

United Parish of
Chinnor,
Aston Rowant,
Crowell
And
Sydenham

Pastoral Letter December 2025



Greetings dear reader.

One of the difficulties I have in terms of celebrating Christmas is that the nativity story is so familiar. Thus, each year, I try to do something different that allows me to see the Nativity in a new light. This year I was inspired by a book entitled 'Gathering around the manger'. It consists of forty little commentaries, one for each day in Advent. Each page concentrates on one character who was part of the Nativity. You might ask how did the book get to forty characters since in the gospels we are only told about the main characters, like the shepherds, the wise men and the escape to Egypt. Well, if you include characters like the innkeeper, his wife and the other guests then you can get to forty quite easily. Indeed, there are children's books where words are put into the mouths of the ox and the ass.

Thus, this year I have been inspired by the innkeeper's story or rather what I imagined his story to be. There is nothing said about him in the gospels. All we are told in is that *Mary gave birth and wrapped the baby in cloths because there was no room for them in the inn* (Luke 2:7).

Thus, I assume the inn had an innkeeper and he was a man. I guess this man had a wife and children. I guess he was the one who said to Joseph, I'm sorry but there's no room in this inn but you can stay in the stable. I guess his wife helped Mary look after the baby – was she the one who supplied the swaddling cloths?

However, the big question for me is what happened to the innkeeper thereafter?

How was he affected? Was he like the shepherds who were in awe as they saw the babe, or was it just 'another day at the office'? I like to think it was the former – that he followed Jesus and that seeing the birth changed him and his family forever.

I like the title of the book, 'Gathering around the manger', surely the innkeeper was one of those who gathered round and marvelled at this gift from God. It occurs to me that we too are part of the story for we are gather round the manger as we celebrate Christmas. We gather alongside the shepherds and wise men as well as the innkeeper as we gaze on the nativity. Why not take a moment now to ponder and effectively gather round the manger alongside the shepherds, the wise men and that innkeeper?

Prayer: Thank you Lord that you came to us as a babe and that we too can gather round and share in the excitement of your birth this Christmas season. Amen.

by Revd. Brian Griffiths

