

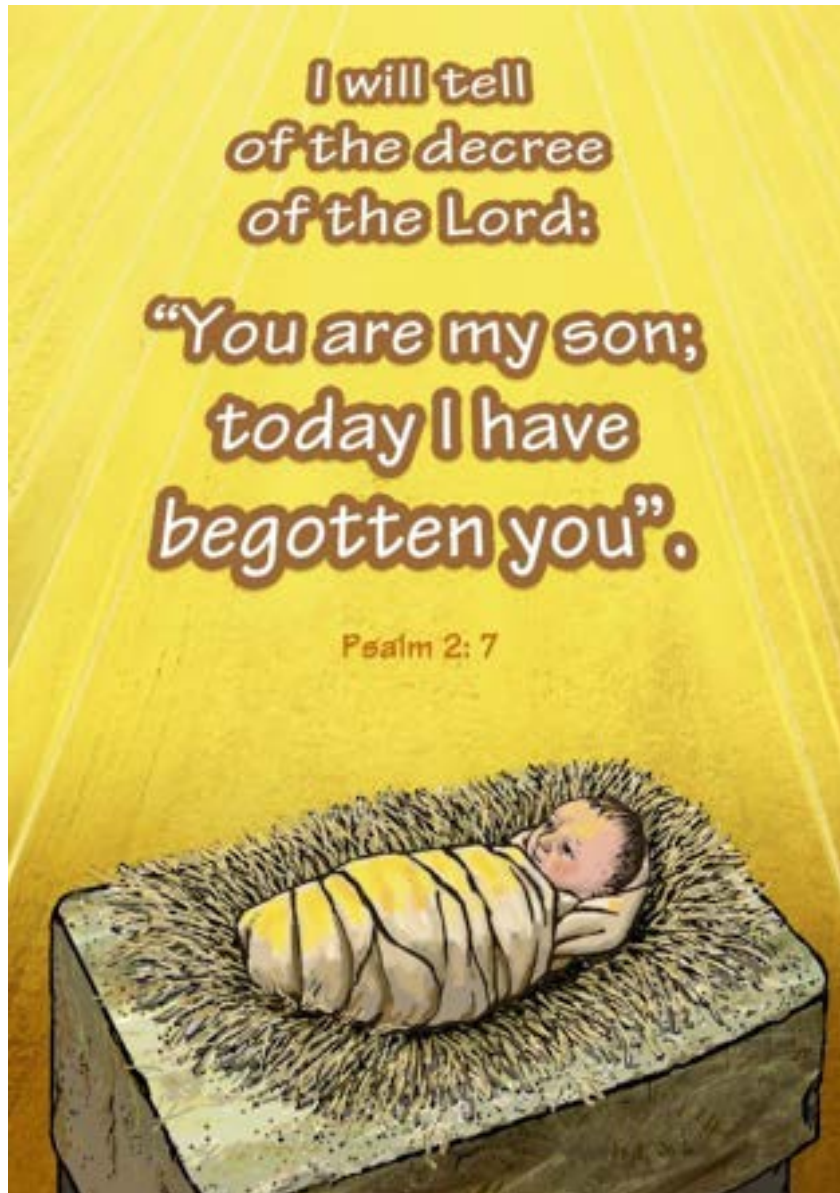
the KEY

Number 251

December 2024

50p

Website: www.bromleyparishchurch.org



News of Saint Peter and Saint Paul

BROMLEY PARISH CHURCH

Church Road Bromley BR2 OEG

"Proclaiming the Word and Work of God"

Member of Churches Together in Central Bromley



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Contributions/suggestions for the Key

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Dear readers,

Welcome to the final edition of the year.

Wishing you a very happy Christmas and I hope you are able to enjoy many of the things happening in the Church this season—the Christmas tree festival, Christingle service, Nativity, and Christmas Day services. Details are in the magazine!

With love and best wishes

Lisa

We will continue the eco-series in the New Year, but for now here are some seasonal reflections.

Canon David Winter reflects on the coming of Jesus...

The most beautiful story

A well-known atheist was being interviewed on Radio 4. When asked how he spent Christmas, he said that he went to Midnight Mass at church. "But you're an atheist", his interviewer protested. "Yes", he replied, "but what they celebrate at Christmas is the most beautiful story ever told."

