



Parish of St Peter & St Paul, Abington
- the Church in the Park -
**Welcome to our December Newsletter
2022**

Rector's Pastoral Letter



Nativity, 1891 by Julius Garibaldi "Gari" Melchers.

The painting above is one of the images I have been praying with this Advent. Although the title of the painting is Nativity, it portrays the scene of Nativity quite differently from what we might be used to. There is no bright star in a magical starry night, there are no animals or shepherds. It is a dark, unheated, cold room where even the door can't be shut fully to keep the cold wind out. Mary looks utterly spent and exhausted after what must have been a very long journey to get there followed by the intense hours of labour to give birth. Joseph looks very quiet and no doubt is exhausted mentally and emotionally. And yet his eyes are fixed on the baby. Then there is baby Jesus covered in hay,

lying in a manger with no hat to keep his tiny head warm. But still, the light is radiating around him.

For many of us in Abington, Christmas will still be an occasion that gives us a sense of warmth and brightness. But we are mindful that this year there will be many families who may be unable to have the simple luxury of a warm room whether because of high energy bills or because their infrastructure has been destroyed in war. How is it possible for us to share the light and peace of Christ in a world like this?

I shared this image with children at a school assembly and asked what their thoughts are.

“I suppose it must have been very cold and lonely to be in a stable at night with your newborn baby and yet with no one to look after you or congratulate you”, said one child.

“But the shepherds came later, didn’t they with their sheep? Mary and Joseph and baby Jesus weren’t left on their own after all. It must have made all the difference when the warm bodies of the shepherds and animals filled the room”, said another child.

What a brilliant answer. And what a gospel message that is for us to take. If it wasn’t for the people who responded to God’s invitation to come to see baby Jesus on that night, the scene of Nativity would have been just like the painting described. Actually, the scene of the first Christmas may well have started like that. It must have been just a lonely family in a dark, unheated, cold room with no one to share the news of baby Jesus’ birth. But when the shepherds came in as they responded to God’s invitation through angels, everything changed. The room suddenly was full of people and animals. Their warm bodies raised the temperature in the room. I can even see in my imagination how baby Jesus’ head would be wrapped by soft lamb’s wool that sat next to him.

God sends his love and grace through his Son to this world. He sends his life-giving Word to us. But his work does not finish with just sending. He then calls us to welcome his Son and nurture the Word through our faith so the light of Christ could grow stronger and stronger that it can fill the whole world. And all this can begin by one simple act of welcome and kindness just like those shepherds did.

The challenges in this world seem to be all just too big and too much compared to how small we are. Energy crisis, wars, struggling hospitals, not enough

resources. But there are still things we can do. We can still choose to come and visit the stable to simply see baby Jesus, to tell him that he is welcome, to let him know we care and to place a warm cloth around his cold body. Our God is the God who honours the smallest gesture of kindness to make it the channel of His saving grace for the world. Perhaps that is why He sent the Saviour of the world in a form of a tiny baby so that we know that there is room for us to fill in his plan, in that stable.

It is your prayer, your kindness and your generosity that will fill this Christmas with warmth, hope and love. And God is there with you. Emmanuel, God with us.

I am particularly grateful for your generous and kind support for the Sharing God's Gifts through which we can share the love of Christ with 60 families. Thank you. May God bless you all and may his light, comfort and peace fill your hearts and your homes so that you may share that with others and fill their hearts with His love.

With every blessing

Jun



Adoration of the Shepherds, 1622, by Gerard van Honthorst

This Month's Prayer Topic

Prayer for those who are in need over Winter

Dear Lord, I may never be able to fully grasp the needs that people have, but you know each of their hearts and what they need. Bring people into their lives to meet their needs. Help them to feel seen, and to feel your love completely covering them. Show them your goodness through the kindness that others show in Your name. Amen.

This month's preachers

4th December, Advent 2: The Revd. Jun Kim
11th December, Advent 3: Mrs. Alison Barnes
18th December, Advent 4: Mr. Prester Coleman
24th December, Midnight Mass: The Revd. Tracy Pegram
25th December, Christmas Day: The Revd. Tracy Pegram
1st January, Epiphany: The Revd. Jun Kim
8th January, Baptism of Christ: Mrs. Alison Barnes
15th January, Epiphany 2: The Revd. Rachel Hetherington
22nd January, Epiphany 3: Mr. Prester Coleman
29th January, Candlemas: The Revd. Jenny Parkin

