

The Herald

50p

December 2025



Reservoir Group of Churches



The Parish of
St Margaret, Downham with
St Peter, South Hanningfield and
St Mary the Virgin, Ramsden Bellhouse

www.downhamchurch.org.uk

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Keep up to date with events as they happen

www.facebook.com/downhamchurch

www.facebook.com/southhanningfieldchurch

www.facebook.com/ramsdensbellhousechurch

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What's on when and where

Sunday 7 December - Advent 2

10.00am St Peter's South Hanningfield Holy Communion

11.00am St Margaret's Downham Family Service

Note: No service at Ramsden Bellhouse

Sunday 14 December - Advent 3

11.00am St Margaret's Downham Sung Eucharist

3.00pm St Peter's South Hanningfield Carol Service

Note: No service at Ramsden Bellhouse

Thursday 18 December

7.30pm St Mary's Ramsden Bellhouse Carol Service

Sunday 21 December - Advent 4

11.00am St Margaret's Downham Group Sung Eucharist
with carols

Note: No services at Downham or South Hanningfield

Wednesday 24 December - Christmas Eve

3.00pm St Margaret's Downham Christingle Service

9.30pm St Peter's South Hanningfield Christmas Holy Communion

9.30pm St Mary's Ramsden Bellhouse Christmas Holy Communion

11.30pm St Margaret's Downham Midnight Mass

Thursday 25 December - Christmas Day

10.00am St Margaret's Downham Holy Communion

Sunday 28 December - Christmas 1

11.00am St Margaret's Downham Group Sung Eucharist

Note: No services at South Hanningfield or Ramsden Bellhouse

Sunday 4 January - Christmas 2

10.00am St Peter's South Hanningfield Holy Communion

11.00am St Margaret's Downham Family Service

Note: No service at Ramsden Bellhouse

**Please see a reminder on page 4
of all the
Christmas services
in our three churches**

St Margaret's Church

Christmas

Bazaar



To be held in

Downham Village Hall
School Road, Downham CM11 1QN

Saturday
6 December

11.00am to 3.00pm

Stalls, games, refreshments
The place to buy your Christmas gifts



Come and meet
Father Christmas

The Churches of

**St Margaret Downham with St Peter South Hanningfield
and St Mary Ramsden Bellhouse**

wish you
a Happy and Blessed Christmas



We invite you to join one or more of our Christmas celebrations

Sunday 14 December - Advent 3

11.00am	Downham	Holy Communion
3.00pm	South Hanningfield	Carol Service

Thursday 18 December

7.30pm	Ramsden Bellhouse	Carol Service
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Sunday 21 December - Advent 4

11.00am	Downham	Holy Communion & Carols
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Wednesday 24 December - Christmas Eve

3.00pm	Downham	Crib and Christingle Service
9.30pm	Ramsden Bellhouse	Christmas Eve Communion
9.30pm	South Hanningfield	Christmas Eve Communion
11.30pm	Downham	Midnight Communion

Thursday 25 December - Christmas Day

10.00am	Downham	Christmas Communion
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Sunday 28 December - Christmas 1

11.00am	Downham	Holy Communion
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From the ministry team



One of the lovely parts of Christmas is how we all have different traditions, and different parts of this season that really make Christmas...well Christmas. Perhaps it is decorating the tree, or enjoying the first mince pie of the year. Maybe its going to see the panto, the school nativity, or a carol service. Maybe it's enjoying some mulled wine at the church's Christmas Bazaar!

For me, the thing that makes Christmas 'Christmas' is Midnight Mass. I realise that might sound strange. As a vicar, by the time I get to Christmas Eve I have normally eaten more mince pies and sung 'Silent Night' more times than I care to count (I never tire of Silent Night, though I must confess I cannot always say the same about 'Away in a Manger'...).

However, there is something so special about church services on Christmas Eve. For me there is just something really special about Midnight Mass. To head to church in the middle of the night (or at 9.30pm, as we do in South Hanningfield and Ramsden Bellhouse), in the often damp, cold weather of late December, and have a church service does seem a little crazy. Yet we do so because of the special thing we celebrate - the very reason we have Christmas - the birth of Jesus Christ. Jesus, the Son of God, was born in the middle of the night. Not in a plush palace, as might befit the Son of God, but in a stable.

