



From the Parsonage

What will you be giving this Christmas? People answer that question in different ways. Sometimes they think about what they would most like to receive themselves! But others just seem to be good at choosing the right present to suit the right person. Some of my favourite presents are those which are homemade because they're unique and they convey part of the person who gives them. And perhaps, this year in particular, that sort of 'contact' counts far more than in others. When you hold a homemade gift, you're making physical contact with something someone has held and shaped for you. Part of them is given to you in the gift and that means more to some than anything else.

From its origins the Christian faith has always been a matter of controversy to those of other beliefs and faiths. One reason for this is its assertion that, in the birth of Jesus, the Creator fully entered into His creation; that in the birth of the Christ, God gives himself to the world. What a thought, that God is both giver and gift in and through the life of Jesus! In this way He chose to communicate His love.

Christianity can seem nonsensical to people because, logically speaking, the Creator and creation are two separate things. But the Christmas message invites us to ponder and reflect on this mystery and take it to heart. And, just as some people seem to have the knack of knowing what to give, so God knows that in His gift He is providing just what is needed and what will bring the greatest and lasting joy to those who with open hearts receive Him. Many have experienced this love in times and places more challenging than even this pandemic. And God never stops giving to those who are ready to receive.

At the end of such a strange year may we know, when all else seems so uncertain, the certainty of God's love which He gives in and through His Son this Christmas. Wishing everyone as peaceful and happy a Christmas as possible during these Covid times.

Peter Blee

Church Services and Morning/Evening Prayer

The schedule of services below is provisional and subject to Covid restrictions. Please check the website www.sussexdownlandchurches.org.uk for updates.

We do not ask people to 'book' to attend services. We hope to accommodate whoever would like to come inside the church. If the church is full then the younger will be asked to remain outside in the churchyard and allow the elderly and less mobile to be seated.

6th December – Advent 2

8.00 am Alciston – Holy Communion
9.00 am Morning Prayer (Zoom meeting*)
10.00 am Wilmington – Morning Prayer
10.30 am Berwick – Holy Communion

13th December – Advent 3

9.00 am Morning Prayer (Zoom meeting*)
10.00 am Arlington – Holy Communion
10.30 am Selmeston – Morning Prayer

20th December – Advent 4

9.00 am Morning Prayer (Zoom meeting*)
3.00 pm Berwick – Carol Service
4.30 pm Arlington – Carol Service

Christmas Eve

3.00 pm Selmeston – Christingle Service
4.00 pm Wilmington – Christingle Service
5.30 pm Zoom Virtual Christingle (see below for details)
11.30 pm Berwick – Midnight Mass

Christmas Day

08.00 am Alciston – Holy Communion
09.00 am Christmas Communion Service Live Stream
10.00 am Arlington – Holy Communion
11.00 am Berwick – Holy Communion

27th December

09.00 am Morning Prayer (Zoom meeting*)
10.30 am Berwick – Holy Communion

3rd January – Epiphany

08.00 am Alciston – Holy Communion
09.00 am Morning Prayer (Zoom meeting*)
10.00 am Wilmington – Holy Communion
10.30 am Berwick – Holy Communion

* Please request a link from the Benefice Administrator benefice.administrator@berwickchurch.org.uk

Virtual Christingle at 5.30 pm on Thursday 24th December

To enable families to 'get together' virtually this Christmas we're holding a Zoom Christingle. To join, please click on the link below (which will also be available on the website) or ask for it to be sent to you by email- share it with family members who you can't be with this Christmas.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84737633167?pwd=ZHZkZmx2NGVIOHRHMW52bUtlak14QT09>

We will be giving away 'Christingle packs' (orange, candle, sweets) for families to be able to make their Christingles at home. These can be used to decorate the house and, if they wish, the candle can be saved and lit at the virtual Christingle service. You can order your Christingle using the contact details below or pick one up from your local church. An 'Order of Service' will be available on the website and sent out to those on the Sunday Link mailing list. If you would like to have your name added to the mailing list, please send your request to benefice.administrator@berwickchurch.org.uk or telephone: 01323 811136. At the Christingle service we normally collect for the Children's Society and encourage anyone taking part to donate via their website www.childrensociety.org.uk

Thank You from the Revd. Frank Fox-Wilson

Just a few, but heartfelt lines to say a huge Thank You for all the wonderful gifts from the parishes to mark my retirement. These, together with an unbelievably generous cheque, so many beautiful cards and kind messages, and the deeply moving final services at Arlington and Wilmington, have all been appreciated beyond words.

