

Wethersfield Parish Magazine

DECEMBER 2025



Parish Church of St. Mary Magdalene
in the benefice of
~Pant Valley Churches~

**Wishing all our readers a
Very Happy Christmas**

WETHERSFIELD PARISH CHURCH

St Mary Magdalene

Pant Valley Churches Benefice of
Finchingfield with Cornish Hall End, Wethersfield, Shalford, Gt. and Little Bardfield

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Vicar

The Reverend Alex Shannon
The Vicarage, Bardfield Road, Finchingfield, Braintree CM7 4JR
Tel: 01371 810309 / 07483 878659
rev.alex.shannon@gmail.com

Associate Minister

The Reverend Canon Janet Nicholls
Park House, Braintree Road, Shalford, Braintree CM7 5HQ
Tel: 01371 851317 jnicholls@chelmsford.anglican.org

Reader

Mrs Sarah Pilgrim, Fieldside, Lombard Street, Finchingfield
Tel: 01371 850781 pilgrim511@btinternet.com

Churchwardens

Mr David Seacombe, Ivanhoe House, Wethersfield
Tel: 07801 868278
Mr Ben Walmsley, Wethersfield Hall, Wethersfield
Tel: 07939 030833

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

Hon. Sec.

Mr Brian Muir, The Manse, Wethersfield
Tel: 07775 675701 hon.secretary@wethersfieldchurch.org.uk

Hon Treasurer

Mr Bob Harris, Top Shop, Wethersfield.
Tel: 07817 379099 hon.treasurer@wethersfieldchurch.org.uk

Ringing Master

Mr Roy Threadgold, Plumley, Braintree Road, Wethersfield
Tel: 01371 850481 roy@boydellsdairy.co.uk

Please contact the Parish Priest for Baptisms, Marriages and when you are in need of help.
He is very happy to bring Communion to the homes of the sick and housebound.
Would newcomers please make us aware of their presence.

From the Vicarage

One of the delightful fixtures of the Advent and Christmas seasons is the Nativity Play. Whether this takes place in school, church, hall or even outside, and whether it takes the form of a traditional retelling of the events of the first Christmas, or whether it takes a fresh perspective, it requires more than one person. Helpfully, the cast size can often be flexible, with variable numbers of angels, shepherd and magi (the Bible only tells us that they brought three gifts!), and sometimes parts for animals too, but there is a minimum number greater than one, and the role which is the most important is the one without any lines – indeed, it's often taken by a doll!

Christmas is therefore a good time for us to remember the value of cooperation. Each person (and indeed animal!) had an important part to play in the events of Jesus' birth: the hospitable inn keeper who provided space in the stable even though the inn was full; the donkey (not mentioned in the Bible, but a fixture of the tradition!) carrying Mary to Bethlehem; the angels announcing the news of what had taken place; the shepherds and magi responding, and representing firstly the people into which Jesus was born, and secondly the nations of the wider world; the animals who found themselves having to give up their feeding trough, traditionally shown as offering the adoration of all creatures before their Creator; Joseph the protector of the Holy Family; and Mary, the one whose willingness to follow God's request made her the one to bring the Holy Child into the world.

The plan of God we see unfolding in our nativity plays is one in which everyone has something important to do, everyone's contribution is valuable. And God himself says nothing at all – 'How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given,' says a favourite carol. The wordlessness of the infant Jesus (which depends not on whether we take literally that line from *Away in a Manger* saying 'No crying he makes') affirms the value of our lives and actions. As the cast of the nativity draws around the manger, God's presence brings their parts into harmony with one another, not by dictating, but through the magnetic pull of love. As we gather in communities and families this Christmas-tide, may our acts of gathering in adoration draw all our parts in the drama of the human story into harmony with one another, as we sing, 'O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.'