The bible tells us that God is love, and Jesus was born, and lived, and died, to show us how much we are loved by God, and so that we might never be separated from that love. As the words of Silent Night remind us:

*Silent night, holy night,
Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from Thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth.*

However you celebrate this season, I wish you all a very merry Christmas.
God bless,

The Revd Jacqui

The history of Christmas

The Bible does not give a date for the birth of Jesus. In the third century it was suggested that Jesus was conceived at the Spring equinox, 25 March, popularising the belief that He was born nine months later on 25 December. John Chrysostom, the Archbishop of Constantinople, encouraged Christians worldwide to make Christmas a holy day in about 400.

In the early Middle Ages, Christians celebrated a series of midwinter holy days. Epiphany (which recalls the visit to the infant Jesus of the wise men bearing gifts) was the climax of 12 days of Christmas, beginning on 25 December. The Emperor Charlemagne chose 25 December for his coronation in 800, and the prominence of Christmas Day rose. In England, William the Conqueror also chose 25 December for his coronation in 1066, and the date became a fixture both for religious observance and feasting.

Cooking a boar was a common feature of mediaeval Christmas feasts, and singing carols accompanied it. Writers of the time lament the fact that the true significance of Christmas was being lost because of partying. They condemn the rise of 'misrule' – drunken dancing and promiscuity. The day was a public holiday, and traditions of bringing evergreen foliage into the house and the exchange of gifts (usually on Epiphany) date from this time.

In the 17th century the rise of new Protestant denominations led to a rejection of many celebrations that were associated with Catholic Christianity. Christmas was one of them. After the execution of Charles I, England's Puritan rulers made the celebration of Christmas illegal for 14 years. The restoration of Charles II ended the ban, but religious leaders continued to discourage excess, especially in Scotland. In Western Europe (but not worldwide) the day for exchanging gifts changed from Epiphany (6 January) to Christmas Day.

By the 1820s, the significance of Christmas was declining. Charles Dickens was one of several writers who sought to restore it. His novel *A Christmas Carol* was significant in reviving merriment during the festival. He emphasised charity and family reunions, alongside religious observance. Christmas trees, paper chains, cards and many well-known carols date from this time. So did the tradition of Boxing Day, on 26 December, when tradesmen who had given reliable service during the year would collect 'boxes' of money or gifts from their customers.

In Europe Santa Claus is the figure associated with the bringing of gifts. Santa Claus is a shortening of the name of Saint Nicholas, who was a Christian bishop in the fourth century in present-day Turkey. He was particularly noted for his care for children and for his generosity to the poor. By the Middle Ages his appearance, in red bishop's robes and a mitre, was adored in the

Netherlands and familiar across Europe.

Father Christmas dates from 17th century England, where he was a secular figure of good cheer (more associated with drunkenness than gifts). The transformation of Santa Claus into today's Father Christmas started in New York in the 1880s, where his red robes and white beard became potent advertising symbols. In some countries (such as Latin America and Eastern Europe) the tradition attempts to combine the secular and religious elements by holding that Santa Claus makes children's presents and then gives them to the baby Jesus to distribute.

From the registers

Downham

Baptism

26 October	Maia Elizabeth Olive Knapp
23 November	Noah Owen Moss

Burial of ashes

31 October	Paul Bernard Neal
	Pamela Julia Neal

Funeral

12 November	Sylvia Ester Purkis
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St Margaret's Downham

Christmas Bazaar - Saturday 6 December

We hope you will come along to our Christmas Bazaar in Downham Village Hall where you may find some interesting or unusual Christmas gifts, as well as the usual refreshments, jams and cakes. For the children we are assured that Father Christmas has it in his diary and will be there. See further details on page 3.

Christmas services

Our Christmas services start on Sunday 21 December when we will be singing carols during our usual Sunday Eucharist service. As it is the third Sunday of the month it will be a joint service for all three churches in our parish and we hope to see a full church.



At 3.00pm on Christmas Eve we have our ever popular Crib and Christingle service during which we bless the Christmas Crib, sing lots of carols and distribute Christingles to the children. All are welcome, but please arrive early if you want to get a seat. The collection taken at this service is given to The Children's Society.

At 11.30pm on Christmas Eve we have our Midnight Mass, then on Christmas Day at 10.00am there will be a said service of Holy Communion with Carols. We hope you will be able to join us sometime over the Christmas period.

Downham WI

Yes Christtmas is just around the corner and everyone is in full preparation mode. We too are preparing for our Christmas lunch, with entertainment and I can confidently say that all the ladies are looking forward to a merry festive occasion.

In November a few of us travelled down to Southend and rode on the train to the end of the Pier.



Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Wendy

News from Downham School

At Downham Church of England Primary School, we are very much looking forward to Christmas! As we enter the Advent season, the decorations are being pulled out of cupboards, Christmas trees are appearing in classrooms, and the sound of singing can be heard throughout the school. Each class, from the youngest to the oldest, will participate in a special Christmas event. EYFS and Key Stage 1 will be performing in Nativity plays, retelling the wonderful story of Jesus' incarnation, Years 3, 4 and 5 will be leading a Carol Concert at school, while Year 6 will be taking part in a Christingle service at St Margaret's Church.

At this time of year, we encourage the children to embrace the joy and wonder of Emmanuel; how amazing that God should become man and come to dwell with us! Throughout the festive season, we will also be taking time to learn and reflect. There will be opportunities for the children to engage with the Christmas story – considering how Mary must have felt when she received the news from the angel Gabriel that she would be the mother of the Son of God, thinking about it from Joseph's perspective as he too received the unexpected news. We will explore the responses from the shepherds and the Wise Men, as both groups left everything to seek the newborn Christ.

As adults at school, it is a time to see the story afresh, through the eyes of the children around us – and what a privilege this is! It can be so easy to get caught up in the busyness and chaos of December, chasing our tails as we organise and plan for Christmas, both at school and at home. The awe and insights of the children can be real blessings to our hearts as they ponder the true meaning of Christmas. They encourage us to slow down and to feel the presence of Emmanuel – God with us.

We would like to wish everyone in our local community a Blessed and Peaceful Christmas, filled with love, joy and wonder. Thank you for all your support, prayers and encouragement throughout 2025.

Lynne Boyd

RE & Humanities Leader at Downham Church of England Primary School

St Mary's Ramsden Bellhouse

Morning Prayer

In view of the minimal attendance recently there will be no services of Morning Prayer on the second Sunday of the month during the winter. We hope we may be able to resume when the weather gets warmer.

Christmas services

We commence our celebration of Christmas with the service of Nine Lessons and Carols at 7.30pm on Thursday 18 December. On Christmas Eve there will be a service of Holy Communion at 9.30pm. Please note there will be no service of Holy Communion on Sunday 28 December.

Community Cuppa & Cake afternoon

Ramsden Heath Village Hall

Dowsetts Lane CM11 1HX

Tuesday 2 December

Our last Coffee Afternoon fell on Poppy Day 11 November and as usual we had a really good turnout. We purchased a lady soldier from the Royal British Legion for Ramsden Heath Memorial Garden. It seems to have made the garden more complete. Our next Coffee Afternoon is on the first Tuesday 2 December and we will be entertained by Downham School Choir. This will begin at 2.30pm and it puts everyone into the Christmas Spirit. There will be no books or jigsaws available that day as we need the room for the choir but plenty of cake for £1.50 and a cuppa for 50p and we will be raising the money for Children in Need.

May we wish everyone a very Happy Christmas and a Healthy New Year and thank you to everyone who has supported us in raising money for so many charities.

Ramsden Cupcakes

Ramsden Heath Horticultural & Allotment Society

On Thursday 6 November we welcomed Marion Scott and friends from 'Wickford in Bloom', a group of volunteers who work together to produce a wonderful array of flowers along Wickford High Street. Marion gave a very lively, interesting and informative talk of the work carried out by the volunteers along with photos of some of the displays which were around the town this summer.

On Thursday 4 December we will be holding our Christmas party at Ramsden Heath Village Hall. The hall will be open at 7.00pm for members to bring their contributions for the meal which will start at 7.30pm.

The price for the evening is £15 per person (members only) and if you haven't yet ordered your tickets, please telephone Rita Elcock on 07946 059878, or email t.elcock@talktalk.net.

We look forward to another fun evening with lots of good food and drink and a glass of punch to welcome us in. Please bring your own choice of liquid

refreshment, and a glass to drink it from.

This year we are being entertained by Debbie Watt, a 'professional vocalist' who will hopefully get everyone singing along with the music and then lead us in to our 'Twelve Days of Christmas'.

The first meeting of 2026 will be on Thursday 8 January. This will be our usual social get together and 'Bring and Buy' sale, a chance to offload some of those unwanted items cluttering up your cupboards – and then go home with something else.



On behalf of Ramsden Heath Horticultural Society we would like to wish all Herald readers a very merry Christmas and a happy, healthy and peaceful 2026.



Ramsden Heath Social Club

Our final monthly BINGO of 2025 will be on Friday 5 December at 8.00pm. Just £1.00 to play plus £2.00 for each book you would like to play. Cash prizes to be won.

