



Stour Vale Benefice

Seven Churches, One Body, One Benefice

Newsletter No.296

Christmas Services in the Benefice

Friday 19th December 6.30pm, Carol Service, Kington Magna – activities for children

Saturday 20th December 6pm, Carols by Candlelight, Stour Provost – reflective service

Sunday 21st December

8.45am, Breakfast Church Christmas Celebration – children welcome to take part.

3pm, Outdoor Carol Service, St Andrew's, Todber

Please dress for the weather and bring something to sit on.

5pm, Carols by Candlelight, East Stour – Activities for children

6.30pm, Carols by Candlelight, Fifehead Magdalen – Reflective service

Tuesday, 23rd December 4pm, Crib Service, The Village Hall, Stour Row – children welcome to take part.

Christmas Eve

4pm, Christingle & Crib Service, Buckhorn Weston – children welcome to take part.

5pm, Christingle & Crib Service, West Stour – children welcome to take part

11.30pm, Midnight Communion, Kington Magna – traditional service.

Christmas Day

10am Christmas Service, St Andrew's, Todber – traditional lay led service.

10.30am Christmas Family Communion Service, East Stour – children welcome to take part.

**You are welcome to join us at
any, or all, of these services
and don't forget the Christmas
Lego Trail at Kington Magna.**



Please note: No mid-week Holy Communion on Christmas Eve or New Year's Eve.

Please remember all who are ill or bereaved in Sunday's intercessions and in your prayers this week

All who are ill, especially Joyce (ES), Irene (KM), Peter (KM), Nicky (T), Margaret (WS) and Tony (WS); for the family and friends of John Score (KM), Jeremy Seavers (T), Maureen Richards (formerly SP) and all those who are bereaved.

Christmas Message

Many thanks for your cards and good wishes for Christmas. I send very few cards as it is so difficult in a Benefice of our size. I do, however, look forward to seeing many of you at our Carol and Christmas services in the coming days. May your Christmas be full of joy and hope as you gather together with loved ones and friends and I pray that your journeys are safe. I wish you a real sense of the love and peace of Jesus Christ our Saviour come to be with each one of us through his birth at Bethlehem. The light which is never overcome by darkness.

Many blessings to you all this Christmas.

Clare



Readings Sunday 21st December 4th Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 7.10–16

Psalms 80.1–8, 18–20

Romans 1.1–7

Matthew 1.18–end

Romans 1:1-7 (NIV)

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God—² the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures³ regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David,⁴ and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.

⁵ Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name's sake. ⁶ And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

⁷ To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Matthew 1.18–end (NIV)

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

²⁰ But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³ "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").

²⁴ When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. ²⁵ But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

Collect and Post Communion for Sunday 21st December

Collect

God our redeemer,
who prepared the Blessed Virgin Mary
to be the mother of your Son:
grant that, as she looked for his coming as our saviour,
so we may be ready to greet him
when he comes again as our judge;
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Post Communion

Heavenly Father,
who chose the Blessed Virgin Mary
to be the mother of the promised saviour:
fill us your servants with your grace,
that in all things we may embrace your holy will
and with her rejoice in your salvation;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

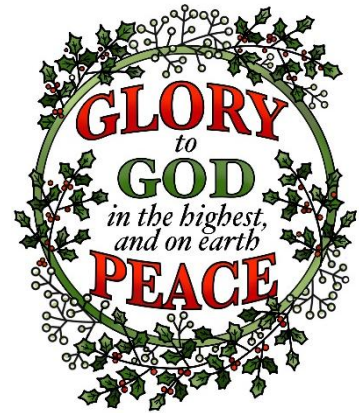
Readings for Midnight Mass and Christmas Day

Midnight Mass

Isaiah 52.7–10
Psalm 98
Hebrews 1.1–4
John 1.1–14

Christmas Day

Isaiah 9.2–7
Psalm 96
Titus 2.11–14
Luke 2.1–14



John 1:1-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

⁶ There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. ⁸ He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

⁹ The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Luke 2.1–14

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ² (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ And everyone went to their own town to register.