Rev'd/Fr Alex

Services for December 2025

Saturday 6 December

3pm RBL District Carol Service – Finchingfield

Sunday 7 December – Second Sunday of Advent

9am Holy Communion (traditional language) – Cornish Hall End

9.30am Morning Prayer – Shalford

10.30am Sung Communion Service – Great Bardfield

11am Prayer & Pilgrimage (Celtic Morning Prayer) – Wethersfield

4pm Sung Compline – Little Bardfield

Sunday 14 December – Third Sunday of Advent

8am Holy Communion (traditional language) – Shalford

9.30am Children's Carol Service – Finchingfield

10.30am Morning Prayer – Great Bardfield

11am Holy Communion (traditional language) – Wethersfield

4pm Sung Evensong – Great Bardfield

6pm Carol Service – Wethersfield

Sunday 21 December – Fourth Sunday of Advent

9am Holy Communion (traditional language) – Finchingfield

9.30am Morning Prayer – Shalford

10.30am Sung Communion Service – Great Bardfield

11am Crib Service – Wethersfield

3pm Joint Churches Carol Service – Great Bardfield

6pm Carol Service – Cornish Hall End

Christmas Eve

3pm Crib Service – Finchingfield

3pm Christingle Service – Great Bardfield

5pm Carols by Candlelight – Shalford

9pm 'Early' Midnight Mass – Little Bardfield

11.30pm Midnight Mass – Wethersfield

Christmas Day

9am Family Communion Service – Cornish Hall End

9.30am Family Communion Service – Shalford

10.30am Family Communion Service – Great Bardfield

11am Family Communion Service – Finchingfield

Friday 26 November – St Stephen

10am Communion Service with hymns – Shalford

Sunday 28 December – St John the Evangelist (transferred)

10.30am Benefice Communion Service – Cornish Hall End

2.30pm Carols in the Cowshed – Boydells Dairy Farm

Regular Services and Events during the week

Monday	8.45am Morning Prayer – Finchingfield 1.30pm 'Faithful Fiction' book club (1st weeks) – Between the Lines, Great Bardfield
Tuesday	8.45am Morning Prayer – Great Bardfield 10am Baby & Toddler Group – Great Bardfield 'St Mary's Munchkins' story & song time with refreshments
Thursday	8.45am Morning Prayer – Wethersfield 10am Prayer Group (1st, 3rd & 5th weeks) Coffee Morning (2nd & 4th weeks) – Shalford Coffee Morning (3rd week) – Cornish Hall End 10.30am Eucharist – Little Bardfield
Friday	8.45am Morning Prayer – Shalford
Saturday	10.30am (3rd weeks) Coffee Morning – Wethersfield

Churchwarden Update

Advent is upon us, started in fine style by the procession from the Church at the Wethersfield big Christmas Lights Switch On event. Do join us for our ever enjoyable Nine Lessons and Carols, in Church at 6pm on Sunday 14 December. On Sunday 21 December we have a Crib Service at 11am. This year it is our turn to hold Midnight Mass; you are most welcome to gather with us at this very special moment. In turn, Finchingfield will have the Christmas Morning service at 11am in Christmas Day. On Sunday 28 December the ever-popular Carols in the Cowshed will be held as usual at Boydells Dairy Farm at 2:30pm. Full details on all of the Services may be found later in the magazine.

If you have visited the Church recently, you may have noticed a metal frame just inside the main entrance door. This is to hold a new draught-excluding panel, made of heavy wool which will hang down to the floor. The frame and the wool panel will fold back separately from the door, and we hope that it is both practical and aesthetically pleasing.

DS

The Light That Shines in Darkness

As December unfolds and our streets fill with twinkling lights, we are reminded once again of the profound truth at the heart of Christmas: that God chose to enter our world not in majesty and power, but as a vulnerable infant, born in the humblest of circumstances.

The Nativity speaks to something deep within the human spirit. In a world often marked by division, uncertainty and hardship, the birth of Christ offers us hope that transcends our immediate circumstances. The angels' message to the shepherds was not one of temporal prosperity or worldly success, but of peace and goodwill among all people. This remains as vital today as it was two thousand years ago.

Whilst we in Britain enjoy relative comfort and security, Christmas calls us to look beyond our own borders and recognise that many across the globe will mark this season amidst poverty, conflict and displacement. The Holy Family themselves were refugees, fleeing persecution. Their story reminds us that Christ identifies with the suffering and marginalised, and challenges us to do likewise.

In our churches this Advent, as we light our candles week by week, we prepare our hearts not for a festival of consumption, but for an encounter with the divine. The gifts we give and receive are symbols of something far greater: God's ultimate gift of himself in Jesus Christ.

As we gather with loved ones this Christmas, may we make space for quiet reflection amidst the busyness. May we remember that the light which entered the world that first Christmas continues to shine in our darkness, offering transformation, redemption and the promise of peace.

DS

Christmas reminders:

**** Save your stamps!**



STAMPS for
Farleigh Hospice

Thank you to all those who and
popping them in the tub on the table in
Wethersfield church.



Old and new styles welcome as are those from all countries.

PLEASE KEEP COLLECTING!

Thank you

**** Remember to use Easy Fundraising** when making
your online Christmas purchases.

Your online shopping with over 8,000 retailers can raise free donations
for St. Mary Magdalene's Parish Church Wethersfield.

Shop for Christmas gifts through easyfundraising - every shop helps us,
and when you sign up via the easyfundraising app now, we'll get an extra £2
donation!

https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/easyfundraising-app/?causeld=254350&utm_term=Q325P

One Big Thank You

Many folk volunteer to keep our church building open. It takes not only money, but *feet on the ground*, to keep our beautiful church building in good order, open and welcoming to all.