All welcome. FREE tea/coffee/biscuits at the half-time break, but please feel free to bring other drinks/snacks of your own.

The final event of the year is our annual MINCE PIES/MULLED WINE/PRIZE GIVEAWAY NIGHT which is on Friday 19 December from 8.00pm. Entry is £5 for Members, £7.50 for Guests & £2.50 for Children.

A fun night leading up to Christmas – come & enjoy a cup of mulled wine and a mince pie or two, as well as some festive music & some games throughout the evening where you'll be in with a chance to win one of the many table prizes or a big cash prize!

Places are limited so please let us know ASAP if you want to come along & haven't already put your name on the list.

All our events take place in Ramsden Heath Village Hall, Dowsetts Lane.

For more information/tickets please contact:

Dave Quinney on 07950 309524 or Dave Charlton on 07940 540819

St Peter's South Hanningfield

Carol singing at The Old Windmill - Tuesday 9 December

Last year members of the choir and others from our three churches went along to sing carols at The Old Windmill and we have been invited back again this year. If you enjoy carol singing and are free that evening, do come along. We will be singing for about an hour from 7.00pm, then usually enjoy a little Christmas cheer, courtesy of the management.

Christmas services

Our Christmas services commence with our service of carols and readings at 3.00pm on Sunday 14 December. Seasonal refreshments will be served after. We hope to see you there. Then at 9.30pm on Christmas Eve we have our service of Holy Communion with carols.

South Hanningfield Village Hall

We had an **Autumn litter pick** and tidy up of the village footpath a few weeks ago. Thank you to the volunteers who helped the hall committee (you know who you are!) We filled 38 bags which were collected from the village hall car park thanks to Chelmsford City Council.

Christmas Decorations Donation Thank you so much to Meadow Croft Garden Centre, Battlesbridge for donating a big box of various beautiful Christmas decorations for our village hall. The committee are very grateful, and they will be used to decorate the hall for the festive season.

Our next event is the **Christmas Carols and Brass Band** on Sunday, 21 December from 4.00 to 7.00pm in the village hall. There will also be an appearance from the Maldon Grinch! Refreshments available. Free Entry thanks to funding from South Hanningfield Parish Council and the generosity of local residents. For further information, call Clive on 07891 653238.

Dates for your Diary in 2026:

South Hanningfield Charity Ball will take place on Saturday, 24 January which includes pre-dinner drinks, 4-course luxury menu, after dinner entertainment and a Raffle at Stock Brook Manor, Billericay in aid of South Hanningfield Village Hall and St Peter's Church charities. For further information, contact Emma on 07961 963914.

St Patrick's Ceilidh we are planning a Ceilidh Dance on Saturday, 14 March, doors will open from 7.00pm. The Yardarm Ceilidh Band will be in attendance, with a caller to show dancers the steps to the music. Tickets cost £8 per person and there will also be a Raffle. For further information and to book, email vallisc@aol.com or phone 07891 653238.

St George's Day We have booked Tom Carradine musical act for Saturday, 25 April, doors will open from 7.00pm. Tickets are £15 each and bring your own drinks and nibbles. There will also be a Raffle! To book, please call Sandra on 07396 546050 or email shvhall@gmail.com

Raffle Prizes Needed If anyone has any suitable items that could be used as Raffle prizes, please can you donate them to us which would be used at future fundraising events for the hall. The committee would be very grateful.

No Parking on Pavement by Hall South Hanningfield Village Hall Management Committee requests that vehicles don't park up on the pavement outside the village hall because of the health and safety risks. Please alert the volunteer committee if you see such vehicles parked in this way outside the hall on 07891 653238.

SOUTH HANNINGFIELD VILLAGE
Charity Ball

£82 PER HEAD THIS INCLUDES
PRE DINNER DRINKS
4 COURSE LUXURY MENU
HOUSE TABLE WINES AND BEERS
HOUSE BAR 10:30 TILL 12:30
AFTER DINNER ENTERTAINMENT:
DJ & 2 GAMES HEADS+ TALES (CASH PRIZE)
RAFFLE & AUCTION WILL BE HELD
DRESS CODE: BLACK TIE + EVENING DRESS
£30 NON REFUNDABLE DEPOSIT
CONTACT EMMA
07961 963914

JAN | 24TH | 7:30PM

STOCK BROOK MANOR
QUEENS PARK AVE, BILLERICAY
CM12 0SP

RAISING MONEY FOR SOUTH HANNINGFIELD VILLAGE HALL CHARITY NUMBER 301402
ST PETERS CHURCH CHARITY NUMBER 1209033

Mobile Library

The Mobile Library visit South Hanningfield Village Hall every three weeks.
Day of visit: Tuesday Time of visit: 11.25pm to 11.55pm
Next visit dates are 9 and 30 December.

