

The Net

December 2007 Vol. 8 No.4

A magazine for the Gauzebrook Area
Alderton, Easton Grey, Foxley, Hullavington,
Luckington, Norton, Sherston and Stanton St. Quintin

Building communities of wholeness with Christ at the centre.



St Mary's



All Saints'



St Giles



Bethlehem

O little town of Bethlehem

how still we see thee lie', the first line of what is surely one of our most popular carols, was written by Philip Brookes after a visit to the Holy Land in 1865. Brooks, who was an American Anglican priest, had stood in the fields that surround the town and, looking at the town in the distance and the star filled sky above, wrote a poem, the words of which were set to music by the organist of his home church and performed for the first time in 1868. Bethlehem was, of course, the birthplace of Jesus. We know the story well. A census organized by the Roman authorities meant that Joseph and Mary travelled from Nazareth to 'the city of David' to register. Mary, heavy with child, gives birth to the Christ child in a stable, because there was no room at the Inn.

We mark the birth at this time of year, although there are hints in the story that Jesus was probably born in the early spring. The climate of Bethlehem has changed over the years since the birth. In Jesus' day 'the place of bread' (which is what Bethlehem means) was much greener than it is now following the encroachment of the Judean desert. The story tells that the shepherds were in the fields tending their sheep. This did not happen during the winter months, when the weather could be cold, because there was insufficient grass for grazing. It's only a small point, and makes no difference to the miraculous elements of the story, but it's an interesting point to ponder.

Since the C4th Bethlehem has been a place of Christian pilgrimage. The 'stable' (actually a limestone cave) was identified as being important to the local Christian community of the day and a small church built over the site. Later, the Church of the Nativity was built which is the oldest extant church in Christendom. Thousands of pilgrims still go there every year when the political situation allows.

In October I was privileged to visit Bethlehem for the third time, with a group of pilgrims from local parishes and farther afield. We celebrated communion together in 'The Shepherds Fields' outside the town and made our way into the Church of the Nativity in Manger Square. Going down into the depths of the church we saw the remains of the cave where, by tradition, Jesus was born.

Bethlehem is just five miles outside Jerusalem but is in Palestinian territory. There is a tiny and declining Arab Christian community in the town, nowadays. When I was last in Bethlehem in the year 2000 we had to pass through a small Israeli checkpoint. This time it was very different because a massive security wall has been built around the town. Stretching for many miles and interspersed with huge watchtowers, it is now very difficult to get in and out, and almost impossible for the Palestinians who require passes that are rarely granted. Imagine requiring a pass to travel to Malmesbury because your village is surrounded by a huge wall!



Jesus was God's gift of salvation and peace to the world. It is terribly sad to think that the town which was marked out by ancient prophecy to be the birthplace of the Messiah is today a symbol not of reconciliation between peoples but a sign of a world still wretched in its brokenness. Jesus is the Prince of Peace and it is for His peace that we must work, both in our daily lives and in our churches. Peace is not built by creating walls between people, but by bringing them down. Please pray for the people of Bethlehem this Christmas. **Andrew Evans**

CANDLES IN THE DARK



During this Advent season find some space and time for God in your busy life!

'Candles in the dark' is a special course to lead us into a deeper awareness of the ever-present God.

Join your hosts Eve and Jerome at the Vicarage in Sherston on Wednesday evenings beginning 5th December at 8.00 p.m.

Course facilitator: Chris Newton-Evans.

Candles in the dark is written by David Adam, Vicar of Lindisfarne and is in the tradition of Celtic spirituality. A wonderful time of peace and reflection as we prepare to celebrate the Christmas season. All are welcome.

www.firstSunday@11.00

Following on from our last First Sunday on Poverty, Wealth, God and Us here are some useful links if you would like to find out more:

www.tearfund.org – is a relief and development charity working in poverty stricken areas

www.compassion.com – is a child sponsorship charity enabling you to sponsor a needy child

www.doorwayproject.org.uk – is a charity drop in centre in Chippenham

Alternatively please contact Sarah Slarke on 837521 for any information.

ST. GILES LIVING CHURCHYARD PROJECT

Another rewarding year has been enjoyed and completed. We would like to extend a heartfelt thanks to everyone who helped in any way throughout the year. We wish you all a peaceful Christmastime and a stress free 2008. Join us on Saturday March 15th to help start our 10th anniversary year. If anyone requires a species list or copy of the Annual Report please contact us. Ivan 01249 657684 or Liz 01666 837921

Our thanks to Furry Tails, your local pet suppliers of Chippenham and Cirencester who have extended their sponsorship of The Net. Tel 01249 444332, 01285 650444 or 01225 775375



mothers union
Christian care for families worldwide

Sherston has an active branch of the Mothers Union which meets in Sherston Church once a month at 7pm on a Thursday. They welcome any visitors.