With every blessing for the future.

Frank

Berwick Churchyard.

Linda and Keith would like to thank all the volunteers for their time and hard work over the last year in helping to keep the churchyard looking as a rural churchyard should: a haven for nature as well as a place for contemplation and remembrance.

Keith and Linda Sutton

Getting tough on Animal Cruelty

With all the negative news at the moment on COVID-19, there is at least some good news on the horizon. A proposed new law introduced in Parliament by Conservative MP Chris Loder will see the most serious perpetrators of animal cruelty face up to five years in prison, up from the current maximum of six months. These tougher prison sentences would be among the toughest sanctions for animal abuse in Europe, strengthening the UK's position as a global leader on animal welfare.

The Bill follows a public consultation in 2017 in which more than 70% of people supported the proposals for tougher prison sentences for those guilty of animal cruelty offences. This could include dogfighting, cruelty towards domestic pets or gross neglect of farm animals. As an animal lover I love nothing more than spending time with my rescue cat Collar after a long day in Parliament. There is no place in our society for cruelty to animals and this Bill, which I am pleased to support, is a further commitment for the UK to be a global leader in animal welfare.

The Bill, which has cross-party support and is fully endorsed by the RSPCA and other animal welfare charities, delivers a strong message to animal abusers that their behaviour will no longer be tolerated. We need to get it on the statute book and send a clear signal to potential offenders there is no place for animal cruelty in this country.

I am pleased that the Bill was able to pass Second Reading on 23rd October, and I am hopeful that, given the strength of support in Parliament, it will swiftly become law. It will now go to Committee Stage, with Report Stage and Third Reading following this, before transferring to the House of Lords for further scrutiny. You can track the progress of the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill and read debates on all stages of the Bill's passage on the Parliament website.

Maria Caulfield, MP

December Gardener's Diary

If you have not yet done it, you can lift the last of your Leeks and Parsnips before the ground gets frozen and heel them into a trench beside a path. They will keep for months like this. Remove yellow leaves of all brassicas as they are of no use to the plant and may harbour pests and disease.

Dig over empty borders and pile manure on top to let the worms and frosts break up the clods. You can cover heavy soil with a plastic sheet to keep it drier. This makes for easier digging in the winter.

If you want to grow something at this time of year, try mushrooms under the stairs. It is something different and they taste nice!

Keith Winter

Family Support Work (FSW) – Update

I am writing this on the first day of the second lockdown, which means further worries for our families. Although things may be easier by having the schools still open, there has been a great deal of worry about how to cope now that we are in the colder, darker weather when opportunities to get out are limited. Our practitioners are still providing their usual service and are still able to meet individual family members in a public space if a face-to-face meeting is vital. We will approach this lockdown in the same way we have approached all the challenges this year – with determination to continue our core work and make sure that our families are getting as much help as we can give them.

Some of you may be wondering about Christmas, which is rapidly approaching. We won't be able to hold our usual Christmas parties, but we will still be distributing gifts to all the children we support, and families will still be receiving Christmas hampers. If you would like to support our Christmas work, then please get in touch with the office (we are running a skeleton staff during this lockdown) for information about how to help – phone 01273 832963 or email spencer@familysupportwork.org.uk

With the cold weather now arrived, fuel bills are a real worry for most of our families. If anybody in receipt of a winter fuel payment feels able to donate this to us so that we can help families who aren't eligible for this support, then we would be extremely grateful. Donations can be made on our website at this link www.familysupportwork.org/single-donation/ (please leave a message after your donation to let us know that this is a winter fuel gift) or by sending a cheque (payable to Family Support Work) to our office at Garton House, 22 Stanford Avenue, Brighton BN1 6AA.

Thank you for all your continued support and prayers as we navigate these difficult times.

October's work in numbers

- ◆ 140 (socially distanced) visits to families and 238 phone calls supporting 48 grandparents, 313 parents and 364 children.
- ◆ 33 supported meetings (virtually via Zoom/Skype etc.) with other agencies.
- ◆ 272 food deliveries made.

