

At the heart of Christmas



**Reaching Out from the Cockfield Benefice
Covering the villages of:**
Bradfield St Clare, Bradfield St George w Lt
Whelnetham, Bradfield Combust,
Cockfield, Felsham, Gedding, Gt
Whelnetham & Stanningfield

**Issue 92
December 2021**

Dear friends

I am writing this on the eve of Advent Sunday, which marks a New Liturgical Year in the Church. What do I mean by this? Well, it's the annual cycle of Christian memory making which has developed in the Anglican Church. It helps us to remember the life, death and resurrection of Jesus; to celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit; and to remember the ministry of all those holy people who have gone before us and have spread the Good News of Jesus Christ.

And so we begin with Advent; which looks forward to Christmas. It is a season of preparation, and one of expectation. Of course many in our society are preparing and 'expecting' for Christmas; but in our Churches we are preparing for the coming of Jesus; which is 'at the heart of Christmas' as our Church of England logo says this year!

In England, Advent falls at the darkest time of the year, and the symbols of darkness and light are powerfully at work. In some of our churches we use an 'Advent Wreath' of candles to mark the Sundays of Advent, lighting a new candle each week. We focus on the patriarchs and prophets who predicted the salvation of humankind, then John the Baptist, then finally on Mary as she prepares to give birth to the Saviour.

We have many services and events taking place across the Benefice which celebrate both Advent and Christmas and I hope that you will be able to

come along to join with us in reflecting on Advent and Christmas; to sing the familiar carols, to hear the familiar story (perhaps told in different ways!) of Jesus' birth, and to share in fellowship with one another.

Whatever you have planned for Advent and Christmas, I hope that it will be a prayerful and joyful time.

With love in Christ,

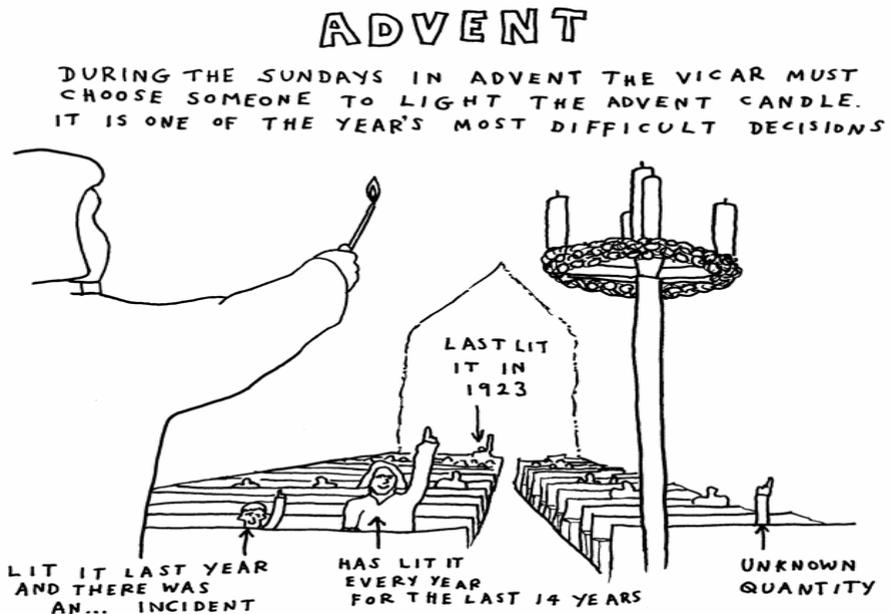
Sharon

Rev Canon Sharon Potter,

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ps Please do remember that we are still in the midst of a pandemic, and that masks are recommended when there are large gatherings in Church, thank you.



Knowing God?

A 6-year-old girl was drawing a picture in class. When her teacher asked her what she was drawing, she answered "I'm drawing God". "But no-one knows what he looks like" remarked her teacher. The child replied quietly "They will in a minute!"

We love a child's imagination, but we stand firmly with her teacher. God is spirit, we say, no-one can see him. Not even Moses – one of the Bible's heroes – was allowed to see God's face. But I wonder, might this child have a point?