That 'beautiful story' tells of a Creator who sent His Son to share the life of His creation, to be born as a helpless baby, to grow up as a man of extraordinary wisdom, gentleness and love, who was executed by the authorities for contradicting the traditions of the time. His followers – who today number about two billion people all over the world – believe that He rose from the dead, and that by His death and resurrection He has made possible forgiveness and eternal life for men and women everywhere.

That is certainly quite a story, perhaps the greatest story ever told, and yes, beautiful. And that is the story that will be rehearsed again this Christmas, in children's Nativities, in hymns and carols, in Bible readings and sermons all over the country. People who stay away from church all year turn up to hear it, and who can blame them? This is a story of hope, of love and of heaven touching earth.

Probably the best-known statue in the world is 'Christ the Redeemer', towering over the South American city of Rio de Janeiro, His arms outstretched in blessing. Christmas celebrates the birth of that great Redeemer – a tiny baby laid in a feeding trough.

His birth changed history, His life transformed our understanding of what it means to be human, His death was at one and the same time a tragedy and a triumph. Yes, it is 'the most beautiful story ever told'. Enjoy it again this Christmas.

The Ven John Barton considers the Christmas story ...

No Room? On the Contrary

All over the world, doors are being slammed shut this Christmas. As the wars in the Middle East, in Ukraine and in Sudan rage on, millions are losing their homes and places of safety. Elsewhere, hundreds of thousands of asylum seekers and would-be immigrants are on the road, seeking refuge anywhere they can find it.

Meanwhile, in recent years vast numbers of Christians have been forced to flee from their ancient homelands in Syria and Iraq. They mirror the Holy Family's escape into Egypt. Every time yet another infant dies violently, it is a reminder of the first century massacre of babies in the Bethlehem region.

So perhaps this year, one carol will be sung with particular poignancy. It retells the message of angels, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom His favour rests" and continues:

*Yet with the woes of sin and strife,
The world has suffered long;
Beneath the angel strain have rolled,
Two thousand years of wrong;
And man, at war with man, hears not
The love song which they bring:
O hush the noise, you men of strife, <
And hear the angels sing.*

The angels' goodwill message will persist despite our clamour, for it proclaims God's all-embracing and eternal welcome. Whatever is happening on earth, Heaven's doors are ever open: it is home for everyone. The final biblical vision is of an all-encompassing city: "On no day will its gates ever be shut... the glory and honour of the nations will be brought into it."

Jesus, for whom there had been no room at the inn, taught that God's kingdom is home for every race: "I say to you that many will come from the East and the West, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." He reassured those anxious about the future: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms..."

No room in heaven? Don't you believe it!

Canon Paul Hardingham gives thanks to the God who comes among us...

Christmas Geese

The story is told of a farmer who didn't believe in Jesus. One snowy Christmas Eve, his wife was taking their children to a service at their local church. He refused to come saying: *'Why would God lower Himself to come to Earth as a man? That's ridiculous!'* So, they left him at home.

During the evening the winds grew stronger, and the snow turned to a blizzard. He heard a series of loud thumps on the window. In the field near his house he saw a flock of wild geese. They had been migrating south when they got caught in the snowstorm. They were lost and stranded on his farm, with no food or shelter.

The man wanted to help the geese and so he opened the doors of the barn, hoping they would go inside for shelter. But the geese didn't do anything, despite the man's efforts to move them. He made a breadcrumb trail leading to the barn and tried to shoo them toward the barn, but they only got more scared and scattered.

Nothing he did could get them to go into the barn: *'Why don't they follow me?!'* Then he realised: *'If only I were a goose and become one of them, then I could save them.'* Finally, he understood the heart of the Christmas message. God has become one of us in Jesus. The eternal creator God has entered time and space as a baby, to show us who God is and how we can know Him.

This Christmas, let's celebrate again this amazing truth that we have a God who knows and can meet our needs in Jesus. *'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call Him Immanuel, which means 'God with us'.* Matthew 1:23.

28th December - Holy Innocents

The death of a very young child is perhaps the hardest grief of all to bear. So, the 28th December is a very poignant day in the church calendar. It is when the world-wide Church joins with bereaved parents to grieve the loss of babies and young children. For Holy Innocents Day recalls the massacre of the young male children of Bethlehem by Herod the Great.

Herod had been told by the Magi, or Wise Men, that a great king had been born in Bethlehem, and he felt shaken. How could a child in unimportant little Bethlehem be so powerful that the stars in the night sky honoured His birth?! Herod took the Magi so seriously that he decided to try and kill this new young rival. He decreed that every male baby of two years and under should be killed. (Matthew 2:1-18).

