



The Shrevenham and Ashbury Benefice
"Mirroring the hospitality of God"
Sunday 20th December 4th Sunday of Advent



Vicar: The Rev'd Norma Fergusson. Tel 01793 784338

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Associate Vicar: The Rev'd Canon Paul Richardson. Tel 01793 710241

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Licensed Lay Minister: Mr Richard Fergusson. Tel 07788 436831



Christmas Services



As numbers must inevitably be limited in view of social distancing, attendance at services marked * will be by ticket only.

Tickets are free on Eventbrite <http://shrevenham-and-ashbury-benefice.eventbrite.com/> or from the Benefice Administrator (shrevenham.ashbury.benefice@outlook.com 01793 783519)

To allow as many people as possible to attend, please only apply to attend one service on either Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.

Our churchwardens and cleaning teams have been working very hard to make each church Covid-secure so that we can have public worship over Christmas.

Please play your part by ensuring you follow the guidance below.

Face coverings are mandatory. Hand sanitiser is available and remember to maintain social distancing. Please do not come into church if you think you may have symptoms of Covid 19.

Saturday 19th December

5:00pm Ashbury, St Mary *
The Christmas Story with
Music and Readings *

Sunday 20th December

9:00am Compton Beauchamp, St Swithun *
Matins for Christmas Week (BCP) *
10:00am Bourton, St James
Holy Communion
10:00am Ashbury, St Mary
Holy Communion
11:00am Holy Communion. Live on [Facebook](#).
3:00pm Fernham, Elmside Green
A Celebration of Christmas
4:30pm Shrevenham, St Andrew *
The Christmas Story with
Music and Readings *
6:00pm Longcot, The Green *
The Christmas Story with
Carols and Readings *

Rev'd Norma Fergusson is giving this week's sermon.
Watch on [Facebook](#) or [YouTube](#) from 9am.

Tuesday

9:00am Morning Prayer. Live on [Facebook](#).
5:00pm Shrevenham, St Andrew
Cloths for the Cradle

Wednesday

9:00am Shrevenham, St Andrew
Morning Prayer. Also on [Facebook](#).

Christmas Eve

3:00pm Bourton, St James *
Crib Service *
4:00pm Ashbury, St Mary
Crib Service in the churchyard
4:00pm Shrevenham, St Andrew **
Crib Service in the churchyard
5:00pm Watchfield, St Thomas *
Holy Communion (BCP) *
11:30pm Shrevenham, St Andrew *
Midnight Mass *
11:30pm Longcot, St Mary *
Midnight Mass *

Christmas Day

9:00am Compton Beauchamp *
Holy Communion by Extension (BCP) *
10:00am Shrevenham, St Andrew *
Family Communion *
Also live on [Facebook](#)
10:00am Ashbury, St Mary *
Family Service followed by
Holy Communion *

Sunday 27th December

10:00am Watchfield, St Thomas *
Benefice Holy Communion *
Also live on [Facebook](#)

Ashbury Cycle of Prayer

Please pray this week for all who live and work
in Chapel Lane.

**Rev'd Norma Fergusson will be off duty
from Saturday 26th December until Friday 1st
January.**

**Canon Paul Richardson will be off duty
from Monday 28th December until Saturday 2nd
January.**

For pastoral emergencies please call 07799 545035

The Benefice office will be closed from 24th December
until 4th January. Emails will be checked daily.

Nativity Scenes



One of the great things about Christmas is all the traditions and rituals we observe. Family ones and community ones. Things we always look forward to doing and enjoying at Christmas.

Many of them, sadly, curtailed this year, but nonetheless part of the festival.

One of my favourite Christmas traditions is the Nativity scenes that appear in all kinds of places. I look forward to following the Methodist Church's Nativity Trail round Shrivenham. There's something magical about standing in a dark, cold street, and looking in at a lighted Christmas scene.

Most of our churches have some kind of Nativity scene, and the Crib Service, when these are set up before Christmas, has always been hugely popular.

I don't know if the Nativity in the Tithe Barn in Great Coxwell is there this year, but we've enjoyed it in the past – it's amazing!

We have often gone abroad to Spain or Madeira for a break after Christmas, and the Nativity scenes in the churches and streets there are wonderful.

In fact, this tradition is really ancient. Apparently, it was started by St. Francis of Assisi in Italy in the early 13th century. He wanted a way to help people understand and wonder at the Christmas story in an age when not many of them could read the Bible for themselves. The tradition has been going on ever since.