Regular Activities

Coffee Morning

Second Wednesday of each month from 10.30am – 12.30pm
Wednesday, 10 Decembe).

Please call the listed contacts below to book a place.

Pilates & Keep Fit

Monday 9.45am – 10.45am
Thursday 10.30am – 11.30am
Contact Hayley on 07758 427379

Puppy Dog Training Classes

Monday from 6.00pm
Dog training for puppies of all ages
Contact Rachel on 07484 706085 or
email Rachel@PuppyPotentialDogTraining.co.uk

Line Dancing

Tuesday afternoons 12.30pm-1.30pm (beginners) and 1.30pm to 2.30pm (more advanced)
Contact Richard from the Super Troupers Line Dance Club
email thesupertroupersldc@gmail.com or tel 07740 360554.

Boxfit Personal Trainer

Tuesday evenings (**NEW**)
Personal Trainer available from 7.00pm during Tuesday evenings.
For more information, contact Rachael, Boxfit instructor on 07912 344560.

1-1 Ballroom and Latin lessons and wedding dance lessons with Callie

Every Wednesday afternoon and evening from 3.00pm £30 for a 45-minute lesson. Please contact Callie on 07885 630241

Tai Chi Beginner Class

11.45am to 12.45pm Thursdays Tel Sen 07853 239103 or email senfitness@outlook.com to find out more information.

Yoga and Zumba

Thursday night Zumba 6.30pm to 7.20pm and Vinyasa Flow Yoga 7.30pm to 8.30pm. Pay as you go. Tel: Charlene on 07772 443028 or email info@sakurayogastudios.co.uk

Upholstery Class

Friday morning 9.30am – 1.00pm Contact Fiona on 01621 776586 or 07887 507208

Wickford Board Game Club

Friday evenings from 6.00pm - the club are a friendly mix of players of all ages and experience levels with a huge range of modern board games for those interested to come and try! For more information, contact Mike on 07958 456575 or look up the Wickford Board Game Club on Facebook.

Zumba Saturday mornings

Zumba 9.20am to 10.20am Pay as you go Tel: Charlene on 07772 443028 or email info@sakurayogastudios.co.uk

If you would like to book the South Hanningfield Village Hall for any regular activities or events, please call Sandra Graves, our Bookings Secretary on 07396 546050 or email shvhall@gmail.com to check availability and prices.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! Please continue to support our local village hall in 2026 and if there are any other ways you can help us, let us know. Please contact the Chairman, Clive Vallis for further information on 07891 653238.

Website <https://e-voice.org.uk/shanningfieldvillagehall>

Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/southhanningfieldvillagehall>

Your Countdown to Christmas – 20 ideas

1. Plan your budget – don't let Christmas 'fever' make you reckless. Be careful you don't go over any overdraft with your bank – the penalties are expensive! Also, really and truly, beware using credit cards if you can't pay them off quickly.

2. Practical details: Make sure you have in a good stock of coal and logs, Christmas tree lights that work, a clean oven, a stock of candles and matches, and spare batteries.

3. Choose a colour theme for this Christmas. Red? Gold? Purple? Silver? Then use it on everything - from your candles, tree baubles and wrapping paper, to table napkins and Christmas cards and lights.

4. Hang a wreath. You can buy one, or get creative with a mixture of foliage from your garden.

5. Enjoy any Christmas fayres and markets – and consider taking a housebound person with you, or someone who may be lonely.

6. The trip to Bethlehem. Dig out your nativity set, and start Mary and Joseph and the donkey at the top of your stairs – moving them a bit closer to the manger downstairs each day. And don't forget to start the wise men on their way, from another part of the house. (Beware your dog eating anyone on the way!)

7. Plan your Christmas lunch early. Try and think of everything that you will need on the day – and make sure you have it ordered or bought in good time.

8. Think about decorating your table - you could use holly and ivy and narcissi and snowdrops... and lots of red ribbon. But if you use poisonous plants, be very careful around the children...and pets.

