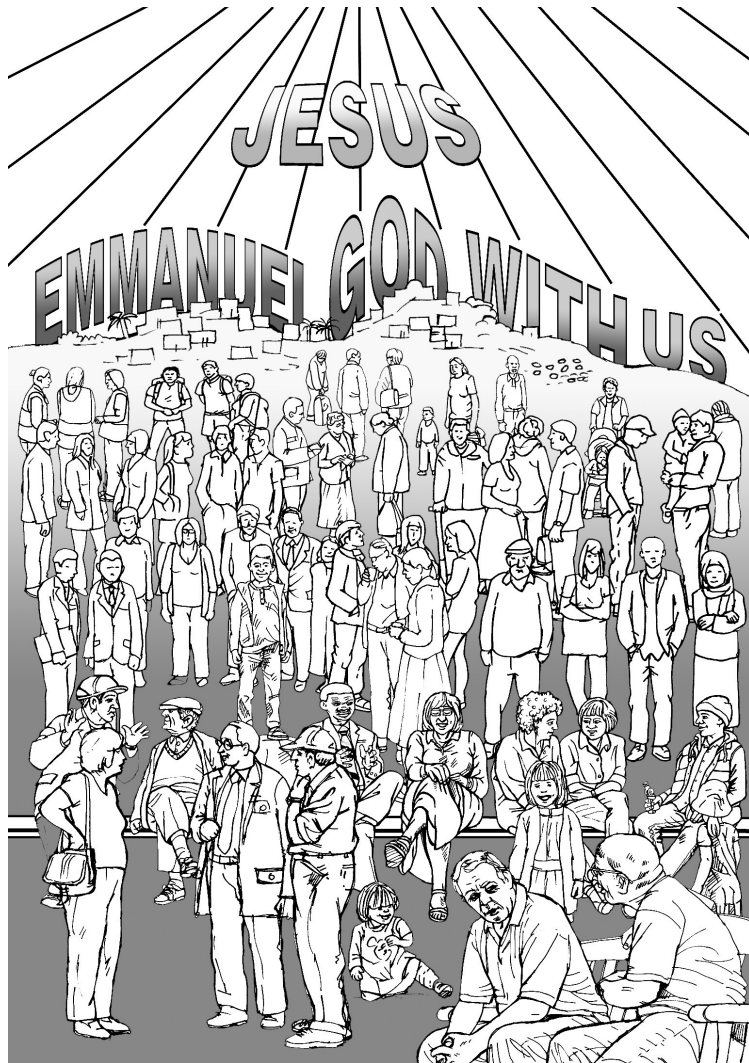


December 2020

30p

Upton-cum-Chalvey Parish News

St Mary St Laurence St Peter



SERVICES & EVENTS

Following the Prime Minister's announcement and advice from the Bishop of Oxford public liturgies in our churches have been suspended.

The churches will open for private prayer as follows:

Tuesday: St Peter's at 10.00am for one hour.

Wednesday: St Mary's at 12.30pm for one hour.

Thursday: St Laurence's at 10.00am for one hour.

Online liturgy will be offered via Zoom on Sundays at 10.00am, and on Wednesdays at 9.30am.

Scheduled meetings will continue via Zoom.

We will recommence liturgies as soon as we are permitted to do so.

Please check the churches' websites for the most recent information.

Fr Alistair C Stewart
Team Vicar

NEXT MONTH'S MAGAZINE

Please let me have articles for the January 2021 issue by **Sunday 6th December** at the latest!

Dave

Fr Alistair Writes:

The season of Advent, on which we enter on 29th November, and which takes up most of December, is a most neglected season. Already in November shops are full of Christmas goods (or at least those which are open) and Christmas planning is underway. This has meant, for years, that Advent is overshadowed by Christmas, even in the church. No longer a time of waiting and apprehension, it has become “Christmas” before Christmas, with the result that Christmas itself is over before it's even properly begun.

Advent will begin this year in lockdown. Whether we will come out of this lockdown is anyone's guess. Or, indeed, whether we will go back in again, or what “tier” we will be in when we come out, and what that means in practice. In other words, this Advent will be a time of waiting and apprehension. These days we are not used to waiting for anything; instant gratification is everything. Perhaps this lockdown could teach us how to wait and be patient.