The astounding, almost incredible message of Christmas is that God came into this world as a human being. We sing *O come O come Emmanuel* during Advent, then we find that Emmanuel did come at Christmas - '*God with us*'. He had flesh and blood, later experiencing all human life yet without sin. He spoke, he could be touched, he was seen, people got to know him. Now, 2000 years later, we too can get to know him through the Bible stories and in doing so we come to know something of God.

Knowing God may seem impossible to the human mind, but the New Testament often refers to it.

The apostle John affirms:

No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known (I John 1.18 NRSVA)

In other words, if we want to know what God is like, look at Jesus.

The problem is that although we can know *about* Jesus in our heads, it takes faith to know him in our hearts. We need to believe that Jesus was truly whom he claimed to be and believe that his Holy Spirit will make him known to us now.

So that 6-year-old girl had a point after all – we can know what God is like. What good news to celebrate at Christmas!

Malcolm Gifford

If you'd like to submit an article/notice/comment to Reaching Out, please email revsharon2@gmail.com by 20th of the month for the next month's edition. Alternatively drop something hand or type-written into the Cockfield Rectory letterbox. Please try not to exceed 300 words if you can! Thank you!



Messy Church News Corner



It's been a long time since I wrote about Messy going on in the Benefice, probably because it's been a long time since there has been anything going on!

However, we are back!

We started in August with an informal picnic in Felsham Church grounds where we just met and did some fun activities as well as eating cake and drinking tea and squash. We made giant bubbles, launched stomp rockets, (most of which are still on the church roof!) as well as doing some quieter craft activities. It was scheduled for an hour but most families stayed a lot longer: no one wanted to go home as they were so grateful just to be able to meet other people outside in the beautiful weather!



Lynn making the giant rain sticks

Then in **October** we did an actual Messy Church session in Felsham Church. The topic was Noah and we had planned for activities both inside and out. However, appropriately, it rained all afternoon so everything was inside—except Dick who was cooking tea on the BBQ—outside under a gazebo! Well done Dick! Unfortunately I was unable to be there as I was ill but everyone carried on as usual and Rev Richard was doing the story at the end anyway. At that session we welcomed Simon Willis onto the team to do activities with the teenagers. They built an almost life size(!) ark out of cardboard for the younger ones to climb in with their toy animals that they had brought along. The other activities included making clouds from shaving foam, animal masks out of paper plates, a giant rainbow using hand prints (on display in Felsham Church) giant rain sticks and origami boats amongst other things. Everyone had a good time and thoroughly enjoyed the tea cooked in the rain!



Sue and Gracie (Rev Helen's granddaughter) having fun making the hand print rainbow

In **November** we met again, this time in Cockfield Church to do lots of activities to do with Advent. These included our own Advent candles and edible Advent wreaths out of bagels and grapes, felt stockings, Christmas cards with wooden cut outs of the Nativity story and miniature wooden Nativity scenes. This time we had soup for tea as we thought we may be a little chilly in Cockfield



The ark under construction!

Church in November!

Although we were fewer in number than usual we did welcome one new family and a new member to the team: Melanie, who has recently moved into Cockfield. We also welcomed Malcolm who was running an activity as Judy was unable to be there. Thank you and well done Malcolm! We finished up with my 'friend' Scruff (a dog puppet in a bag, pictured right) helping the children to learn about the real meaning of Christmas. As the children left they were given a Real Advent calendar to help them to remember the real meaning of Christmas.



Scruff in his bag!

The next Messy Church is planned for **January 22**, venue to be decided. You are most welcome to come along and see what goes on! Please pray for our Messy Church families and the team as we plan and run the Messy Church sessions.

Christine Stainer and the MC Team



Help needed!



We are looking for a volunteer (or 2) to help in the kitchen at **Messy Church**. You would not have to do an activity with the children just plate up the food (provided) and make drinks for both children and adults. Then clear up afterwards, but there is always plenty of help with this.

We meet 6 times a year on a Saturday afternoon in either Felsham church (usually May, July and September) or the village hall (November, January and March) from 3 –5 pm. You would not need to be available for all 6 as it is possible to share the duties .