The branch are holding their Christmas Service on December 20th.

For further information please contact Pat Whitehouse on 840640



Current and past copies of The Net are now published every month on the Hullavington village website <http://www.hullavington.info/>. When in the website click on "St Mary Magdalene Church" and then on "The Net"



Special events this month



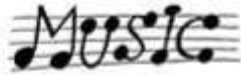
All the December Services can be found on the insert with this month's magazine.

**FOLLOW THE STAR
To 'THE STAR'
ON CHRISTMAS EVE**

Meet the donkeys at the Parklands bus stop in Hullavington at 4.30pm and join us to follow them to the 'STAR INN' for the Crib Service and some warming Refreshments.
Come dressed to join in the search for a room for Mary and Joseph.

"Don't forget" Genesis Singers meet every Thursday evening in the Church, 7.00-8.00 pm. Children over the age of 7 years are welcome.

You are invited to
A NEW AND EXCITING INITIATIVE
AT EASTON GREY CHURCH
for all ages



with a

MESSAGE



Using local talent
vocalist STEVEN WODECKI
and a Guitarist from the
Band 'BULLET TRAIN'
SUNDAY, 2nd DECEMBER

6pm - 6.45pm
followed by drinks & nibbles

Carols and Punch
at Holly House, 3 Watts
Lane, Hullavington

6.30pm Sunday 2nd Decem-
ber

Tickets from Holly House on
837605
£3.00 (children under 14,
£1.00)

Our next **www.First Sunday@11.00** Service in Hullavington is in the season of Advent on **December 2nd**

This is an informal Service where we will be exploring how we can prepare ourselves for Jesus' coming.- God is with us and has never left the world He created. Refreshments start at 10.30am—see you there!



EASTON GREY PARISH CHURCH
invite you to the
CAROL SERVICE

on **TUESDAY, 18TH DECEMBER**
at 6pm

followed by Bring and Share Refreshments
at Bridge House (by kind invitation of Craig
and Gail Aitken)

**ALL WELCOME TO COME AND SING YOUR
FAVOURITE CAROLS**

Saturday 15th December
4.00pm

Lighting the Christmas tree lights at the Church.
Come and sing carols around the tree, and have
mulled wine, mince pies etc,

and listen to carols by

Genesis singers

Village Voices

Coffee at Serendipity

Every Friday morning as usual throughout
December.

For information about **MUSTARD SEEDS,
DEUTERONOMY, OR GOLDEN
THREADS**, ring Alison on
01666837661



December Services



www.firstsunday@11.00 is on the first Sunday of every month at St Mary's, Hullavington. It is an informal service welcoming anyone of any age with any or no previous experience of church.

Hullavington

2nd	11.00am	www.firstsunday@11.00
	6.30pm	Carols and punch—Holly House
9th	11.00am	Holy Communion
16th	11.00am	Morning Praise
23rd	3.00pm	Carol Service
24th	4.30pm	Crib Service starting at the Bus stop and finishing at 'The Star ' Inn
	11.15pm	Midnight Communion
25th	11.00am	Family Service
30th	11.00am	Joint Service at SSQ

Norton

2nd	9.30am	Communion
24th	3.00pm	Crib Service
30th	11.00am	Joint Service at SSQ

Stanton St Quinton

2nd	11.00am	Morning Praise
9th	9.30am	All age Family Service
16th	9.30am	Holy Communion
23rd	6.00pm	Carol Service
24th	5.00pm	Crib Service
	9.00pm	Holy Communion
25th	9.30am	Family Service
30th	11.00am	Joint Service SSQ

Alderton

9th	10.00am	Family Service
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Easton Grey

2nd	6.00pm	Evening Worship
16th	9.30am	Holy Communion
25th	11.15am	Holy Communion

Foxley

9th	11.00am	Holy Communion BCP
23rd	6.00pm	Carol Service
25th	10.00am	Holy Communion

Luckington

2nd	11.00am	Family Communion
9th	11.00am	Matins
16th	11.00am	All Age Family Service
23rd	11.00am	Carols for Christmas
24th	10.00am	Holy Communion
25th		No Service
30th	11.00am	Joint Service at SSQ

Sherston

2nd	8.00 am	Holy Communion
	9.30am	Sung Eucharist
	6.00pm	Reflective Service of the Word
9th	8.00am	Holy Communion
	9.30am	Sung Eucharist + Baptism
	6.00pm	Evensong
16th	8.00am	Holy Communion
	9.30 am	Family Service
	6.00pm	Carol Service
23rd	8.00am	Holy Communion
	9.30am	Sung Eucharist
		No Evening Service
24th	6.00pm	Crib Service
	11.30pm	Midnight Mass
25th	9.30am	Family Communion
30th	8.00am	Holy Communion
	9.30am	Sung Eucharist
	6.00pm	Evensong