Perhaps we could take that as an opportunity. Israel was waiting on a messiah. Would he come on the clouds? Would he come on a donkey? One sage said that it depended on Israel's sin; he would come on clouds if Israel was righteous, and on a donkey if Israel were sinful. The messiah would free Israel. But what of those who were sinners within Israel? Would part of the end of all things not involve judgement? Christians, who believe the messiah has come, still await his return. The same question of judgement hovers over us.

This is the waiting of which Advent speaks. Not waiting until 25th December so we can open our presents, but waiting to see whether judgement will be kindly.

So we can adopt our Advent start in lockdown by seeing this as a time of waiting and apprehension, and a time to repent and to seek forgiveness. Possibly when Christmas comes we will be able to come to our churches; if we come in a state of forgiveness and renewal, then even without the hymns and carols which are so much part of our celebration we can encounter behind the stark and stripped-down worship the reality of the messiah who comes to us again to confirm our forgiveness and to pronounce the judgement by which we are set free to serve.

17th December: Eglantyne Jebb – founder of ‘Save the Children’

Here is a modern-day saint whose compassion and determination has saved literally millions of lives.

Eglantyne did not begin as an obvious ‘mover and shaker’ of people. Born in Shropshire in 1876, she grew up in Ellesmere, studied history at Lady Margaret Hall in Oxford, taught at Marlborough, and then resigned as she was not physically robust.

Eglantyne moved to live with her mother in Cambridge, and it would have been so easy to settle for a life of peaceful obscurity. But she was a Christian, and at Oxford she had developed a passion for social concerns, so this compassion now drove her to take action.

She began in 1906 by publishing research on the poverty she'd found in Cambridge.

Then in 1912 the Balkan Wars broke out, and Eglantyne left Cambridge for Macedonia. Her months among the refugees led her to decide that long-term constructive aid was more effective than short-term handouts.

The First World War left Eglantyne horrified by the prolonged Allied blockade on Germany and Austria-Hungary, which even after Armistice meant starvation for millions of civilians, especially children.

And so in 1919 Eglantyne and her sister Dorothy Buxton helped found the ‘Fight the Famine’ Council, which wanted to end the blockade and establish a League of Nations.

One day during a rally in Trafalgar Square, Eglantyne was arrested for distributing a leaflet showing starving children which read: “Our blockade has caused this – millions of children are starving to death.”

She ended up in court and was fined, but the judge was so impressed with Eglantyne's commitment to children that he himself paid her fine. His money became the first donation to Save the Children, the new charity just set up by Eglantyne and Dorothy.

Save the Children was officially launched at the Albert Hall in May 1919, with the aim of helping the starving civilians of central Europe. It was a success, raising £400,000 in that first year alone.

When in the autumn of 1921 Russia was facing famine, Save the Children chartered a cargo ship, the SS Torcello, to carry 600 tons of lifesaving food and

medical supplies to Russia – saving hundreds of thousands of lives.

By 1922 Save the Children had become one of Britain's biggest charities. Eglantyne's Declaration of the Rights of the Child, written in 1923, was adopted by the League of Nations the following year. The present-day UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is derived from it.

But ten years of running Save the Children had sapped Eglantyne's fragile strength, and she died in Geneva in 1928, aged only 52.

26th December: In praise of Good King Wenceslas

When I was a choir boy many years ago, writes *David Winter*, 'Good King Wenceslas' was a very popular carol. A man sang the King's lines, a boy sang the Page's, and the choir filled in the narrative. It was not of course technically a Christmas carol but one for which most people know as 'Boxing Day' – the 'Feast of Stephen' the first Christian martyr.

But you don't hear Good King Wenceslas these days. It fell out of political correctness. The king was wealthy and very kindly, helped a poor man, but the last verse was the problem. It called on 'Christian men, wealth and rank possessing'. To help the poor and be blessed in doing it. All considered very patronising, class-conscious, and chauvinistic. So, it has simply disappeared.

I think that's a pity, and I also think it's a serious misunderstanding of the carol. It relates to the good deeds of a tenth century Duke of Bohemia, Wenceslas I, and concerns a king and his page, and a poor man freezing and potentially starving whom he saw from his window.

The king didn't, as he might well have done, simply order some minion to take the man some food or fuel. He decided to do it himself assisted by his young page. Together they braved the bitter wind and snow in order to take pine logs and food to this humble dwelling. That is not patronising but true Christian grace.