We may have to wait till next year to do it, but to come into a quiet, empty church and stand still before a beautiful Nativity scene for a few minutes in silence is, for many of us, a moving experience. It's one way that we can 'in heart and mind go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which has come to pass and the Babe lying in a manger.'

Happy Christmas to you all.

Robin Cardwell

The Character Course

Each week, 'The Character Course' looks at one of eight themes: learning, hope, love, forgiveness, gratitude, humour, persistence and curiosity. The sessions last about 75 minutes. There is a short video to watch and a bible passage to ponder.

The course is free and will run online via Zoom on Wednesdays from 13th January to 3rd March 2021.

Join a morning session at 10:30am
or an evening session at 8:00pm.

Contact Jane Ahern thestable@protonmail.com

Cloths for the Cradle

5pm on 22nd December at St Andrew's

A short, quiet and reflective service for the week before Christmas.

Christmas can be a bitter-sweet time as we remember those we love who are not around to share it with us, and worries about work, health or family can make it difficult to join in what seems to be compulsory jollity. The wise men brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, all of which link Christmas to Holy Week and Easter; this is an opportunity for us to bring our cares, uncertainties, hopes and fears to the God who knows what it is like to be human. The cloths and cradle will be left in the Lady Chapel after the service if you would like to add your prayers on another occasion.

Alpha Online - ask the big questions of life and explore the Christian faith.

Each session starts with a short video talk looking at different questions around faith, followed by discussion in small groups.



Alpha Online will be held via Zoom on Monday mornings (10.30am - noon) from 11th January to 15th March 2021.

More information from Jane Ahern
01793 783521 thestable@protonmail.com

A joint venture with Shrivenham Methodist Church

Shrivenham Village Crossword Puzzle

First prize £20 - closing date 10th January 2021

You may know the answers, which refer to places or items visible in the village, or you may have to walk around to find them! Some of the clues are cryptic.

Set by the people who organised the Treasure Trail.

Entry is £5 for the crossword and clues.

Available from Shrivenham Post Office
David Watson 783405 or Julian Stevens 782065
In aid of St Andrews Church Restoration Project

Churches Open for Private Prayer

Our churches will be open for private prayer once a week as follows:

Ashbury 10am – 4pm on Thursday
Compton Beauchamp 9am – 5pm on Sunday
Longcot 10am – 3pm on Wednesday
Shrivenham 9am – 5pm on Sunday and Wednesday
Watchfield 10am – 4pm on Wednesday
Fernham church remains closed to allow Annabelle's pre-school exclusive access during term time.

Face coverings are mandatory, and you should either scan the NHS test and trace QR code or use the sign-in sheets on entering. Hand sanitiser is available and remember to maintain social distancing.

Please do not come into church if you think you may have symptoms of Covid 19.

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.

FIRST READING

2 Samuel 7:1-11. 16

A reading from the second book of Samuel.

Now when David the king was settled in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the LORD is with you." But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan: Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?" Now therefore you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the Lord declares to you, David, that the Lord will make you a house. Your house

and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before me; your throne shall be established for ever.

CANTICLE OR PSALM

Either **Luke 1:46b-55**

R *My spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.*

Or **Psalm 89:1-4. 19-26**

R *Your love, O Lord, for ever will I sing.*

Your love, O Lord, for ever will I sing;
 from age to age my mouth will proclaim your faithfulness.
 For I am persuaded that your love is established for ever;
 you have set your faithfulness firmly in the heavens. **R**

"I have made a covenant with my chosen one;
 I have sworn an oath to David my servant:
 'I will establish your line for ever, and preserve your throne for all generations.'" **R**

You spoke once in a vision and said to your faithful people:
 "I have set the crown upon a warrior and have exalted one chosen out of the people.
 I have found David my servant;
 with my holy oil have I anointed him. **R**

My hand will hold him fast and my arm will make him strong.
 No enemy shall deceive him, nor the wicked bring him down.
 I will crush his foes before him and strike down those who hate him. **R**

My faithfulness and love shall be with him,
 and he shall be victorious through my name.
 I shall make his dominion extend from the Great Sea to the River.
 He will say to me, 'You are my Father, my God and the rock of my salvation.'" **R**

SECOND READING

Romans 16:25-27

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans.

To God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but

is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith – to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory for ever! Amen.

GOSPEL Luke 1:26-38

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke.

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end. Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

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.