Bethlehem was not a large place, and Bible commentators estimate that between six and 25 infants were slaughtered by Roman soldiers. Their mothers were inconsolable at the death of their babies, as indeed mothers have always been.

The death of these innocent baby boys of Bethlehem became a feast-day in the western Church by the 4th century. This was because the Church considered them to be martyrs because they not only died for Christ, but instead of Christ.

Down the centuries, the tragic loss of the Holy Innocents has touched the imagination and hearts of poets, preachers and artists. Though heart-broken parents still grieve today, the Church can offer them one firm assurance: that young children who die to this world will undoubtedly "this day be with Me in Paradise." The One who eagerly said "Suffer the little children to come unto Me" will be the last person to turn them away.

The Big Quiz Night

On Saturday 16 November a successful Quiz Night was held in the Church Rooms. About £480 was raised for Tear Fund, whose aim is to end poverty for good. Tear Fund planned for churches everywhere to take part in a Big Quiz Night to raise money for the charity. It was facilitated in our church by Donya.

There were 10 tables and people came, with their Vicars, from a number of churches in Bromley to make up teams. Richard (Sam) Sammons was the Quizmaster. He has carried out this role successfully many times, with his able Assistant, Gill, keeping the scores. Sam put a lot of work into adapting the quiz rounds and providing a table quiz. The Choristers' team were the eventual winners but everyone enjoyed the evening.

Gillian Million





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Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in Luke chapter 2 verses 1-7

The Roman Empire charged the countries it had invaded taxes, based on the number of people and what they earned.

Emperor Augustus gave orders that all people in the Empire were to be registered so they could be taxed.



This census was before Quirinius became Governor of Syria* (* whose own census started riots - Acts 5:37)



When the order came, Mary and Joseph were living in Nazareth.

But Joseph was descended from King David, who had been born in Bethlehem...



so Joseph took Mary to Bethlehem to stay with his family.

Come and meet everyone!



A normal home in Bethlehem.



Stable with mangers

Animals were kept inside at night

Everyone lived and slept in the living room.

Room added for guests and visitors

While they were staying there, Mary's baby was born.



There was no space in the guest room to put a new baby!

So they made a snug bed for Jesus in one of the mangers.



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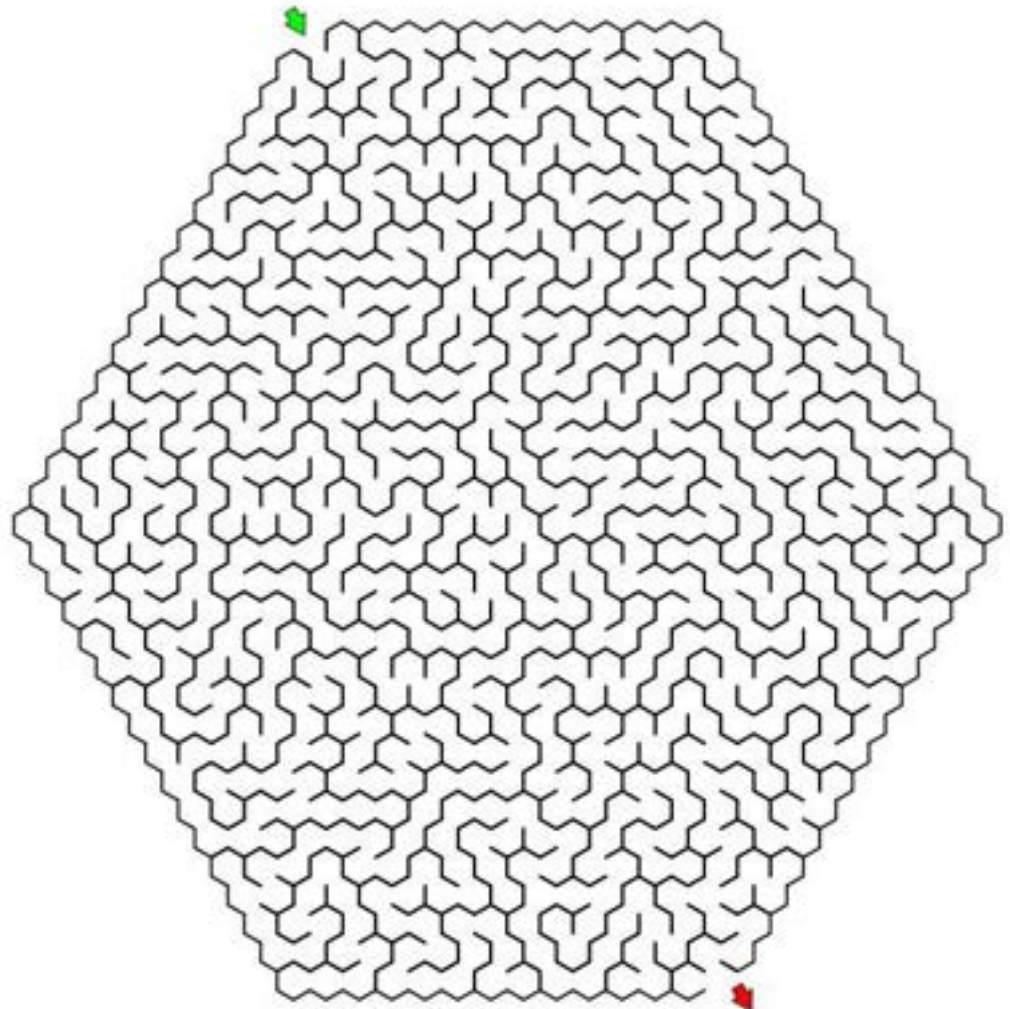
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| baby | everyone | born |
| living | home | David |
| Nazareth | visitors | room |
| Quirinius | Augustus | Jesus |
| family | space | manger |
| bed | Joseph | Syria |
| Mary | Empire | taxes |
| Bethlehem | guest | stable |

