



DECEMBER PARISH NEWSLETTER

SERVICES FOR DECEMBER

Saturday 2nd December

5.00 pm Lighting of St Denys & Christmas Tree in St Denys Church Churchyard, followed by the singing of Carols & Refreshments

Sunday 3rd December Advent

10.15 am Holy Communion (Stanford)
4.00 pm St Denys @ 4 Christmas Fellowship Meal in Stanford School

Wednesday 6th December

6.00 pm Stanford School Year 3, 4 and 5 Christmas Performance

Thursday 7th December

2.00 pm Stanford School Year 3, 4 and 5 Christmas Performance
6.00 pm Stanford School Year 3, 4 and 5 Christmas Performance

Sunday 10th December Advent 2

10.15 am Holy Communion (Stanford)
4.00pm Denys@4 – All Age Advent Service
6.00pm Carols by Candlelight – St Georges, Hatford

Wednesday 13th December

2.00pm and 5.30 pm Stanford School Foundation Stage and Key Stage One Christmas Performance

Saturday 16th December

4.00pm Carols by Candlelight – All Saints, Goosey

Sunday 17th December Advent 3
10.15 am Holy Communion (Stanford)
6.00 pm Carols by Candlelight at Stanford

Sunday 24th December Christmas Eve
4.00pm Crib Service at Stanford
10.00pm Holy Communion at Stanford (No service at 10.15am)

Monday 25th December Christmas Day
10.15 am Informal Family Holy Communion at Stanford

Sunday 31st December

10.15 am Holy Communion (Stanford)
(No Denys@4, transferred to a Fellowship 'Drop In' New Year's Day Tea on January 1)

Sunday 7th January

10.15 am Holy Communion (Stanford)
4.00 pm Denys@4 – All Age Service

In Memory

Our thoughts and prayers go to all the family and friends of people who have recently died.

Sadly, this includes:

Eileen Varney
Peter Hawsworth

Open House On most Saturdays St Denys Church is open between 10 am and noon for coffee and tea, cake and chat. Do pop in. You'll find a warm and friendly welcome.

WHO'S WHO IN THE PARISH?

Vicar	
The Revd Paul Eddy	710267
Church Wardens	
Maz Galley	710211
Michelle Sinclair	07929733429
Verger	
Susan Mayall	710138
Parish Website:	www.stdenys.org

The Vicar Writes

AS I started to write this piece, a news alert came up on my iPhone which read: "**Bethlehem officially cancels Christmas for the first time in decades over Israel-Hamas war**". A far cry from the Christmas carol which says "**O Little town of Bethlehem how still we see thee lie**".

Stanford in the Vale with Goosey and Hatford Newsletter December 2023. To include items for the newsletter:

Janet Warren 01367 710789 or jmwarren302@gmail.com Closing date this month is the 18th December

Stanford Community Website for e copy - Local events, business listing, village history and more

Newsletter sponsored by Public Purposes Charity Stanford in the Vale



Not for the first time, on first view, the picture painted in carols is drastically different to reality today.

But as ever, we need to look beyond the headlines, for the carol goes on to say *“Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting Light; The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.”*

Around 2023 years ago, a young couple, Mary and Jo were going back to Jo’s hometown to re-register for the Census, so the invading Romans could ensure the full taxes were paid to stockpile their military might and power. Nothing new about invasions of Israel it seems.

Many carols take two words *“The Inn”*, and that there was *“no room”* there, and do an amazing Hollywood job and create all sorts of stories, characters and scenes so that all of a sudden, a husband, Jo, who was of the Royal line from King David, and his young wife, Mary, carrying the next generation of Kingly line (so the carols say), are shunted off to a ‘stable’ (nowhere in the Bible does it say that), and Mary gives birth, on her own, in an unheated, unlit, cow-dunged stable or barn? Really?

The actual word ‘Inn’ is properly translated to mean the *“Upper Room”* in a typical house of the day in which the whole family normally slept downstairs, together, in the main living room. There was one room upstairs, often a room open to the stars (due to the heat and good weather), where family visitors would stay – called the *“inn”*.

So, with dozens of people returning home to Bethlehem at that time, (experts believe the normal population of Bethlehem in AD30 was around 600 people), it’s pretty likely that the ‘Inn’ of many family homes would already be occupied with sons and daughters and their families dropping in for a night or two.

So where was Jesus born? Well, the reference to the *‘manger’* gives us a clue.

It was a special hole/troth in the downstairs living room floor, where food and water for cattle was contained. And in the very cold weather, very young cattle, or lambs were brought in for the night. They literally slept in the same space as the family. In fact, in certain parts of Israel and the Middle East today, is still happens, and this family/animal living/sharing concept is very well documented.