Yes, the last verse does express a Victorian view of characters but that's when it was written. No one should condemn the carol and its message. Who would shrink from following its example? I'm afraid texting a token ten quid to a charity does not quite qualify.

Love requires action, if we don't see that then we have missed the point. That is the message of this lovely carol.

St Mary's Lunchtime Concerts

The 30th Year of Saturday Lunchtime Concerts at St Mary's!

Due to the coronavirus pandemic there will be no Saturday Lunchtime Concerts until further notice.



St Laurence's Preserves

If you would like to order some St Laurence's jam, marmalade, chutney or other item from the preserves stall, please call Allan on 01753 532425 and he will arrange collection or delivery in line with current Covid-19 regulations.



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



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

St Peter's War Memorial

I am writing this on Remembrance Sunday, having just watched the low-key ceremony from the cenotaph on TV. We were reminded that the cenotaph as we now know it was erected 100 years ago, two years after the end of WW1.

St Peter's war memorial was erected the following year, 1921, and lists more than 70 names of Chalvey residents who lost their names in that conflict. Chalvey was very much a village then. There are photos of the dedication ceremony on the south wall of the church.

The DCC has decided that we should commemorate this event in June next year. Luckily Father Derek West and Arthur Spicer spent hours researching all the names on the memorial and compiled a very comprehensive record of service details and families of all those recorded. I have now got the (large) box of those records which Lynda Bussley and I hope to go through in the next couple of months - we would have started this already, but Covid 19 got in the way. Maybe we will be able to trace some relatives of the men, but at the very least it will be good to somehow display some of the information we have and to honour the men listed.

Margaret



Martin received the latest Christmas coronavirus regulations from the diocesan office.

Going to church in the coronavirus pandemic

More than 17,000 online services and events have been provided by Church of England churches since the introduction of the lockdown and restrictions on public worship earlier this year.

Figures from the Church of England's "A Church Near You" website, which allows people to search for church services and events, show that more than 17,000 online services or events are now listed, including Sunday Communion services, Bible studies and morning or night prayer. Many of these services take place regularly and this figure represents a snapshot of the likely total number.

The statistics do not include the Church of England's national online weekly services broadcast on Sundays and shared on Facebook and YouTube. There have been nearly three million views of the national online services and posts about the weekly broadcasts have been seen 23.6 million times. Contributors have included the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, the Duke of Cambridge and Pope Francis.

The national online services are being watched by a wide range of ages and around one in five people viewing go to church infrequently or not at all.

Other figures in the report show that official Church of England apps from Church House Publishing – the most popular being Daily Prayer, or the Daily Office of morning, evening and night prayer - have been used more than seven million times so far this year, up from five million in 2019. Church of England social media posts have been seen 86 million times so far, nearly double the total for last year.

The growth in online services has been helped by the Church of England stepping up its digital training programme for congregations. More than 4,200 vicars and local church leaders have taken part in remote digital training courses so far this year, four times the number as in 2019.

The Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, said: "At a time when many have felt isolated and fearful, Church of England parishes and clergy have broadcast thousands of online church services and events, seeking to bring comfort and hope to their communities. We know that tens of thousands of those tuning in will never have had contact with their local Church of England parish before and may never have heard the Christian message. Their welcome presence is a sign of the great hunger we all have for spiritual meaning in our lives."

St Laurence's Dedication Festival and Gift Day

We hope to celebrate this event in church on 6th December at 11am if the current lockdown has ended. Alternative arrangements will be made if this is not possible. The Gift Day monies will be used for general funds. More details will follow by letter, email or phone and online.

Parishes serving their communities

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

More than 4,000 parent/carer toddler groups are run or supported by Church of England churches, while more than 5,000 churches run or support lunch clubs, coffee mornings or similar hospitality for older people.

The figures also show the extent of church support for people living in food poverty, with nearly 8,000 food banks run or supported by Church of England churches.

Nearly 60% of churches are involved in food bank provision, while nearly one in three reported either running, hosting or supporting a parent/toddler group. Other figures showed 2,700 churches involved in community cafes, 2,400 in night shelters and 2,300 in holiday or breakfast clubs.

The findings show Church of England churches were involved in 35,000 social action projects, compared to 33,000 recorded in 2017.

These figures for social action have been released alongside statistics showing that the number of regular worshippers attending church once a month or more decreased by 1% in 2019 to 1.11 million.

