (temporary)	01285 831836 wrensorchtwo@gmail.com
PCC Treasurers	Stratton	Linda Wilkes	tbc
	Bagendon	Martin Taylor	01285 831253 martin1943@hotmail.co.uk
	Baunton	David Shaw	01242 702898 drs2307@yahoo.co.uk
	North Cerney	Peter Knight	01285 831072 pdknight48@yahoo.co.uk
	Coberley	Alan Lowe (temporary)	01285 657014 talanlowe@aol.com
	Colesbourne	Amanda Morgans	07590 245185 amandamorgans@yahoo.co.uk
	Cowley	Vacancy	
	Elkstone	Brian Howlett	01242 870462 brianhowlett21@gmail.com
	Rendcomb	Annabel Purcell	01285 831686 annabelpurcell@hotmail.co.uk
	Stratton	Alan Lowe	01285 657014 talanlowe@aol.com
Organists	Bagendon	Tony Hymas	01285 831728
	Stratton	Robin Baggs	07796 812945 rebaggs1@gmail.com
Pastoral Emergency in	Stratton	Revd Jan Moore	01285 640077 therevjan@gmail.com
	North Cerney	Elmore Crump	01285 831275
Parish Clerk Bell Ringers Vulnerable Persons Rep	North Cerney	Judy Carter	01285 831425
	Rendcomb	Alex Brealy	01285 831213 brealya@rendcombcollege.org.uk
	Stratton	Alison Lowe	01285 657014
Safeguarding/Child Protection Vulnerable Persons Rep	Upper Churn	Dr Marie Owen	07590 907203 marieowen@doctors.org.uk
	Benefice	Beth Hamid	01285 644895 bethhamid@googlemail.com
Flower Arranging	North Cerney	Anne Norman	01285 831237
	Stratton	Lesley Pollock	01285 653145 lesleyalm@btinternet.com
The Tuesday Group	Stratton	Judith Wood	01285 652713 wood.judith@yahoo.co.uk
	North Cerney	Simon Pow	churnnews@hotmail.com
Magazine Editors	Parish Link	Corinna Bramley	01285 641523 editor.parishlink@gmail.com

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Associate Priests	The Revd Arthur Champion	01242 870402 championarthur@gmail.com
	The Revd Cliff Pooley	01242 243981 cliff.pooley@btinternet.com
	The Revd Bob Edy	01285 831391 bobedy21@gmail.com
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	Mr Mark Venn	01285 831209 mark.w.venn@btinternet.com
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