

'I'm an angel, oooh...'

Messy Church members learnt this new song in November to go with the theme of the afternoon: the special message about the forthcoming birth of Jesus that the Angel Gabriel brought to Mary. Angel biscuits were decorated, lollystick angels made, and little bottles filled with special messages: "Do not be afraid, you have found favour with God" – all followed by tea, of course!



Above: At the Messy Church Christmas party in December, everyone worked on a collage to decorate the chapel in Smallfield Church Hall



Windmill United Benefice
The parishes of Burstow, Horne and Outwood

Rector: Revd Nicholas Calver
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Following the star

Journeying together through Advent and Christmas

Margaret Hobson writes:

I looked forward to Mary and Joseph's visit in December. They came with Mary Baldock from St John's, Outwood and a friend of hers, and they stayed for coffee and a chat. I found out that the friend used to run a cat rescue in Smallfield. The chatter lasted for quite a while!

As I had booked to go to The Archway Theatre in Horley to see *Flint Street Nativity* that evening, I did not want to leave Mary and Joseph alone at home so they came along with me. As we were going in we met Derek and Anne Pinfield from St Bartholomew's, Burstow. They had come with a group from Copthorne Church so Mary and Joseph came out on to the table, met some of them and had a drink with us in the bar. They had to sit on my lap for the play which they found differed a bit from their recollections but very funny!

The next lovely sunny afternoon we went to South Nutfield for their next visit to Anne and Clive O'Flynn and their dog from St John's Church, Outwood. Again lots of chat over a cuppa and cake.

I really enjoyed their short stay and hope they can come again next year. It was a great way to meet people from other churches in the benefice who I may have known by sight but not actually spoken to.



Above: Mary and Joseph pictured on their evening with Wendy Jeavons, who writes:

I would like to mention that I was very moved at the service in Outwood on Christmas morning. There was a very special moment when Nicholas held up a newly born baby, Imogen, and gave her a lovely blessing, it was so moving.

I would also like to mention that at the Christmas fair in Outwood church, a lot of people said to me that the church had a lovely warm atmosphere and the music was very enjoyable.



There was a good turn out at the CAMEO Christmas lunch at the Plough in December. Before enjoying the meal, members took a moment to raise a glass to absent friends, remembering Win Carter and Bill Hodsdon who had died during the year, and Betty Thorpe and Raymond Dench who had moved into care homes. There were also congratulations for Val and Gordon Butt who had celebrated their Diamond Wedding Anniversary that week.

Sandra Robson writes:

I felt it was a moving, peaceful and spiritual experience to be part of the Advent Journey and to welcome Mary and Joseph into my home. I felt the journey made us more united as a benefice, helping us put names to faces and sharing a time of prayer together and making arrangements to meet again in the new year.

I found the Advent booklet, *Follow the Star*, of great benefit during the busy time of Advent, making time each day to read, reflect and respond. Having missed a couple of Advent services

because of illness, I found that this Advent calendar was a great help spiritually.

I found great comfort from the words of the saints: those of Julian of Norwich were the words I heard when I was dreadfully ill when I had my 40th birthday and those of St Theresa gave me a great feeling of peace, as did the words of St Augustine: "Trust the past to the mercy of God, the present to his love, and the future to his providence."

Advent was a great time of reflection. Thank you, Lord, and thank you, Nicholas and Judith.

Sue Wates writes:

2016 was no different... as the bright daylight of long summer days contracted into the gentler light of cooler autumn days and then early winter with last summer's sun tan fading fast, the nation's thoughts turned to Christmas, led by the promise

Nicola Ramm writes:

I just wanted to say a big **thank you** for introducing Mary and Joseph's Advent Journey to our parish – what a wonderful pre-Christmas 'gift'. I felt really blessed and privileged to be part of their journey from house to house during Advent. It was inspirational and brought a feeling of peace and calm in what is usually such as busy time. I also found the *Follow The Star* Advent booklet extremely enlightening and thought provoking. Both helped remind me of and focus on the true meaning of Christmas.

of happiness from the retail trade.

There was no getting away from it: cards should be bought, present wish lists should be circulated, a new sofa purchased, catering arrangements discussed and how were we going to include all the family and keep everyone happy!

Part of me enjoys the frenetic preparations and spectacle of the retail extravaganza – it can be fun to be swept along on a wave of retail therapy that we're told will lead to happiness – but for me there's always a day when sanity kicks in and I crave the peace that I know is at the heart of the Christian Christmas.

My inner peace took root on Sunday 27 November 2016 at the joint

Windmill United Benefice Advent Carol Service. The three choirs had practised together for the service and in doing so came to know one another better. Individuals united by a single focus; looking forward to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.