Readers and Intercessors for this month

4th December, Advent 2: Readers: Simon McKay & Olivia May
Intercessor: Alan Sutton
11th December, Advent 3: Readers: Alicia Menzies & Susannah McKay
Intercessor: Prester Coleman
18th December, Advent 4: Readers: Andrew Munns & Jenny Mercer
Intercessor: Alison Barnes
24th December, Midnight Mass: Readers: Damian Pickard & Bob Purser
Intercessor: Rhiannon George
25th December, Christmas Morning: Readers: Jenny Parkin & Pam Norman
Intercessor: Matthew George
1st January, Epiphany: Readers: Douglas Rutherford & Tony Sawford
Intercessor: Peter Gompertz
8th January, Baptism of Christ: Readers: Alan Sutton & Dianne Ward
Intercessor: Hilary Hodge
15th January, Epiphany 2: Readers: Owen Warr & Chris Waters
Intercessor: Liz Kelly
22nd January, Epiphany 3: Readers: Alison Barnes & Jan Abel

Intercessor: Donald Loe
29th January, Candlemas: Readers: Fiona Crook & Prester Coleman
Intercessor: Pam Norman

Children and Youth Missioner's Update

Twenty-three children were in church for the Remembrance Day service and it was really good to welcome increasing numbers of Rainbows, Brownies and Guides with their families. They were very well behaved. Having a JC for the younger children and the older children visiting the war graves during the sermon seemed to work well.

The JC volunteers met in November for an early Christmas 'thank you' supper at Gill and Colin's home. We are very lucky to have such dedicated helpers who really care for the children who come to Junior Church. It is a great privilege to share our faith with them and to see the children grow in confidence through the worship and activities that we all enjoy on a Sunday morning.



11 teenagers were invited to the Bowling and Pizza event during half term. 3 attended and it was good fun. Thank you to Ali and Tracy who helped me. We had some good conversations about Holy Communion during our lunch together. I plan to meet up with Jon Ford from NAYC to discuss ways of developing our work with teenagers.

Since starting Little Fishes in February 2022, we now have 20 children who regularly attend with their parents, grandparents or carers. There are also another 10 children who have come or do come on an occasional basis. The format of the morning is play and craft for 30/40 minutes, then snack time all together, then 15 minutes at the end of the session for storytelling, singing, sharing time (including birthdays) and prayer time. We always end with the lighting of (battery operated) candles and singing 'This Little Light of Mine.' Thank you to the volunteers from the church who provide the refreshments – your support is gratefully appreciated!

The 'Light Party' that was held on 31st October for preschool children was very enjoyable and was attended by 17 children and 19 adults. Both adults and

children also appreciated the opportunity to place tea lights around the churchyard to remember All Souls Day.

The youth drop in evenings at The Hut (previously known as AHOF) have not restarted since the easing of the pandemic restrictions. Only one group is using the building, on a Wednesday (JH Community Support, who support young people and adults who have learning difficulties). 'The Hut' Committee have decided that the time has come to hand over the management of the building to another group who will be responsible for its upkeep and usage. Interested groups are being approached by Alan Brett (from PAMC) and any final decision about the future of the building will be taken by the Committee, including a member of the Council.

Cathy Tinsley **Tel. 07516979223** or children@abingtonchurch.org.uk



The church Christmas Tree is being put up
on Saturday 10th December

This year we are inviting children (and adults) to make a few decorations at home and then bring them to church on either Sunday 11th or Sunday 18th to help decorate the tree. Please do join in with this activity and let us see how many decorations we can make!

For further information, please see Cathy.





**'Make your own' Christingle Service
next Sunday, 11th December at 3 pm
here in church**

**Please do come and join us for this
event. Everyone is invited.**

We are supporting the work of



*St Peter and St Paul Abington "the church in the
park" invites you to hear ...*

The Shepherds' Tale

Meet Seth and his Dad, Amos. They're shepherds from Bethlehem and they've got the most amazing story to tell you.

Follow the numbered signs
around Abington churchyard to
hear all about it. The first sign is
by the gate on Park Avenue South.

Look out for the cheeky sheep hiding
on each sign too. Each contains a
letter, put them in order and they
will spell out a message to you.
Good luck!



Please join with us in celebrating Christmas at Abington

The Shepherd's Tale

*A self guided trail around the Churchyard to discover the amazing story of
Seth and his Dad Amos, two Bethlehem shepherds.
Open all day until 6th January*

Make your own Christingle Service 3pm 11th December

Lessons and Carols Service 6pm 18th December.

Followed by mince pies and refreshments

**Christmas Coffee and Craft Morning 10am - 12 noon
19th December (Church Rooms NN3 2HT)**

Crib Service 3pm 24th December

Christmas Morning Family Eucharist 10am Christmas Day

All our services and activities are open to everyone and free to enjoy. We look forward to welcoming you.