Over the next few editions of the Wethersfield Parish Magazine, I will be asking you all to join me in One Big Thank You to all those people.

This month I would like to thank **The Church Cleaning Teams**.

We have two Cleaning Teams of hardworking ladies (where are the men?!) who volunteer to give up a few hours on a monthly basis to keep our church clean and tidy. This is quite a feat in the summer months when the resident bats are very active! Also high level cleaning of cobwebs is a bit of a challenge so the clerestory level (the very highest windows) are generally left for the wildlife to enjoy undisturbed.

The teams alternate on a fortnightly basis and come together before special festival times such as Christmas and Easter. People are drawn from all over the village and we always need more volunteers.

As part of the Ministry Team, I am truly impressed that whilst most of our volunteers are not regular worshippers at St Mary Magdalene church, yet they value the contribution that the church building & people make to the village and thus come forward to do their bit. Everyone is welcome to use the building as it belongs to the village. This is your church.

If you think you might be able to offer a few hours please do get in touch with our Cleaning Team Leaders – Sue Clubley on 07909 920028 or Liz Townrow on 07899 883496.

Again, **One Big Thank You** to our Cleaning Teams!

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CAN YOU HELP?

We are currently revamping Wethersfield's Children's Church area which includes dispensing of the old and rather scruffy toys, book etc that have been there a while and replacing them. So, if you have any toys, games puzzles and books that are no longer being used that you are willing to donate we would be most grateful.

They need to be clean, safe with no sharp edges or small items that could present a choking hazard and in full working order please.

If you are able to help us, please leave items in the Children's Church area of the church, or bring them to Memories Cottage in the High Street, just a short walk in the Playing Field direction. Please let us know if you need us to pick up anything.

Thank you in expectation.

The Children's Church Team.

SHOEBOXES 2025



A BIG THANK YOU

to everyone who filled a shoebox or donated items to go into boxes.

63 boxes were gathered together at the special shoebox service in Cornish Hall End Church and are already on their way to families and the elderly in Eastern Europe to bring some light into the lives of those in need.



COFFEE AND CHAT *in Church 10.30am – 12 noon*

Saturday 13th December *(Please note change of date)*

Meet up with old friends, make some new.
ALL WELCOME



COME AND JOIN THE CAROL SINGING

Tuesday 16th December
5pm – 6pm

Wrap up warm, bring a torch and help us raise lots of money for UNICEF.

Meet on Wethersfield Green at 4.45pm for 5pm start.
Finish 6pm with free refreshments at Wethersfield Club

MOBILE LIBRARY SERVICE

Mobile Library 2 visits Wethersfield **every 3 weeks** (Excluding Bank Holidays.)

NOW on **MONDAY mornings, 10.40am to 11.10am**

and can usually be found parked in the High Street or at the Village Hall

Next visit dates:

1st December 2025

22nd December 2025

12th January 2026



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SANTA'S SACK

will be back in Wethersfield Church again this year,
waiting to be filled with your gifts.

Santa will be collecting gifts for Braintree Salvation Army's
Christmas distribution to needy families in the district,
throughout December



Help us fill his sack.

Toys, gifts and Christmas treats all gratefully received.

Please bring something to pop in Santa's sack.

THANK YOU

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WETHERSFIELD CHURCH



CHRISTMAS TREE

FESTIVAL

8th DECEMBER until 1st JANUARY

Church open daily 9-4 for viewing at your leisure

FREE ENTRY

JOY

WETHERSFIELD CHURCH

FAMILY CRIB SERVICE

11AM

SUNDAY 21ST DECEMBER

**COME AND BE PART OF THE
CHRISTMAS STORY**

**COSTUMES WILL BE AVAILABLE OR COME READY
DRESSED**



**DONATIONS OF TOYS & CHRISTMAS TREATS FOR
THE SALVATION ARMY COLLECTION WILL BE
GRATEFULLY RECEIVED**

WETHERSFIELD VILLAGE HALL FRIDAY NIGHT CINEMA 2025/26

12th December



**Doors open 6:30pm Film Starts 7pm
Tickets £5 cash or card Raffle £1
Bar & snacks available before & during interval
Ticket Enquiries 07304 360410**

Mulch your flower beds with organic matter

This will help with moisture retention, weed suppression and protect new growth and plant crowns of more tender plants from frost, leading to healthier flowers ready to energise bumblebees next year.

Top tip: Gather leaves, grass clippings, moss and wood chip in your garden to create your own mulch!



Winter jobs



Plant low-cost fruit trees

These trees are currently in their winter dormant phase, so you can buy them as bare-root stock ready for planting. Once established, fruit trees will be buzzing with bumblebees in early spring – providing you with an abundance of fruit later in the year.