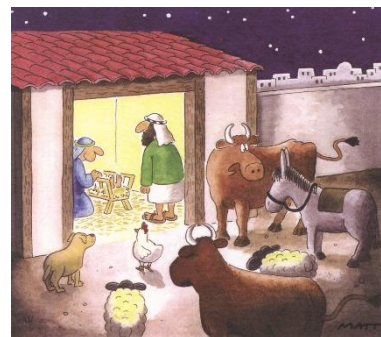
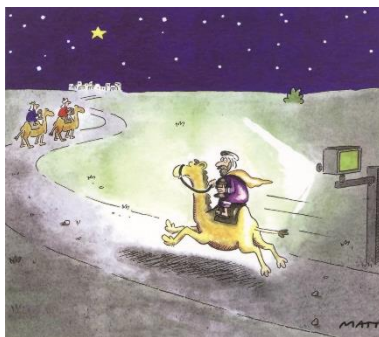
Prayer points

- ◆ Thanks for some recent funding successes that will help maintain our work until Christmas.
- ◆ Strength for our practitioners who are now dealing with incredibly complex cases and increasing numbers of referrals.
- ◆ Give thanks for a recent meeting with the new Bishop of Lewes that was extremely positive, as we hope to develop a strong relationship that will help to strengthen our work.

Nikki Kerr, FSW Director of Fundraising and Marketing



'Let's just check in the birth announcements column.'



'They'll never get a baby-sitter for New Year's eve.'

Publication of the Local Plan – 'Direction of Travel' Consultation Document

The council is preparing a new local plan for Wealden District. The Local Plan will provide policies to shape our places, plan and manage growth in the district and guide development over a 15-20 year period. The Local Plan will ultimately be the key planning document against which we assess and make decisions on planning applications. This 'Direction of Travel' consultation is the first stage in our engagement process, and we are inviting residents, businesses and stakeholders to take part in the consultation.

Within the consultation document we have identified several key planning themes that we know we will need to address in our local plan. These themes include climate change, infrastructure, housing, the economy and employment, town centres, tourism, the natural environment, landscape, heritage and cultural assets, design and health and wellbeing. Under each of these themes we have identified what we think are the key challenges, opportunities and critical planning issues for our district, and how these could be included in a new local plan. We also set out some broad growth options for consideration as well.

We are very keen to hear your views at this early consultation stage so that we can understand what is important to our communities including residents, businesses, voluntary organisations, Town and Parish Councils, as well as our partner organisations and stakeholders. Throughout our consultation document we ask a series of questions as well as provide an

opportunity for you to tell us what you think on each planning theme. All the responses we receive will be considered and we will use these along with national policy, legislation and guidance to help shape our Local Plan.

The consultation is open until and midnight on Monday 18th January 2021. All of the documents relating to the consultation can be found on the Council's website at <https://www.wealden.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/wealden-local-plan-direction-of-travel-consultation>.

The Planning Policy Team at Wealden District Council

News from King's Academy, Ringmer



Despite the current lockdown restrictions we are pleased to report that life for our students at King's is as normal as we can make it. We are immensely proud of our 94% attendance record that is well above the national average of 88%. The vast majority of our students are happy, relaxed and pleased to be learning with their friends in a safe and positive environment. We have always prided ourselves on the support we are able to give to our students and for those that are anxious at these difficult times we will always be there to help them.

Traditionally, students from the school have marched in the Remembrance Parade at Ringmer, which this year had to be scaled back because of Covid. That didn't stop Head Boy Matthew Page and Head Girl Olivia Wiles laying our wreath from the staff and students at the War Memorial on Remembrance Sunday.

Whilst Matt and Olivia were laying the wreath Alfred Parris, unable to march with his Lost Explorers Scout Group, ran 7 Km between the War Memorial in East Hoathly and Chiddingly and back. He raised £110 for the Royal British Legion - surpassing his target of £50.

Unfortunately, all our traditional involvement with the community this Christmas has been curtailed. We will miss our annual cleaning of the brass at St Mary's and our carol concerts, which have brought us all closer together over the past few years.

We wish you all a safe, healthy and happy Christmas and, like the rest of the world, hope for a more peaceful 2021.