The feeling of peace grew as I read the daily readings, reflections and suggestions for response in *Follow the Star*. The set texts for each day were interesting and thought provoking and I soon began to look forward to the next day's readings. I admit to taking a sneaky peak ahead on a few occasions as I wondered in which direction I would be led next.

I find it difficult to single out one text in *Follow the Star* that is more meaningful for me than another so all I want to say is that if you haven't

Another benefice member writes:

It was very meaningful to participate in Mary and Joseph's Journey to Bethlehem. A simple act, yet it calmly brought the deep meaning of Christmas into my home. It significantly stemmed the rushing ocean waves of glitter and worldliness, with all of the associated hubbub, into a balance of calm highlighting the true importance of Christmas. Echoing the first Christmas with its struggles and discomfort, how appropriate that the figures came, not in fancy wrappings but, in a basic cardboard shoe box together with prayers to be said and a candle to be lit spreading light into the world.

read it yet, you should... it will help you to find the true peace and happiness of Christmas.

All three Christmas fairs at Burstow, Horne and Outwood were very successful. Not only did they make much needed funds for the mission and upkeep of the churches, they were also wonderful community events. At Horne, there has not been a Christmas fair for a number of years and the event proved to be a real focus for the community with lots of Horne residents coming along. At Outwood, the fair moved into the Church and again, there was a great atmosphere. And at the Burstow fair in the Smallfield Hall, people came and lingered, rewarded by the offer of delicious bacon sandwiches!



Heather Sargent writes: Christmas really started with the Advent booklet. I read it every morning and I could think about it during the day. On 1 December we were asked to reflect on the words of Julian of Norwich – ‘Every-thing will be all right’ – and what they might mean for us today. It took me back to the time about 30 years ago when my daughter Liz phoned me to say she had to go into hospital for a cancer operation and could I come up and look after the boys. I went, of course, and took over the house; the boys were both young. I was praying daily, ‘Dear God, please let everything be all right’. It was and Liz is now in her sixties and very healthy. This reading brought that happening all back to me and how God answered my prayers.

On 10 December we were challenged to think of ways we might work for justice and peace – and to consider which individuals or charities we could help. I’m too old now to be able to do many good deeds but I love to support St. Catherine’s Hospice in any way I can and also Ripple Africa, the charity founded by my daughter Liz and her husband Geoff. In their different ways they both do wonderful work.

It was also an experience to give Mary and Joseph a home for a night, I think they enjoyed the television!

My family from Madrid arrived on Christmas Eve and we all thoroughly enjoyed the Crib Service with the candles which got us all prepared for the next morning. The boys always enjoy Christmas morning; they love the service with the carols and prayers.

Gary Lynch writes:

Nicholas had said that receiving Mary and Joseph into our homes made them a little Bethlehem, a place where Christ is born.

When Mary and Joseph came to us I certainly felt this. It felt as though they had been on a journey (which by then was almost at an end as it was nearly Christmas) and

seeing them felt almost as though our home had become a shrine. They seemed imbued with some kind of ethereal quality, and their appearance and posture, quietly kneeling, raised feelings in me. I had the same sense of wonder – of this ‘shrineness’ (I just made that word up) – as I had when I was a small child.

I thought it was very special that we all joined in and had a common union through this sense of wonder briefly. And I felt that talking with Adrian, who brought them to us, and to Nicholas and Judith, who I passed them on to, deepened our appreciation of the strength of the pieces.



Behind the scenes

Above: Liam Harvey captured the peace of St Mary's, Horne, before the carol service, while *(right)* the augmented Outwood choir posed after the carol service there. *Below right:* the National Trust volunteers cut down and brought the 15ft Christmas tree into Outwood church and *(below)* in all three churches the flower arrangers worked hard to enhance their beauty



Reach for the sky!

Some recent tall stories from around the benefice



Paul Pitts (*left below and below left!*) has completed a night time High Altitude Low Opening (HALO) Tandem skydive from 30,000ft in the United States, joining the Mayor of Reigate, David Powell who, by jumping at the age of 81, set a world record. Paul and David were raising funds for the Royal British Legion.



Guy and Louise Wates successfully reached the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro in October. Undeterred by this gruelling experience, Guy is now training to run the London Marathon in April, to raise money for the Alzheimers Society. Find out more by visiting: <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/Guy-Wates1>

Mary Baldock won the prize for the tallest sunflower in Outwood village. Her winning plant measured 4.01m (over 13 ft) before the Outwood Show but went on growing even more after that!