⁴ So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests."

Christmas Day

Collect

Almighty God,
you have given us your only-begotten Son
to take our nature upon him
and as at this time to be born of a pure virgin:
grant that we, who have been born again
and made your children by adoption and grace,
may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Post Communion

God our Father,
whose Word has come among us
in the Holy Child of Bethlehem:
may the light of faith illumine our hearts
and shine in our words and deeds;
through him who is Christ the Lord.

Sunday 28th December – 1st Sunday of Christmas

9:15am Parish Communion Stour Provost
11:00am Parish Communion Kington Magna

Please note: no services at Buckhorn Weston or Fifehead Magdalen on the 28th December.



Readings Sunday 21st December *1st Sunday of Christmas*

Isaiah 63.7–9
Hebrews 2.10–end

Psalm 148
Matthew 2.13–end

Hebrews 2.10–end (NIV)

In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered. ¹¹ Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters. ¹² He says,

“I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters;
in the assembly I will sing your praises.”

¹³ And again,

“I will put my trust in him.”

And again he says,

“Here am I, and the children God has given me.”

¹⁴ Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— ¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. ¹⁶ For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham’s descendants. ¹⁷ For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Matthew 2.13–end

When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.”

¹⁴ So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, ¹⁵ where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I called my son.”

¹⁶ When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in

accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. ¹⁷ Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

¹⁸ "A voice is heard in Ramah,
weeping and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children
and refusing to be comforted,
because they are no more."

The Return to Nazareth

¹⁹ After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt ²⁰ and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead."

²¹ So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. ²² But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, ²³ and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.

Collect

Almighty God,
who wonderfully created us in your own image
and yet more wonderfully restored us
through your Son Jesus Christ:
grant that, as he came to share in our humanity,
so we may share the life of his divinity;
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Post Communion Prayer

Heavenly Father,
whose blessed Son shared at Nazareth the life of an earthly home:
help your Church to live as one family,
united in love and obedience,
and bring us all at last to our home in heaven;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Other Benefice services/events coming up in January

Every Wednesday – Said Holy Communion 10:30am East Stour Church

Please note: No mid-week Holy Communion on Christmas Eve or New Year's Eve.

Friday 16th – Service in the Pub 11:15am

Monday 19th – Knit and Natter 2:30pm East Stour Village Hall

Tuesday 27th – Benefice Lunch 12:30pm Udder Farm

Friday 30th – Stour Vale Benefice prayer Group 2pm East Stour Church

Prayer in the Benefice – Sunday 21st December to Saturday 3rd January

Please join us in prayer this week, either by adding the topics to your usual daily prayers or by praying the specific prayers suggested below. If you would like us to pray for something, or someone, then please contact Jill Perry (octavoeditorsvb@gmail.com).

Sunday: The Fourth Sunday of Advent – Mary

God our Father, the angel Gabriel told the Virgin Mary that she was to be the mother of your Son. Though Mary was afraid, she responded to your call with joy. Help us, whom you call to serve

you, to share like her in your great work of bringing to our world your love and healing. We ask this through Jesus Christ, the light who is coming into the world. Amen.

Monday: All who are ill or bereaved, especially those listed on the first page of the newsletter we have specifically been asked to pray for; those who find Christmas difficult.



Compassionate Lord, have mercy on all who are suffering in any way. We pray especially for those who are ill or bereaved, and for those who find the Christmas season difficult because of loss, loneliness, painful memories, disillusionment, or for any other reason. Bless them at this time. Alleviate their misery. May they find in you a source of joy and peace. Amen.

Tuesday: Family

Almighty God, at this family-focused time of year, I seek your abundant blessings on every member of my extended family. May your favour rest upon us, and may we experience the joy of unity and shared love. Bless our homes, our relationships, and our endeavours this coming year. Amen.



