



St Lawrence Church, Guestling

YOU RAISED AN INCREDIBLE

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Registered charity no. 224791 (England & Wales) #FARM AFRICA

FARM AFRICA says thank you

Kate Prowse, Supporter Care Manager for Farm Africa has written to say she can't thank us enough for our support. Faced with drought, disease and depleting grasslands, many pastoralists in the drylands of Uganda and Ethiopia are struggling to keep their herds alive. For these families whose livelihoods depend on their livestock, poverty and malnutrition are a

harsh reality. Community animal health workers who are supported and trained by Farm Africa are helping women like Dawunda keep their goats healthy so they have milk for their children and manure for crops.

STOP PRESS The next newsletter will be with you on Saturday 2nd January 2021. Let's pray the New Year brings health and healing to a troubled world.

Don't forget On Monday 21st, around 4.30pm , to look 10° above the south-southwest horizon to see Jupiter and Saturn shining almost as one. It's our best chance of seeing what might be the Star of Bethlehem until 2080!

Contact information

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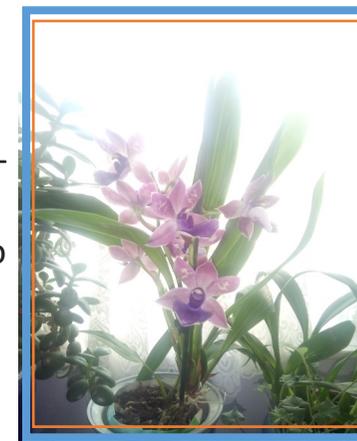
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THE BENEFICE OF WESTFIELD AND GUESTLING

A letter from Rev Joy 20 December 2020

I started writing this on Friday afternoon when Clem and I had been out briefly in the Old Town picking up some essential last minute presents—mainly books. There was a strange atmosphere and we were very glad to get home. I am rewriting the letter now as I have just watched Boris give his briefing from Downing Street. The news is not good as we enter Tier 4



tomorrow and the Christmas rules are now far stricter for both Hastings and Rother. I know this will mean last minute changes in plans for some of you as it does for us.

I've left in the picture above to cheer us up. It is of our Advent orchid which has suddenly got to Christmas early as all 9 flowers have opened now.

I had an early morning call today from a Westfield resident asking to book two places for the **10pm** service on Christmas Eve. Even though we are moving into Tier 4 tomorrow, public worship has not been suspended. Thank you if have already signed up for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services. It's still not too late if you haven't. We would hate to turn people away but we are even more mindful of staying Covid safe. If you have decided, in the light of today's news ,to stay at home we do understand. We each must do what feels right for ourselves and our loved ones and I pray that, amidst all this stress and confusion, you will still encounter the peace and joy at the heart of Christmas.

This comes with my love and blessings for you all, Joy

Please don't forget to sign up for Christmas Services at Westfield tomorrow or email me and tell me when you plan to come or if you no longer need to be on the list.

Westfield Church

Sunday 20th Advent 4 10am Communion

11am –12– Christingle Takeaway (see below)

Wednesday 23rd 9.30am BCP Communion

10am—11.30am Private Prayer

Thursday 24th **Xmas Eve 10pm** First Communion of Xmas

Friday 25th **Christmas Day 9.00am** BCP Communion

10.30am Family Communion

Sunday 27th First Sunday of Xmas 10am Morning Praise

Wednesday 30th Church closed

Guestling Church

Thursday 24th **Xmas Eve 4pm** First Communion of Xmas

Sunday 27th First Sunday of Xmas 10am Holy Communion

CHRISTINGLE kits that have been booked can be collected from the church porch after the 10am service on Sunday. **We**



will have a plate for donations to the Children's Society in church on Sunday and then in the porch. Please bring in any collection boxes you may have at home as soon as you can. Thank you. Thank you too to everyone who has helped make this happen.

The Children's Society runs vital services that help our most vulnerable young people. By listening, supporting and acting to change children's lives, The Children's Society brings hope to young people who are suffering, so they can enjoy the bright futures every child deserves.

their sin. However, God's own plans are not thwarted, and we see His perfect plan running through all these fallible characters and brought to perfection at the first Christmas. Christ our Saviour is born, and we can now happily turn to Luke for all the wonderful details!

Love Cathy

PS I will not be writing a study next week so, even though it is unlikely to be the family celebration we would all like, I hope you have a blessed and happy Christmas.

The First Christmas by Marian Swinger

It never snows at Christmas in that dry and dusty land.

Instead of freezing blizzards,
there are palms and drifting sands,
and years ago a stable and a most
unusual star

and three wise men who followed
it, by camel, not by car,
while, sleepy on the quiet hills,
a shepherd gave a cry.

He'd seen a crowd of angels
in the silent starlit sky.

In the stable, ox and ass stood
very still and calm

and gazed upon the baby, safe and snug in Mary's arms.

And Joseph, lost in shadows, face lit by an oil lamp's glow
stood wondering,

that first Christmas Day, two thousand years ago.

Thank you to Ken Holmes for sending this in.