On average, 854,000 people attended Church of England services and acts of worship each week in October 2019, a decline of 2.1% compared to the year before. The additional number of people attending services for schools in Church of England churches rose by 3% to 182,000. Usual Sunday attendance fell by 2% to 690,000 in 2019.

In 2019 there were nearly eight million attendances at Christmas and Advent services, and more than a million people attended Church of England church services at Easter.

"I am looking for a Christmas Card that contains inclusive language, and yet retains the richness of 16th century English and is overtly Christian whilst being sensitive to the multi-faith patterns of our day ... any suggestions?"



Christmas can't come too early

Every year it happens. I hear Christians lamenting how 'Christmas comes earlier every year.'

Since this September (or before!) supermarkets, shops and garden centres have been selling Christmas jumpers, socks and pyjamas and all kinds of other seasonal merchandise. Should we be annoyed or exasperated? Should we have gone around reminding people that it's much too early for tinsel and mistletoe?

This year, of all years, the answer from churches and Christians of all denominations must surely be a resounding 'NO.'

As people began looking to Christmas for some light in the gloom of the pandemic – and hard-hit businesses desperately need to increase their income and chances of survival – it sounds a woefully wrong note if the Church is saying 'hold back, it's not time yet...'

Because Christmas is that time of year when increasing numbers of people want to come to church services and share in the story of the new-born King. It is when carols are played in shopping centres, and there are openings to speak of the meaning of the season.

Churches might not be able to host big indoor carol services this year, but the

challenge is how we take the Christmas message out into the streets and neighbourhoods around our buildings.

This year has been one like no other for millions of people, with little prospect of better news into the New Year. So we need to be declaring the Christmas message of hope and light and joy in the darkness. And to be doing so at every opportunity.

But also, we need to be doing so with sensitivity and care, for the many who will find it hard to be celebrating this pandemic year, and with the prospect of large family gatherings in doubt because of Covid 19 regulations.

Archbishop of York Stephen Cottrell wrote in his 2009 book 'Do Nothing Christmas is Coming', "Christmas is one of the most joyful times of the year. It is also one of the most stressful. It is laden with expectations. It is often overtaken with grief. It might be the season of good will, but it can feel like the last straw on an already overburdened camel." He added ruefully, "Wise men would not ride this one."

Archbishop Cottrell is right that Christmas has to be approached sensitively, that we need to take care in how we celebrate, that for many people who have lost loved ones and livelihoods during this traumatic year, Christmas will not be easy.

We come alongside people with the news that the baby born in the manger grew up to be the Man of Sorrows, acquainted with grief, who experienced suffering and bereavement. God, born as Man, who shared our pain as well as our celebrations, ultimately died on a cross to rise again.

Our mission is to bring a message of hope, and to do so with love, humility and sensitivity to a hurting disorientated world – one that's eager for light in the gloom.

Revd Peter Crumpler

Angels?

Two daughters had been given parts in a Christmas pageant at their Church. At dinner that night, they got into an argument as to who had the most important role.

Finally, the 14 year-old said to her 8 year-old younger sister, 'Well, you just ask Mum. She'll tell you it's much harder to be a virgin than it is to be an angel.'



The Story is still the same!

‘Christmas may look different, but the story is still the same!’ That’s the message for Christmas in 2020. Coronavirus will make our celebrations this year look very different from usual. However, the message of the baby born in Bethlehem is still relevant!

In one nativity play, the highlight was to illuminate Jesus, with a light in the manger, when all the other lights were turned off. At the appropriate time, all the lights went out, including the manger one. The silence was broken when one of the shepherds loudly whispered: ‘Hey, you turned off Jesus.’ Of course, nobody can turn off Jesus this Christmas!

The angels announced, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; He is the Messiah, the Lord.’ (Luke 2: 10,11). The birth of this baby brings great joy and good news for everyone! As the king of the universe, He has come as our Saviour. In an uncertain world, He offers joy and hope, because He holds this pandemic in His hands. This is a real cause for joy!

‘Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom His favour rests.’ (Luke 2:14). We may feel anything but peace amid the anxieties over our current circumstances. How can a Jewish infant born to a peasant family in first century Palestine bring peace to our lives today? Jesus established peace with God through His death on the cross. Trusting the Prince of Peace for our lives brings God’s peace amid the huge uncertainties we face. As the carol says, ‘Joy to the world, the Lord has come, let earth receive her King.’