9. Pick the perfect tree. Bear in mind that an artificial tree is not just for Christmas, but for life.... all that non-renewable plastic will spend eternity in some landfill site. So why not branch out and look for the real thing. For more options, visit The British Christmas Tree Growers Association www.christmastree.org.uk

10. Display your cards with style. The simple ideas are often the most stylish. So have fun with wooden clothes pegs, sprayed gold, and peg your cards along ribbon that can be looped from one end of a curtain pole to the other.

11. Deck the halls - especially yours. Would your front entrance hall take a small tree, wreath, or maybe just a bowl of pretty sweets? Run a garland up the banister. Add some ivy and some fairy lights.

12. Donate to charities who help the homeless and the migrants.

13. Sing carols – and play carols at home. Remind your family what Christmas is really all about.

14. Wrap those presents - what you get and how you wrap it will say a lot about your attitude towards the person you are giving to! So, select your presents and wrapping materials with care, use only sharp scissors, and put your Sellotape on neatly. Adding some ribbon is well worth the effort.

15. Fill those Christmas stockings - a must for Christmas mornings. Cleverly planned, they might even delay the time when exhausted parents are awoken from slumbers....

16. Give your pets some extra care. If you have a curious dog or cat, avoid tinsel on the tree – your pets could choke on it. Keep a watchful eye on the turkey bones on Christmas Day – and dispose of them safely. If they splinter in your pet's throat on Christmas Day, you could easily double the cost of your Christmas with just one visit to the vet.... Don't leave scraps of wrapping paper around if they might be eaten. Finally, ensure your pets can find a quiet place to rest if all the family is there.

17. Go crackers. In 1847 the confectioner Tom Smith invented the Christmas cracker. Legend says that he spotted a beautifully wrapped French bon-bon, and had a 'eureka moment'. In effect, he said to himself: "What that bon-bon needs is a tiny plastic key-ring, an awful pun on a piece of paper, and a tissue paper hat, all crammed into an exploding toilet roll." The rest is history.

18. Read your children the Christmas story. There are any number of excellent children's books which tell it with wonderful illustrations.

19. Make sure your neighbours are all right - is there anyone who could use a helping hand? Anyone needing a lift to church?

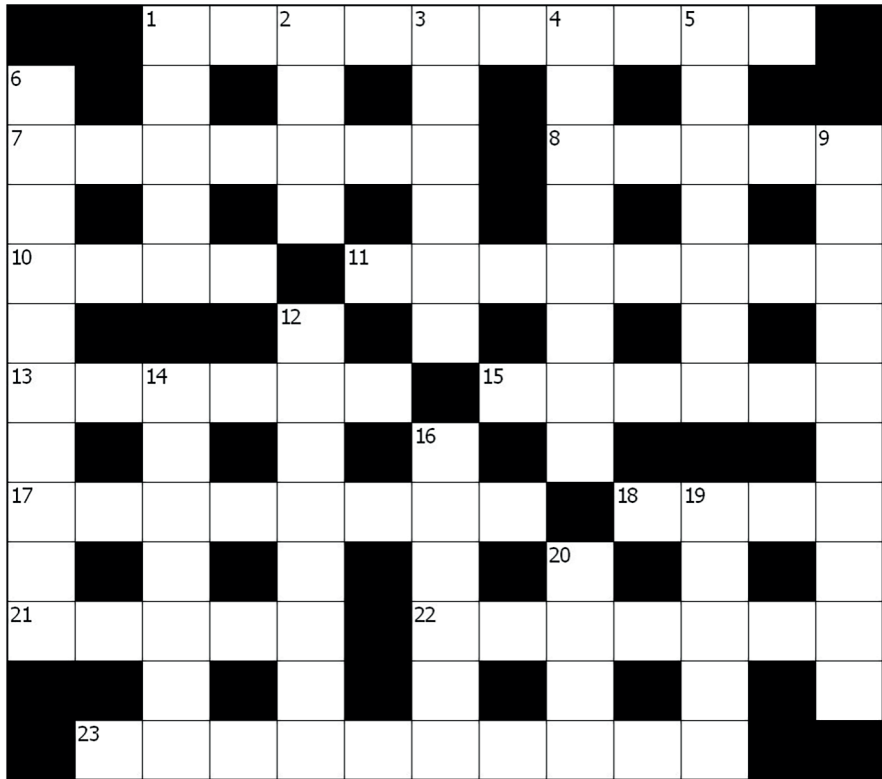
20. On Christmas Eve/Christmas, make time to have a family reading of the Nativity stories in Matthew and Luke. As a family, make time to praise God for the gift of Jesus!