Stephen W. Green, Environmental Coordinator, King's Academy Ringmer

Long-tailed Tits - The Ties That Bind

"Who are these people?" You've hardly seen them all year yet here you are, paper hat askew, squashed between them on the sofa at Christmas. On a branch out in the cold darkness of the garden, also sandwiched between aunts, brothers, cousins and daughters, a tiny bird is asking a similar question.

Long-tailed tits and humans are two of Britain's most social species. And just like a visit from your relatives, the arrival of a long-tailed tit flock in your garden can turn tranquillity into chaos. It's like someone has emptied a box of feathered fireworks over the fence. They manically bicker on the bird feeder and swing acrobatically upside-down on the fat balls, all the while trilling, rattling and screaming 'eee-heee-heee' like a troupe of Michael Jackson impersonators. What you're witnessing is a group of roving relatives, roaming the neighbourhood to pillage your peanuts. This posse of outlaws consists of in-laws, brothers, sons and daughters. With their gorgeous pink, black and white plumage and those ridiculously long tails, these flying lollypops must qualify for Britain's cutest bird. Then, suddenly they're gone, and the pulse rate of the garden returns to normal.

By late winter, the extended family will drift apart to find new partners, ready to start new families. In March, the foundations are laid for an epic construction. Moss building bricks are lashed together with ropes of sticky spider's webs. The walls rise, a camouflage cladding of lichen is added to the roof and a cosy filling of a thousand feathers lines the interior. The end result looks a crocheted stomach and soon there will be plenty of rumbling from inside as eight hungry chicks demand to be fed. But raising a large family can take its toll. The constant hunt for insects can exhaust a parent almost to breaking point. And that's when something unusual and wonderful happens. Their family arrives to save them. Aunties and uncles who have not been successful raising their own family that year will selflessly help the parents and feed their nephews and nieces.

Once the children have flown the nest the whole gang remains together and joins with other siblings to form your chaotic neighbourhood feeding flock. But the biggest challenge of the year still awaits: winter. Freezing night-time temperatures exact a heavy toll on our garden birds. And that's why at Christmas, hidden deep in a hedge, you'll find the extended family of long-tailed tits huddled together on a frosty branch, sharing their warmth and surviving. Like them, we can all extend a warm wing to surround and support our family and friends this Christmas, whether near or far. Because none of us can get through this on our own.

Michael Blencowe of the Sussex Wildlife Trust

Benefice Priest

Revd Peter Blee
Rector of Berwick and Vicar of Selmeston with Alciston
The Parsonage, Berwick, Polegate, BN26 6SR
Tel: 01323 870512 Email: peter.blee@berwickchurch.org.uk
Peter's day off is Saturday.

Churchwardens

Alciston - Michèle Boys Tel: 01323 870623
Berwick – Ruth Nares Tel: 01323 811186
Selmeston - Jan Matthews Tel: 01323 811380

Benefice Administrator

Stephanie Lewis-Grey Tel: 01323 811136 Email: benefice.administrator@berwickchurch.org.uk

Parish News Advertising and Distribution

This is coordinated by Jeremy and Valerie Shaw. Tel: 01323 811567.

Parish News

This “digital issue” is also available on the benefice church’s website www.sussexdownlandchurches.org.uk and Berwick Parish Council’s website www.berwickparishcouncil.org.uk. We are anticipating that future issues will be distributed in this way until things return to normal.

As the “digital issues” do not include advertising, we intend to include the advertisements in the printed issues until they have appeared in a full 12 month’s issues.

The production team is Jane Anderson and Martin Chilvers.

Contributions (other than advertising requests) should be sent to Martin Chilvers by the 12th of the month.

Email: empty.sea@outlook.com; Post: 66 Parkfield Avenue, Eastbourne, BN22 9SF.

You should receive confirmation of receipt by the 15th of the month, but if not, please call him on 01323 507655.

Contributions can also be passed on to one of the coordinators:

Jane Anderson at Old Postman’s Cottage, Alciston Tel: 01323 870075.

Valerie Shaw at Selmeston House, Selmeston Tel: 01323 811567.

Laurie Tinsley, Wynsford, Berwick Tel: 01323 870895.

Donations

Financial donations to the Parish News are gratefully received. Cheques payable to “Parish News” can be passed to the Treasurer, Valerie Shaw, Selmeston House, Selmeston, Polegate, BN26 6UD.

Alternatively, electronic donations can be made to Barclays Bank - Account No. 70650625; Sort code 20-49-76.