**Midnight Eucharist
:24th December
11.30 pm**

[Draft Minutes from the last PCC Meeting](#)

Please click the title above to access the link.

Message on Sharing God's Gifts

Hello. I last stood at the church 8 weeks ago and introduced the Harvest campaign, Sharing God's Gifts and I am here today to update you on what has happened since.

I am delighted to say that your response to this campaign has been absolutely amazing and I would like to give sincere thanks to you and to God for that fact. Between you all you generously donated a sum, which

when Gift Aid is added in on top, amounts to a staggering three and a half thousand pounds.

The amazing thing about the extent of your generosity to your fellow neighbours means that we are not only able to help the one school, Bridgewater Drive Primary School, but we are also in a position to share your love and gifts with Abington Vale Primary School too. In total, we are able to support 60 families this year. That's an incredible achievement.

We have worked with both schools to compile a list of needs based on what was most needed by those 60 families and here is what your donations will buy:

- 22 families will benefit from support with their weekly food shop to the tune of £100 each
- 5 children will have properly fitted school shoes and 3 children will have new PE trainers this winter
- 1 child will have free school meals for a month at school next term
- 5 families will have help towards the cost of providing new school uniforms for their children
- 12 families will be able to go and enjoy lunch and precious time together in the park café
- And 14 families will have help towards the cost of buying Christmas gifts for their children through £50 of Smyths toy vouchers each.

These gifts not only show that we hold these families in our hearts and prayers, it is a very tangible expression of our duties as followers of Christ to love our neighbour as ourselves.

So what happens next?

Tracy and I are busy arranging for all the vouchers and payments to be in place so that we are able to deliver these gifts to the schools in the second week of December. Given that these gifts have come from your generosity and love, we would like to invite you to write your own personal message in a Christmas card, which will contain the individual

gifts and these will be delivered to the families by the school. The cards come in a little cellophane envelope detailing which gift they will ultimately contain so if you wish to put a personal message in for a particular gift that you had in mind when you were donating, or to a particular school, then please find the relevant card. These cards will be available to sign this week and next week so there is a bit of time to do so. There is some guidance on the table to express what not to include in your message such as personal details about yourselves, but I hope this is all straightforward. If not, please speak with either myself or Tracy.

We will also be printing and sticking a prayer for these families in the card too.

Thank you again for what you have achieved with this campaign. I hope the families who receive this gift will know and feel your love and the love of God.

Melissa (Chair of Community & Outreach Committee)

Zoom Compline

This is a weekly service at 7.00pm on Tuesdays. In case you don't know, Compline is a quiet, reflective service at the end of the day and includes an open prayer time, so we shall be able to continue to support one another as we have become used to over the last two years. The joining details are: Meeting I.D. 815 8020 8528. Passcode 409450 Please talk to Liz Kelly if you want to know more about this and to receive a weekly invitation by email, which enables one-click joining. Her contact details are: lizmk@outlook.com or telephone on 07745 604591.

News from the Pastoral Team

The Pastoral Team continues to support parishioners through regular telephone calls, prayer, and pastoral visits. Home Communion is available too. If you, or anyone you know, would like someone from the pastoral team to get in touch, please contact Liz Kelly, Lay Pastoral Minister and Anna Chaplain. Her contact details are lizmk@outlook.com and telephone 01604 636947 or 07745

604591. We offer a listening ear, someone to pray with, bereavement support, or a friendly visit.

On 9th November, Liz led the first Messy Vintage service at Abington Park View Care Home. This is an exciting new venture under the umbrella of Anna Chaplaincy, and includes a craft activity as well as a bible reading, hymn and prayer. The theme was 'All Saints', and the key verse was Ephesians 6.16, *"Take up the shield of faith."* Eight residents were joined by a relative, who with Kate, Jackie, Liz, and Lisa, helped them with the craft, which was to make a shield that was personal to them, and which represented their life story, including their interests, and their faith. The results were amazing, and here are some photos to show how they turned out.