Christmas Eve: A prayer by Peter Greig

May this day bring rest to my heart and my home. May my peace and perspective be renewed in the busyness of this Advent season. May my hand be free enough from spending and acquiring to receive your gift. May a little of the wonder and magic of Christmas awaken the child within me today. And may God's Word feed me and His Spirit lead me into the day and into the life to come. Amen.

Christmas Day: from *Common Worship*

May the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the perseverance of the wise men, the obedience of Joseph and Mary, and the peace of the Christ child be ours this Christmas. Amen.

Boxing Day: The World – A Prayer from Compassion UK:



Father God, we pray for our world today. We pray for peace and hope to abound. Many are affected by natural disasters: floods, droughts and forest fires. Many are struggling with conflict, poverty and the global food crisis. O Lord, we pray for your provision, peace and protection. Amen.

Saturday 27th : The Church

Great High Priest, unite your Church in purpose and in service to others in your name. May we work together with joyful hearts, seeking to help those in need and reflecting your love to the world. Give us a shared vision to make a difference, so that others may see your goodness through our lives. Amen.

Sunday 28th : The Benefice

Almighty God, we know we can achieve nothing without your guidance and help. Give us discernment and wisdom to understand your Will for the churches and communities within our Benefice. May we be faithful, courageous and diligent to act in accordance with that Will, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.



Monday: Poverty

Sovereign Lord, in a world you created to be rich in resources and fruitfulness, so many live in need. Knowing all things are possible for you, we ask that you bring an end to poverty. Influence rich countries and rich individuals to share their wealth with others. Remove the greed and the fear that causes them, and us, to hoard things we do not need, to the detriment of others. Stop all

exploitation of people and resources for personal or corporate gain. Give us all a spirit of generosity and compassion. Amen.

Tuesday: All who are ill or bereaved, especially those listed on the first page of the newsletter we have specifically been asked to pray for; those caught up in conflicts.



Merciful Father, hear us as we remember those we know who are ill in body, mind or spirit. Comfort and heal them. Have mercy on all who are suffering as a result of war or strife: the wounded, the dying and the bereaved, the homeless and impoverished, the starving and refugees. Bless the agents of righteousness and reconciliation at work amongst the stricken nations, and give peace in our

time. Amen.

New Year's Eve: Thankfulness

Loving Lord, at the end of the year, I come before you with a heart full of gratitude. Thank you for the blessings of the past year. Help me reflect on the goodness in my life and appreciate the moments of joy and growth. May I carry a spirit of thankfulness into the coming year, recognizing your hand in all things. Amen.



New Year's Day: Guidance - Based on a poem by Minnie Haskins

Gracious Lord, as we go forth into the new year and the unknown, may we put our hand in your hand, as that is better than a light and safer than a known way. Amen.

Friday 2nd: The World of Work

Gracious Father, as many people return to work after their Christmas break, we pray for those who seek work but cannot find it; for those who over-work and neglect others; for those who should work but avoid it; for those who do work but resent it; for those who exploit work and demean it; for the unemployed and their families. Bless, guide and influence them. Amen.

Saturday 3rd: People who pray



Listening Lord, we thank you for people who pray for others and for our world: for those who live in religious communities, for priests and deacons, for members of prayer groups, for everyone who takes time to talk to you about other people and situations. We know that you always listen, and always respond! Make us more aware of those responses. Act swiftly to make your Will be done. Encourage all who pray by showing them that their prayers make a difference. Amen.

You can contact Revd Clare on: 01747 838171

Or by email: clare@evzone.co.uk

Please Note: Clare will be on leave from Friday 26th December to Friday 2nd January and on Retreat Monday 5th to Friday 9th January



This Newsletter



We hope you find this newsletter helpful. If you know of anyone who would like to join the mailing list, tell them to send their name, parish and email address to Jill Perry at octavoeditorsvb@googlemail.com with the subject "Newsletter Mailing List". But, if you do not wish to continue receiving them, please email her with "Unsubscribe" in the subject field.

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Newsletter produced on behalf of the Stour Vale Benefice:
Buckhorn Weston – East Stour – Fifehead Magdalen
Kington Magna – Stour Provost – Todber – West Stour