So, far from being shunned and turned away, Mary and Jo very probably were welcomed to bed for the night in the family living room. Surrounded by family who’d look after Mary and then, when nature took its course and Jesus was about to be delivered by women helpers, no doubt yes, the men were shunted off to the pub, served by the Inn Keeper who this time, did his proper job, serving them a pint to wet the baby’s head!

But what difference does it make? Lots.

For a start, it shows that God himself was delivered in human form into the very beating heart of family life, not a private, top-end midwifery unit, into the living room, surrounded by all sorts of family, with all sorts of personalities and backgrounds and no doubt like any family, there would have been the usual arguments, as well as acts of love.

Mary and Jo were visitors, but there was a proper family welcome, so much so, that the bible explains they stayed in town for quite some time: the wisemen didn’t pop in with pretty useless baby toys on Boxing day, but maybe a year or so later, experts believe.

And then, and only then, did they leave Bethlehem because the wise men told Jo that the self-imposed ruler at the time was threatened about news of another ‘king’, and wanted to

kill all Jewish children in that small community: history repeats itself, sadly.

Now, a bit like today, in Israel there were different views on how to overthrow those who sought to annihilate the Jews from their land, or claim their right to the land. Most wanted a new King, a Messiah, to develop a Resistance Army and fight against the Romans. Through might and aggression, demonstrate who was really in charge and throw them out of Israel. Others were not so sure given the history of fighting in the land.

God’s solution? To send into the midst of power struggles, violence, and corruption in Government a selfless baby who lived a normal family life amongst a carpenter dad and siblings, then when around 30, spent three years teaching peace, love and justice. So much so, the rulers even then found this man a threat. They colluded with others, used fake news and false evidence to try him, sentence him to death and then crucify him. All seemed pretty bleak and impossible: the plan which God offered – peace with God and with others, and a new Kingdom not of this world, defeated. It seemed, the powerful military might, those with the most ammunition, the Romans, had won.

But how does that hymn end?

“How silently, how silently, the wondrous Gift is giv’n;

So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His Heav’n.

No ear may hear His coming, but in this world of sin, Where meek souls will receive Him still, the dear Christ enters in.”

Even today, in the darkest, most desperate parts of the world, from the innocent civilians in Gaza, or Israel, or in Ukraine, or those who this Christmas sit alone at night when the children are in bed as this year, their marriage has broken up. Even today, to those who this Christmas grieve the loss of a loved one, taken from them too soon.

Even then, to the person who watches the fun and joy around them, the bright lights, and hears the music blaring around the shops, and on the radio and yet, and yet, they are walking in a parallel world, awaiting that letter from the hospital with a test appointment, or for the follow up meeting to hear the news they really hope is not what they dread. Even today, the dear Christ wants to enter in.

Just over 2,000 years ago, one night a rather seemingly odd and irrelevant act of God occurred: His son being born on earth. But in sending Jesus into one of the darkest times of Israel’s history then, and right into the very heart of family life in that downstairs living room, a place of fun and lighter, and rows and pain, sometimes verbal, even occasionally physical, was born Jesus. Jesus, who brought light and life and love, and for two millennia, has changed the lives of all who will invite him into their lives – and transform their darkness because God is within them, *“Emmanuel”*, whatever they face.

The last verse of that carol says:

“O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray; Cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today.

We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;

Oh, come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel!”

May you welcome Emmanuel into your family living room, and into your life, whether dark, or light, crowded or alone, this Christmas.

Yours *Paul* Revd Paul Eddy, FRSA **Vicar**

Stanford in the Vale with Goosey and Hatford Newsletter December 2023. To include items for the newsletter:

Janet Warren 01367 710789 or jmwarren302@gmail.com Closing date this month is the 18th December

Stanford Community Website for e copy - Local events, business listing, village history and more

Newsletter sponsored by Public Purposes Charity Stanford in the Vale



Stanford Pickleball Group Success

In 2017 the **Vale Council** set up an initiative called 'Go Active Gold' to encourage the over-60s to get fitter and one of their chosen activities was pickleball, which really is a lot of fun to play! (If you want to know all about it, go to the **Pickleball England** website.) Then they handed over the reins to the current volunteer organisers, Frank Coldwell and his wife, Wendy; and currently have over 30 members with a waiting list to join. The Vale initially provided equipment – balls, 'paddles' (also known as bats) and the net; and further invaluable help was kindly given by the village's **Public Purposes Charity** in the form of replacement equipment and a very expensive green training machine, for all of which our Group members are extremely grateful. This has meant that over the years the standard of play has improved markedly and last week, Frank went to the English Nationals Pickleball Tournament in Bolton Arena and won a gold medal in the over-70s men's doubles. For those who didn't see the Oxford Mail article, here is the link:

<https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/sport/23889721.oxfordshire-pickleball-player-wins-gold-national-championships/?ref=suit> And here are some of the happy current members and the green 'trainer':



OPEN MIC NIGHTS in the village:

These start at **8pm every 1st Wednesday** of the month in the Horse and Jockey and every 3rd Thursday of the month in the Social Club (no need to be a Social Club member to attend the open mics). Come along to enjoy a fun night of free entertainment and/or to perform to an enthusiastic audience

St Deny's Handbell Ringers

We have had a busy and exciting month so far, performing, and rehearsing lots of new music. We started the month playing at the 'Ringing into Winter' handbell rally in Downton, and performed for the very welcoming Mothers Union in Lechlade who donated £148 to the Salvation Army! We have one more performance at the Milton Under Wichwood WI before we go full-swing into practicing for Christmas!

If you enjoy music and like the sound of handbells, why not give them a try? No prior musical experience required! We are a small, friendly group that meet in the small village hall every Wednesday 8-10pm.

If interested please send us an e-mail to Jackie at StDenys.HBR@btinternet.com

Christmas Bells

Listen out for Stanford's church bells ringing as we celebrate the Christmas services in December. This is probably the busiest time of the year for ringers and it's great that we have new ringers this year to help ensure we can ring the bells when needed.

Our new (2023) learners have made fantastic progress and we are very pleased to have welcomed them to the tower. Bell ringing is, however, an interest which allows for continual progression so there will be plenty more to learn next year and we all look forward to that.

If you would like to become a bell ringer, or would just like to see the inside of the church tower and how bells are rung, please visit us in the church tower on a Tuesday (7.30-9pm) or Sunday (9.45-10.15am) (ideally contacting us in advance via e-mail at StDenysChurchBells@btinternet.com, just in case there has been a change in arrangements).

Repair Café

Decemeber

Coffee shop 2nd December 12.00-2pm Small Items and Advice on repairs of larger items. also

ULTRASONIC CLEANING FOR JEWELLERY

NOTE THERE WILL BE NO MEETING AT THE SOCIAL CLUB ON 16TH DECEMBER.

January

Coffee shop 6th January 12.00-2pm Advice on repairs, small items and ULTRASONIC CLEANING FOR JEWELLERY

Social Club 20th January 11am – about 2pm. General repairs and servicing. Please let us know beforehand if possible so we can have tools and parts available. Our work is varied but new Volunteers are always welcome. Tele 01367 710283

Email: stanfordrepaircafe@silkie.co.uk

Stanford in the Vale with Goosey and Hatford Newsletter December 2023. To include items for the newsletter:

Janet Warren 01367 710789 or jmwarren302@gmail.com Closing date this month is the 18th December

Stanford Community Website for e copy - Local events, business listing, village history and more

Newsletter sponsored by Public Purposes Charity Stanford in the Vale





FAS Artisan Craft Fair
Saturday 2 December 2023
 12:00pm - 4:00pm
 Corn Exchange
 Faringdon SN7 7JA

Discover unique gifts or treasures while meeting local skilled crafters and makers



Free Public Admission
www.faringdonartsociety.co.uk

Saturday 2nd December
5.00 pm Lighting of the Tree in St Denys Church Churchyard, followed by the singing of Carols and hot refreshments.

Wednesday 6th December 2023
7.30 pm Stanford in the Vale Parish Council Meeting in Stanford in the Vale Village Hall - check noticeboards or Parish Council website for details. Members of the public are welcome to attend.

Stanford in the Vale Village Hall
Prize Christmas Bingo
Friday 8th December 2023
 Doors open at 7 for Eyes-down at 7.30pm
Cash prize for Last House
 Bar and raffle
 Contact: J. Warren jmwarren302@gmail.com or 01367 710789

FARINGDON & DISTRICT U3A MEETING ON THURSDAY 14TH DECEMBER

Thursday 14th December 2023 2.30 Corn Exchange Visitors £1.59. - No Lecture in January.

The title of the talk this month is, **Secrets, Scandal and Salacious Gossip of the Royal Court 1660-1830** by **Sarah Slater** who is a guide at Hampton Court Palace. Her talk will tell us about all the

Stanford in the Vale with Goosey and Hatford Newsletter December 2023. To include items for the newsletter: Janet Warren 01367 710789 or jmwarren302@gmail.com Closing date this month is the 18th December Stanford Community Website for e copy - Local events, business listing, village history and more Newsletter sponsored by Public Purposes Charity Stanford in the Vale

naughty bits of history that you probably would not have learnt at school! She has a particular interest in the human stories of those who have lived and worked within the palace. This talk promises to be great fun but certainly for an adult audience.