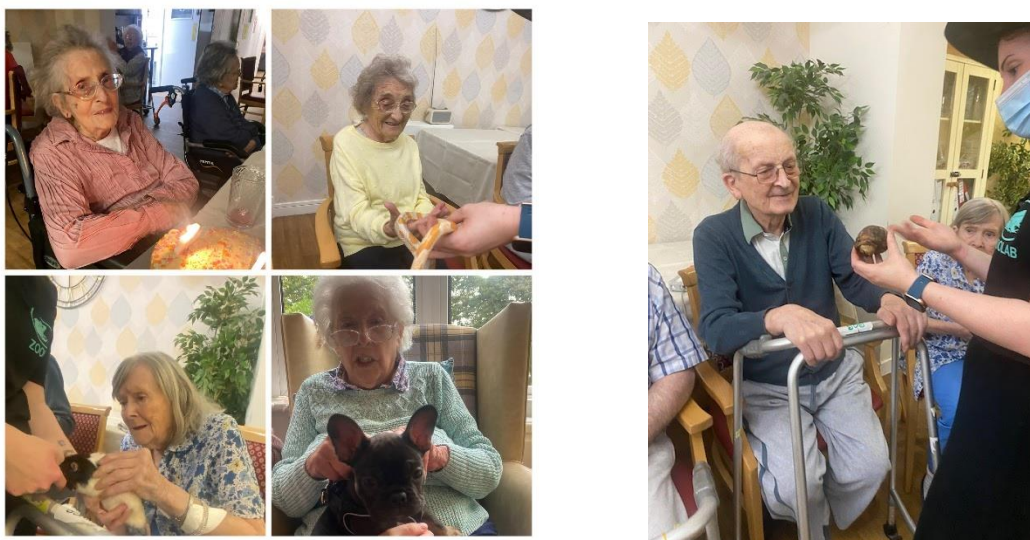


Then on 23rd November, Revd Tracy, Jackie, and Liz led the Songs of Praise service, which this time was based on Evensong, on the theme of Christ the King. We sang some well-known hymns, including 'The head that once was crowned with thorns' and 'Jesus shall reign'. This is an immensely valuable ministry and if you feel called to share in it, please do get in touch with Liz.

Thank you all for your prayers for the Pastoral Team, and for the staff and residents of Abington Park View and St Christopher's Care Homes.

News from Abington Park View Care Home

Congratulations to Mary, who celebrated her 93rd birthday at the end of October. The residents also enjoyed the visit of a mini-zoo recently and here are some pictures of them interacting with just a few of the animals, which included a large snake, a French Bulldog and a giant snail!



Christmas Coffee and Craft Morning



There will be a **'Christmas Coffee and Craft Morning'**
at the Church Rooms on Monday 19th December
from 10 am to 12 noon.

Everyone is welcome to come along for a **drink and mince pie and to try their hand at a craft activity** (although this is not compulsory!). We might even sing a few Christmas carols! **Do invite friends and family who might like to join us.** There will also be some toys out for the younger children.

Foodbank at St Albans

As you will all be aware the cost of everything is rising and is causing more concern and worry for many people.

The numbers of people attending the Foodbank each Friday morning has been at a very high level for many weeks now and will continue at those levels for a long time to come.

We are regularly providing food parcels for over 60 people each week.

It was a blessing, therefore, to receive the wonderful Harvest donations from both Abington Church and St. Christopher's Home.

Thank you all for your wonderful support at this time and thanks to all who regularly donate tins and packets of food either in the box in the Sideman's corner at Church or bring them to our home. It is truly appreciated.

Please keep all those who attend Foodbanks everywhere in your prayers.

Malc and Jill Ward

Mothers Union

Our next meeting will be our Christmas Gathering **at St Ragener's Chapel, St Christopher's Home on Tuesday 13 December 2022 at 2:30pm.** It would be lovely to see as many of our members who are able to join us for the afternoon, to catch up with friends in fellowship and to end the year on a high, in what has been a difficult year for many.

Look forward to seeing you all

Sue, Cathy & Jenny

Crib Service



Come one, come all to an interactive telling of the Christmas Story. All grandparents, parents and children are welcome. And if anyone (adults included) would like to dress up as a character from the Nativity story, they are more than welcome to. The Crib Service will be at 3.00pm in the Church on Christmas Eve afternoon.

Regular Giving

Christian giving is the regular financial commitment of church members to the work of Abington Parish Church. Stewardship has been part of our life at Abington for many years and we now use the Parish Giving Scheme, run by a partnership of Dioceses, as the best of collecting and managing our giving.

For this reason, we no longer pass a collection plate at Services, but visitors are welcome to contribute to the life of the church either through the Card Reader

by the font, by using the link on the Church website. or through yellow envelopes in the pews which along with cash can be placed on the plate or in the wall-safe.

For a Parish Giving Scheme form or for further information on Christian giving, please speak to Damian Pickard or Bob Purser.

How to get your contribution or event into the next Abington Newsletter

Please send content to Matthew George on abingtonbulletin@outlook.com by the 21st of the month for guaranteed inclusion in the next edition. If you send it after the 21st, it may not be included. There will not be a January edition, so the next Parish Newsletter will be February's edition. If you wish to have a printed version delivered to you, please contact Bob Purser 785836. There will also be a small number of copies in church for visitors.

If you no longer wish to receive the Newsletter from Abington Church please email
bob.purser@abingtonchurch.org.uk