If you feel that this is something that you could help with then please have a word with me or call on 01284 388175 or email me on christinestainer57@gmail.com

Thank you

Christine Stainer



Big Green Tips – December

Over the next month many of us will be receiving a great deal of 'stuff'. Of course, receiving presents is lovely, but some you may not have a use for, some will be in vast amounts of packaging and some will be foodstuffs that you may not want to eat. So:

- ❖ If you receive gifts you don't want then consider how you might pass them on through charity shops, on Freecycle <https://uk.freecycle.org/> or to others who might find a good home for them
- ❖ If you haven't already written your Christmas cards (I have a friend who writes their cards on the beach in August!) then consider sending an ecard. You can then donate what you would have spent on cards and postage to a charity of your choice. It is estimated that 1 billion Christmas cards end up in the bin in the UK each year – what a waste!
- ❖ Think carefully about your Christmas tree. If you are buying an artificial one you need to hold on to it for about 10 years for it to have a lower carbon footprint than a real one. Think carefully about disposing of your real tree. Usually councils have a scheme for

chipping trees which means the carbon is returned to the soil in the form of mulch.

- ❖ If you are thinking about buying a new set of lights then why not opt for LED ones? They don't get hot, are brighter and use on average 75% less energy and can last 25 times longer.
- ❖ As you prepare for the big day, keep an eye open for eco-friendly crackers or indeed make your own from loo rolls and wrapping paper. You can also buy ready-made ones that you can fill yourself with small zero waste gifts. People appreciate the thought behind each gift and you are not adding plastic toys to the plastic waste problem
- ❖ Try to avoid buying plastic tat for stocking fillers. Your family will appreciate more sustainable gifts such as ethically sourced chocolate bars (particularly if they are Fairtrade). If you have time they would also appreciate any edible gifts you can make yourself.

Boxing Day – 26th December

Ok, it's Boxing Day, probably what you need most is a long walk in the fresh air. However, there is also all that wrapping paper to sort out for recycling or reusing next year. You may have a great deal of uneaten food so think carefully about how you can use it over the next few days to cut down on food waste. Do you have any tinned or dried goods that could go to the foodbank.

Wishing you a very happy and green Christmas!

Rev Richard

Christmas Coffee & More

You are warmly invited to Stanningfield Village Hall for a mid-morning/early afternoon coffee/tea/mince pie/cake on Saturday 4 December 11am-2pm.



Christmas Hamper Raffle,
Cornish Craft Creations,
books/puzzles for sale.
Do come along for a chat and a browse!



**St Peter's Church Cockfield presents
A Twelfth Night Entertainment & Hog Roast**

Friday 14th January 2022 at 7.00pm in the Church

Bring your own drinks

Tickets £12.50 are available from

Norman Kelly 828904, Mike Swiney 828652

Dave Smith 828239



Cockfield Benefice Services & Events – December 2021

Saturday 4 December	3pm Christingle with Baptism – Bradfield St George
Sunday 5 December Second Sunday in Advent	10am Communion – Stanningfield
	4pm Advent Carol Service - Gedding
Sunday 12 December Third Sunday in Advent	10am Communion – Gt Whelnetham
	4pm Carol Service – Bradfield St Clare
	6pm Carol Concert with the Tudor Rose Singers - Felsham
Monday 13 December	7pm Carol Service – Lt Whelnetham
Wednesday 15 December	6pm Doorstep Carols – Gt Whelnetham
Friday 17 December	7pm Carols at the Village Hall – Bradfield St George
Sunday 19 December Fourth Sunday in Advent	10am Carol Communion - Cockfield
	3pm Carol Service - Stanningfield
Friday 24 December Christmas Eve	3pm Crib Service – Bradfield St Clare
	9pm Communion – Felsham
	9pm Communion – Gt Whelnetham
	11.30pm Communion – Cockfield
Saturday 25 December Christmas Day	10am Communion – Stanningfield
	10am Communion – Bradfield St George
	10am Communion – Gedding

Please note these services may be subject to change – for up-to-date service times see the benefice website at www.cockfieldbenefice.com