Many trees need two of the same type (i.e., two apples) in order for cross pollination to produce fruit.

Top tip: If you already have fruit trees, prune them back to remove any dead or damaged wood, which you could add to your habitat pile!

Avoid digging up your soil

Queen bumblebees may be tucked away hibernating underground in your garden (lucky you!) – so it's best to be on the safe side and avoid disturbing the soil if possible, just until they are ready to emerge in spring.

If you do happen to disturb a hibernating queen, whilst preparing the ground for next year, try not to worry. If the bumblebee isn't too active, you can cover it up again using the material that had been hiding it, as loosely as possible.

Top tip: If the bee remains active and won't go back into hibernation, you can help her on her way by leaving her in a sheltered place to rest, such as under some leaf-litter.

Grow ivy for pollinators

This is a great way to provide some much-needed shelter from heavy rain showers, as well as a vital source of nectar and pollen for any busy bumblebees and other pollinators still hard at work.

Top tip: Keep ivy well-maintained on walls and fences. Don't forget to only cut back after flowering around December time.



Winter is a wonderful time to sit back and reflect on what has worked well in your space, and to plan what you'll grow next year.

Remember, it doesn't matter about the size or location of your outdoor space, or even what it looks like. It's all about the habitat and food you can offer local bumblebees, and how it helps support them throughout the seasons. You don't have to achieve everything mentioned in the job lists above, just doing what you can will help fuel the active bumblebees in your patch.

Try to create a balance between not being overly tidy (as you want to leave plenty of wild spots available for bumblebees to take shelter, nest and feed), whilst maintaining your garden in a way that suits you.



So when was Jesus born?

The Bible itself does not give an exact date for the birth of Jesus, or even enough indirect information to pin it down with certainty.

At the request of Pope John 1st in the early 6th century, the birth of Jesus was to be used as a dividing line for dating historical events into BC and AD. However, it's been known for quite some time that the chosen point of division must be in error.

The birth of Jesus was marked by two astronomical events. The relatively short lived Star of Bethlehem is known to most people. Less well known is that fact that an eclipse of the Moon also helps to fix the date of the nativity.

Jesus was born shortly before the death of Herod, and Herod is recorded as dying shortly after an eclipse of the Moon. So there was an eclipse of the moon close to the time when Jesus was born.

Dating eclipses is easy – by applying Newton's Laws of Motion and his Universal Law of Gravitational Attraction you just have to work out the orbits of the Moon, Earth and Sun to see when they were in lined up in this order – as viewed from Jerusalem. There are just two relevant possibilities – in 4 and 1 BC.

The Star of Bethlehem ought to tie the date down with precision if we can identify exactly what sort of astronomical event it was. It must have been pretty impressive as it attracted widespread attention.

There are several possibilities but only those that persisted for several months need to be considered. This reduces the number of candidates to just two.

A comet was noted in the meticulous astronomical records of both the Chinese and the Babylonians. They describe a comet with a bright tail that appeared in the spring of 5BC and was visible for 70 days. The description of the 'star' in Matthew's gospel may mean that the comet's tail was seen from afar as being vertically above over Bethlehem. If this comet was the 'star of Bethlehem' then Jesus was born in the mid April of 5BC, which makes it the lunar eclipse of 4BC that occurred just after Herod's death.

The other possibility for the Star of Bethlehem is the apparent coming together in the sky – or conjunction – of the paths of Jupiter and Saturn in 7BC. Their combined brightness would have made them quite obvious in the night sky. In fact, due to the peculiarities of the motions of the planets as seen from Earth, Jupiter and Saturn would have moved back and forth close to each other in the night sky three times over a period of several months, before moving away to quite distinct regions of the sky.

To be guided by either these events – a comet, or the conjunction – the three wise men would have to travel typically 1000km in two to three months – say 1000/75 days or about 14km/day – which seems to be quite feasible.

I favour the comet explanation not least because it would have been quite a bit brighter than the conjunction. Furthermore, although the multiple conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter is a rare event – it does repeat every 800 years or so. The comet of 5BC only visited our solar system just once. Unlike Halley's comet for example, it doesn't keep returning.

So mid-April of 5BC looks the best bet for actual date of the nativity..

Rick Marshall

Eco Church - actions you can take at home

Did You Know?

On average, one supermarket goes through 60 million bags each year.

One of the best ways to cut down on single-use bags-both paper and plastic-is to switch to reusable.

Around 27,000 trees are cut down each day

The world has over 3.04 trillion trees in the world. However, 27,000 of them are cut down daily to make toilet paper. This translates to about 9.8 million trees annually.

Paper from trees can be recycled 6 times.

Paper comes from trees and can be recycled a maximum of six times, after which, its fibres become too weak to hold together.