Canon Paul Hardingham



On the best ways for a vicar to disrupt Christmas

The Rectory
St James the Least of All

My dear Nephew Darren

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

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

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

But the one person none of these well-meaning, efficient, committed organisers can control is the Rector. You could call it a staff perk.

Carols will (accidentally, of course) be announced in the wrong order; if verse 3 was to be omitted, I announce it will be verse 4. This keeps the organist on his toes while the choir hovers on the point of a collective nervous breakdown. At the Christmas supper, my introductory welcome speech and extensive grace make those in the kitchen wonder if the vegetables being boiled should better be served as thick soup.

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

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

Your loving uncle,

Eustace

How to impress the cat this Christmas

If you are going to spend Christmas in a house with a resident cat, it may be worth knowing how to win its favour on the big day.

Recent research at Sussex University has found that humans become more attractive to a cat when they slowly blink at it, and mimic what is known as a 'cat smile.'

Cats are more likely to slow-blink at their owners after their owners have slow-blinked at them. Cats are also more likely to approach an outstretched hand after a person has slow-blinked the cat.

As one professor said, this is something 'you can try yourself with your own cat at home, or with cats you meet in the street. It's a great way of enhancing the bond you have with cats.' (Presuming you want such a bond!)

Try narrowing your eyes at them as you would in a relaxed smile, followed by closing your eyes for a couple of seconds. You should find they respond to you in the same way. You might even start a sort-of conversation.

Stark sign of the times

Children's piggy banks have been raided by a quarter of parents this year, struggling to pay their bills during lockdown.

A survey by Direct Line Life Insurance has found that buying food was among the most common reasons for 23 percent of adults admitting they had actually had to dip into their children's savings.

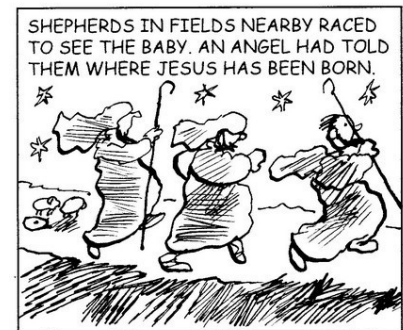
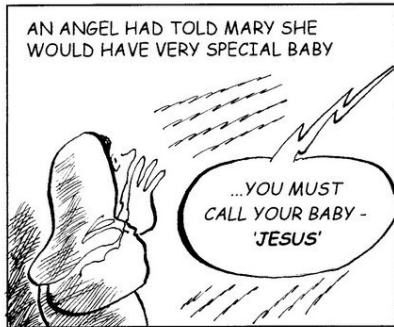
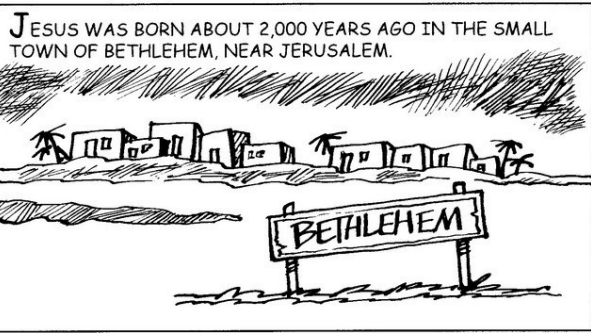
Picture

The teacher asked her Sunday School class to draw a picture of a Bible story with a Christmas theme. She was puzzled by Kate's picture, which showed four people on an airplane. She asked her which story it was meant to represent. 'The Flight to Egypt,' was the reply.

Pointing at each figure, the teacher ventured: 'That must be Mary, Joseph, and Baby Jesus. But who's the fourth person?'

'Oh,' explained Kate happily, 'that's Pontius - the pilot!'