10 Fun Facts about Christmas trees

1. Even before the time of Christ, evergreen trees were seen in winter as a symbol of fertility.
2. It was the 16th century monk, Martin Luther, who is credited with the idea of having lights on Christmas trees. He added candles to his tree, to look like stars in a forest.
3. Windsor Castle got its first Christmas tree in 1800, brought by Charlotte, wife of George III.
4. It was in 1835 that the term 'Christmas tree' was first used in English.
5. It was in the 1840s, when Prince Albert, consort of Queen Victoria, began bringing trees inside, that led to their popularity throughout the UK.
6. It was Woolworths who first sold manufactured Christmas tree ornaments – back in 1880.

continued on page 19

Puzzle corner



Across

- 1 Provisional meeting place of God and the Jews (Exodus 25:9) (10)
- 7 David's third son, killed when his head got caught in a tree during a battle with his father (2 Samuel 18:14,15) (7)
- 8 They ruled much of the west coast of South America in the 15th and early 16th centuries (5)
- 10 Small deer of European and Asian extraction (4)
- 11 Seized control of (Numbers 21:25) (8)
- 13 Terror (Luke 24:5) (6)
- 15 First World War heroine shot by the Germans in Brussels, Nurse Edith (6)
- 17 Stormy (8)

18

- 18 A bitter variety of this, together with lamb and unleavened bread, was the Passover menu for anyone unclean (Numbers 9:11) (4)
- 21 Arson (anag.) (5)
- 22 How John Newton described God's grace in his well-known hymn (7)
- 23 Habitation (Isaiah 27:10) (10)

Down

- 1 and see that the Lord is good (Psalm 34:8) (5)
- 2 The wicked man flees though no one pursues, but the righteous are as ... as a lion (Proverbs 28:1) (4)
- 3 One of the exiles, a descendant of Parosh, who married a foreign woman (Ezra 10:25) (6)
- 4 He escaped from Nob when Saul killed the rest of his family and joined David (1 Samuel 22:19,20) (8)
- 5 City and lake in Central Switzerland (7)
- 6 Offer your bodies as living , holy and pleasing to God (Romans 12:1) (10)
- 9 Pouches carried by horses (Genesis 49:14) (10)
- 12 One who accepts government by God (8)
- 14 Aromatic substance commonly used in Jewish ritual (Exodus 30:1) (7)
- 16 He asked Jesus, 'What is truth?' (John 18:38) (6)
- 19 Are (Romans 13:1) (5)
- 20 You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will ... his people from their sins (Matthew 1:21) (4)

Answers on page 33

... continued from page 17

7. The tree in London's Trafalgar Square has been a gift from the city of Oslo, Norway since 1947.
8. The world's tallest Xmas tree, at 221ft high, was erected in a Washington shopping mall in 1950.
9. In a survey of the nation's favourite smells, real Christmas trees came eighth, just behind the sea, but ahead of perfume.
10. About five million real Christmas trees are sold in the UK each year.

Children's pages



At Christmas we celebrate the birth of Jesus,
God's Son and our Saviour
coming into the world as a baby,
and we look forward to the time
when Jesus will come again,
not as a baby but as the
King of kings and Lord of lords!

read

John 14:3

A baby needs clothes
to keep warm like
a snuggly sleep suit
or a vest and nappy.

What were you dressed in?

Jesus was wrapped in

read Luke 2:7

A baby needs somewhere
to be born like at home
or in a hospital.

Where were you born?

Jesus was born
in a stable in

read Luke 2:1-6

A baby needs
somewhere
to sleep like
a crib or a cot.

*What did you
sleep in?*

Jesus slept in a

read Luke 2:7

A baby needs
a name.

*What name were
you called?*

Jesus was given
a special name
that had a
special meaning.

read

Matthew 1:21-23

HAPPY CHRISTMAS!

NADOLIG LLAWEN ☆ NOLLAIG CHRÏDHEIL ☆ NOLLAG SHONA
JOYEUX NOËL • FELIZ NAVIDAD • BUON NATALE • GOD JUL • FROHE WEIHNACHTEN

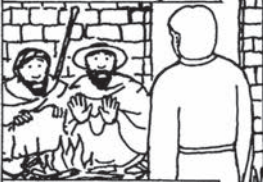
Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in
Luke chapter 2 verses 8 to 20

Shepherds were paid to look after the flocks out on the hillside. Uneducated and rough, they were usually avoided, or overlooked.

Then one night... an angel visited.