STANFORD IN THE VALE LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

CHRISTMAS SOCIAL : WEDNESDAY 13th DECEMBER @7.30 in the large village hall

GUEST SPEAKER : TIM HEALEY : A VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS

Followed by Christmas Refreshments £3/person for members

Visitors welcome £8 including refreshments

Stanford in the Vale WI

For information on Stanford in the Vale WI, which meets on the third Wednesday of the month at the Village Hall, please ring Annette on 01367710528.

Advance Notice

They're back oh yes they are !!!
Jack and the Beanstalk will be performed by the local talented members of our Stanford in the Vale Drama Group.
 A Pantomime not to be missed!!
 Put a note in your diary for
 Thursday 1 February, Friday 2 February or Saturday 3 February (matinee and evening performances) 2024

Pre-school news – December 2023

Our committee organised a Spooky Disco for the children. This was really well attended, and a fun time was had by all.

We have been looking at changes in the environment with the season of Autumn in full swing. The children collected items on a walk around the village and then used the items to make autumn collages.

We have been learning about the festival of Diwali. The children have been making their own Diya lamps from clay and decorating them with resources of their choice.

We have been taking part in Nursery Rhyme week. We have been singing some old favourites and learning some new ones.



We have now signed up as a good cause on the new White Horse Lottery. This is a great way to support the Pre-school and also win some money yourself. Information on how to join can be found here:

<https://www.whitehorselottery.co.uk>

You can also support the Pre-school by buying online through Easy Fundraising and choosing us as your good cause. At no cost to you every time you shop we will get a commission from the company. https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/stanfordpresch/?utm_campaign=raise-more&utm_medium=email&utm_content=rm-en-e2

The Pre-school would be delighted to hear from any companies or individuals who would be interested in supporting the Pre-school financially. Due to a mixture of long-term insufficient funding from government (our only income) and rising financial costs the Pre-school continues to be in a very precarious financial state.

If you are interested in registering your child with us please visit www.stanfordpreschool.org.uk and complete a Pre-Registration form or contact the Pre-school on 01367 718696.

Stanford in the Vale CE Primary School

Reported by the newly elected School Council:

Year 1 - Jonathan & Lola,

Year 2 - Sophie & Luis,

Year 3 - Ivy & Saffron,

Year 4 - Conway & Anneke,

Year 5 - Toby & Lottie,

Year 6 - Tessa and Esmay



Foundation - We have been learning about Remembrance Day and fireworks. We enjoyed creating some poppy themed artwork and learning about why we mark remembrance day.

Year One - We have been working really hard in year 1, learning all about our number bonds and 2D shapes. We have been enjoying thinking about our village and creating maps of our local area.

Year Two - We had a great walk down to St Denys to support our learning all about it's historical importance in our village. We have also been working really hard on adding and subtracting 2-digit numbers and reading our book 'The Owl Who was Afraid of the Dark'.

Year Three - We have been exploring a variety of alternative stories all about wolves and their representations. In Maths we have been working

really hard on addition and subtraction with exchange and are very proud of our progress.

Year Four - We have been very busy learning all about electricity and how to make electrical circuits work as part of our Science lessons. We are applying this learning to creating ice cream van signs which will light up in DT. We have also been enjoying reading 'Until I Met Dudley' and exploring explanation texts.

Year Five - We are really enjoying our Earth and Space topic - learning all about our solar system and reading our linked text 'Cosmic'. We have been using this learning to create space themed board games in DT.

Year Six - We had a fantastic residential to PGL. We all enjoyed all of the different activities and being away with our friends for the week. We learnt so many skills and grew in confidence whilst away.

It has been a very busy time at school with Remembrance, Odd Socks Day, Anti-Bullying Week and Children in Need. We were all extremely proud to participate in the Remembrance service at the Church. On Monday the 13th we all wore Odd Socks to school to celebrate our differences and throughout the week we thought about how we can 'make a noise' to stop bullying. We marked Children in Need by wearing something spotty, creating a giant Pudsey out of coins and donating to Children in Need in return for a cupcake - kindly baked by school council!

Please do look on our school website for more information about what we have been doing. Please do look on our school website for more information about what we have been doing.

Thank you for reading our report.
Take care and keep safe.

Stanford in the Vale with Goosey and Hatford Newsletter December 2023. To include items for the newsletter:

Janet Warren 01367 710789 or jmwarren302@gmail.com Closing date this month is the 18th December

Stanford Community Website for e copy - Local events, business listing, village history and more

Newsletter sponsored by Public Purposes Charity Stanford in the Vale