The First Christmas

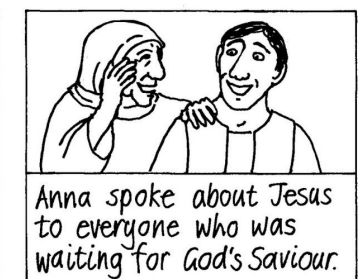
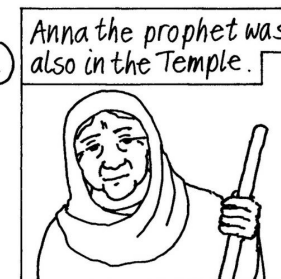
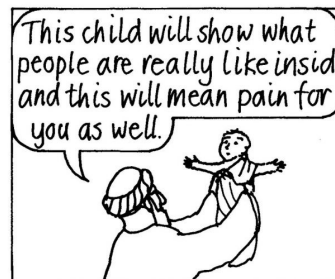
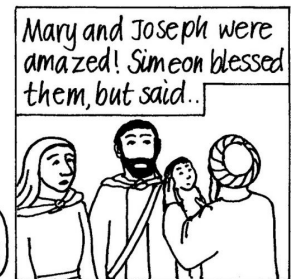
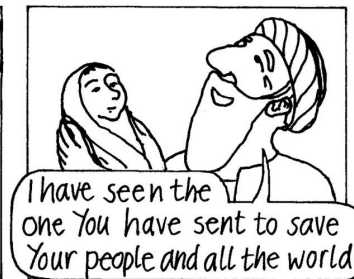
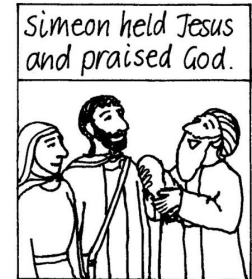
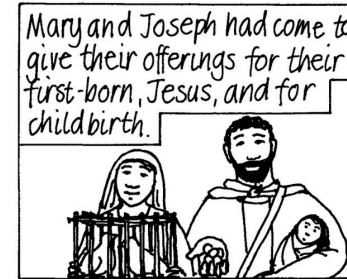
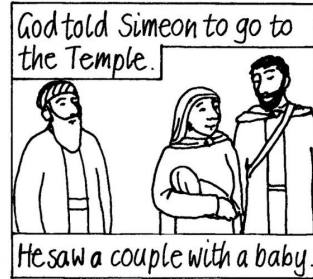


Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in Luke 2 verses 22-38

God promised the Jews that when times were bad, He would send a Leader to save them. He told Simeon it would happen in his life time.



CHILDREN'S PAGE



Mouse Makes

HAPPY CHRISTMAS!
Read the Christmas story in Luke 1:1 - 2:21

"I bring you **good news** that will bring great **joy** to all people. The **Saviour** has been born today! ...
Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased".
from Luke 2 vs. 10,11,14



A picture to colour for Christmas. Colour in one star each day as you count down to Christmas!

Dec20 © deborah noble • parishpump.co.uk

Mothers' UNION

Christian care for families

UPTON-CUM-CHALVEY / LANGLEY BRANCH PROGRAMME

All are open meetings and are joint meetings unless otherwise stated

2020 Theme: "Building with Confidence"

Meetings with a talk, either:

Third Wednesday of the month at St Laurence's Upton. Coffee and chat at 10.15am. A short service at 10.45am. Talk at 11.00am followed by a light lunch.

OR

Third Monday of the month at St Mary's Church Centre, Langley, 2.00pm

First Tuesday of the month: 2.30-4.00pm "Mulling It Over": Tea, Study and Prayer Group led by Revd Linda Hillier (see notice sheet for venues), open to all.

Second Thursday of the month at St Laurence's: 10.00am Mothers' Union Corporate Communion

Due to the coronavirus pandemic there will be no meetings until further notice.

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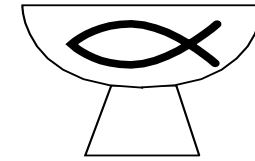
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Revd Alistair Stewart (Team Vicar)	01753 520725
Revd Linda Hillier (Associate Minister)	0208 8645728
Rob Walker (Licensed Lay Minister)	
Parish Churchwarden: Andrea Sparrow	07446 187762
Parish Churchwarden: Lynda Bussley	01753 573614
District Churchwarden (SM): Jean Smith	01753 862357
District Churchwarden (SM): Derek White-Taylor	Ex-dir
District Churchwarden (SL): David Kill	01628 776856
District Churchwarden (SL): Richard Emerson	01753 526325
District Churchwarden (SP): Peter Clarke	07464 718909
District Churchwarden (SP):	
Vergers (SL): Allan James	01753 532425
Organist (SM): Malcolm Stowell	01628 660651
Mothers' Union: Julie James	01753 532425

Clergy days off:

Revd Alistair Stewart Tuesday

Magazine Editor: David Kill

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Web-sites:

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<https://www.stpetersslough.org.uk/>