Don't be afraid! I have good news that will be a great joy for everyone!



What?!

Earlier today, the Saviour, Christ the Lord, was born in Bethlehem.



Why's he telling us? We're just shepherds.

You will know him by this sign



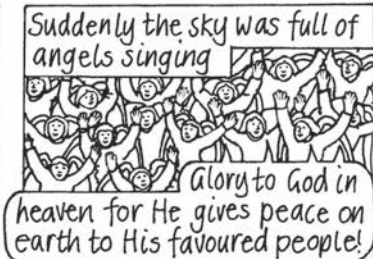
He'll be in a palace or the house of someone rich.

He will be lying in a feeding trough.



What?! The Saviour is like one of us?

Suddenly the sky was full of angels singing



Glory to God in heaven for He gives peace on earth to His favoured people!

So the shepherds decided to go down into Bethlehem to see what they had been told about...



...and they found Mary, Joseph, and the baby in the manger just as they had been told.



Look, there he is!

They told everyone about the angel's message



...and Mary listened carefully.

Then the shepherds returned to their flocks praising God for all they had heard and seen.





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Smile lines

When children tell the Christmas story...

- When the three wise guys from the East Side arrived, they found Jesus in the manger.
- When Mary heard that she was the mother of Jesus, she sang the Magna Carta.
- Jesus was born because Mary had an immaculate contraption.

Well known pilot

At Sunday school, the younger children were drawing pictures to illustrate a biblical story. The teacher was startled to see one little boy was drawing an airplane. "This is the Flight into Egypt," the little boy explained. "See, here is Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus. And this," he said, pointing to the figure in the front of the plane, "is Pontius. He's the Pilot."

Nativity set

A man visiting his daughter and her family for Christmas was admiring the beautiful nativity set in her hallway. His young granddaughter came up to him, and he asked her if she knew what it was.

"Sure I do," she replied. "It's breakable."

Santa's sleigh

Father Christmas nervously went for his sleigh-driving test. He came rushing back in a thunder of reindeer and pulled up in front of the toy factory. "At last!" he shouted, "No-el plates!"

Footballer's carol

A football supporter's favourite Christmas song? 'Yule never walk alone'.

Don't eat

What do you get if you eat Christmas decorations? Tinselitus

Helpers

What do you call Santa's helpers? Subordinate Clauses.

Weird Christmas

Christmas is weird – at what other time of the year do you sit in front of a dead tree and eat sweets out of your socks?

New Year's Eve is coming soon...

The inventor of the bagpipes was inspired when he saw a man carrying an indignant asthmatic pig under his arm. Unfortunately, the man-made sound never equalled the purity of the sound achieved by the pig.

Contacting The Herald

Contributions to the January 2026 edition

Copy for the next edition of The Herald should be sent by email to Robert Andrews at theherald@downhamchurch.org.uk by **Thursday 11 December (please note this is a week earlier than usual because of the Christmas holidays)**. Please send files in .doc, .docx or .rtf format. Because we wish to maintain a common house style please keep any formatting to an absolute minimum and do not embed photographs or other artwork. If you wish to include photographs or other artwork they should be sent separately in .jpeg or .pdf format. If you are unable to use email or are unsure about file types please telephone Robert on 01268 733817, but be aware that the telephone line has BT Call Guardian installed to deter nuisance callers, therefore you may have to announce your name and press the # key in order to be put through.

Advertising in The Herald

All general enquiries about advertising should be addressed to Mike Roome on 07770 795388 or email advert.theherald@downhamchurch.org.uk

Advertising rates are currently:

Full page	£100 for 12 insertions
Half page	£60 for 12 insertions
Quarter page	£40 for 12 insertions

We will accept one off or limited run insertions on a pro rata basis

If you have existing artwork your advertisements should be emailed to advert.theherald@downhamchurch.org.uk preferably in .jpeg or .pdf format. If you wish us to produce artwork for you this can be arranged for a small one-off fee.

Answers to the Crossword puzzle

ACROSS: 1, Tabernacle. 7, Absalom. 8, Incas. 10, Roes. 11, Captured. 13, Fright. 15, Cavell. 17, Cyclonic. 18, Herb. 21, Sonar. 22, Amazing. 23, Settlement.

DOWN: 1, Taste. 2, Bold. 3, Ramiah. 4, Abiathar. 5, Lucerne. 6, Sacrifices. 9, Saddlebags. 12, Theocrat. 14, Incense. 16, Pilate. 19, Exist. 20, Save.

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