Now we come to David, the great king who followed the Lord faithfully. Oh, except once! David's great sin was to fall in love with a married woman and then 'arrange' for her husband to be killed in battle so that he could marry her (2 Samuel chapters 11 and 12). The woman in question was Bathsheba and here she is in the genealogy, not by name, or as David's wife, but as *Uriah's wife*. David had other legitimate children but the line passes through the wife he gained through an indirect act of murder that is exposed here for all to see.

The list continues through some lesser known figures until we reach another Jacob who has a son called Joseph. Joseph was the husband of Mary and it was to Mary that a son was born, Jesus who is called Christ.

If we are ever minded to doubt God's acceptance of those who are marginalised by society, those who are rejected, those who are refugees, those who appear to be leading unrespectable lives, those who have committed dreadful deeds, then Matthew's Christmas message tells us that God works out His purposes through the most unlikely people. If we ever despair of our own unworthiness and are tempted to think God cannot use us because of our wrong turnings that cannot now be undone, then Matthew's Christmas message assures us that God wants to bring wonderful things out of the messiest lives.

Jesus' family is full of deeply flawed, sinful human beings who messed up their own lives and must have thought they had messed up God's plans too. In a way they were right and some of them, such as David, suffered deeply as a result of

Advent 4 Sunday 20 December 2020

Collect

Eternal God,
as Mary waited for the birth of your Son,
so we wait for his coming in glory;
bring us through the birth pangs of this present age
to see, with her, our great salvation
in Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen

Westfield and Guestling

Lectionary Readings

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16 Luke 1:26-38

BCP Readings Fourth Sunday of Advent

Philippians 4:4-7 John 1:19-28

Online services: Please check the website on Sunday for services for Westfield

<http://www.westfieldchurch.co.uk/online-services-for-westfield-church/>

Guestling <https://www.westfieldchurch.co.uk/online-services-for-guestling-church/>

Readings for Christmas Eve

Isaiah 52:7-10 John 1:1-14

BCP Titus 3:3-7 Luke 2:1-14

Readings for Christmas Day

Isaiah 9:2-7 Luke 2:1-14

BCP Hebrews 1:1-12 John 1:1-14

Readings for First Sunday of Christmas

Galatians 4:4-7 Luke 2:15-21

BCP Galatians 4:1-7 Matthew 1:18-end

CV19 Homegroup

Dear Everyone,

It is fascinating to see the different ways the four Gospel writers record Christmas. Mark does not consider starting his story with the birth of a baby, he launches straight into the adult life of Jesus at the time of Jesus' baptism by John. If we seek stars, angels and shepherds in all their delightful detail, then go to Luke's account, they are all there. If it's deep theology, wonderful insight and glorious truths about Jesus, then go to John's gospel. But, if you want a dry genealogy then I suggest Matthew. Doesn't sound appealing? Well, that's what I once thought.....

Matthew chapter 1 verses 1 to 17.

Matthew is writing primarily for a Jewish audience and is keen to show that Jesus is the Messiah promised throughout their history. He starts his gospel with a genealogy of all Jesus' ancestors. As we might expect, he starts with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the patriarchs (verses 1 and 2). We have seen in some of our studies how God made a covenant with these men of faith, a covenant that looked forward to a Saviour for their race and for all the world (eg Genesis 12 verses 2 and 3).

Next, in verse 3, we come to Judah, the eldest of Jacob's twelve sons. We have read his story this year and seen how he treated his brother Joseph. We might have expected God to work through Joseph's line. Joseph was a God-fearing, wise man who was used by God to save the lives of many, but the line of descent proceeds through the more flawed character of his elder brother Judah, the son of Leah, Jacob's

less loved wife. Read Genesis chapter 39 verse 10 to see God's stated intention as Jacob blesses his sons.

At this point a woman is introduced into the list, Tamar, Judah's daughter-in-law. The strange and sordid story is told in Genesis 38. Tamar was widowed and given to her late husband's younger brother so she could continue her husband's family line. In this she was cheated by her new husband and then side-lined by her father-in-law, Judah. Tamar took back her rights by deceiving Judah himself into fathering her twin boys, one of which, Perez, is listed in our genealogy as the ancestor of Jesus.

As we proceed further down the list, we meet Salmon, an Israelite from the tribe of Judah who was the father of Boaz (verse 5). Boaz' mother is named as Rahab. Her story is recorded in the book of Joshua chapter 2. Rahab was a Canaanite woman, a prostitute who ran an inn on the edge of Jericho city. As far as any Israelite was concerned, she was the enemy and the lowest of the low in society. Yet Rahab had somehow begun to trust in the God of the Israelites. When Israelite spies were discovered in Jericho, Rahab lied to the king in order to protect them and smuggled them out of the city. She later married into the Israelite community as the wife of Salmon, and she is mentioned as a woman of great faith in the New Testament.

The next remarkable pair in the lineage are Boaz and Ruth. We know the story so well (book of Ruth), that we sometimes forget that Ruth too was a Gentile, a Moabitess and an economic migrant and yet part of the ancestry of Christ, a great grandmother to King David.