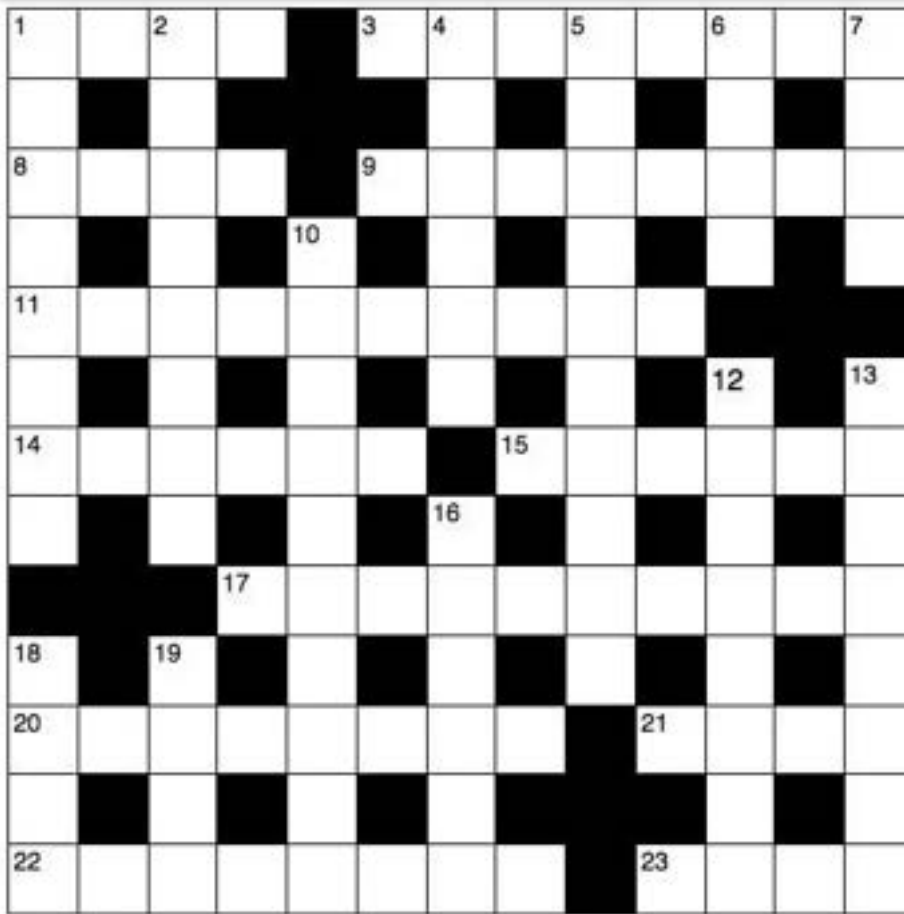
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Sudoku:

Insert numbers 1-9 in every row, column and 3x3 box.





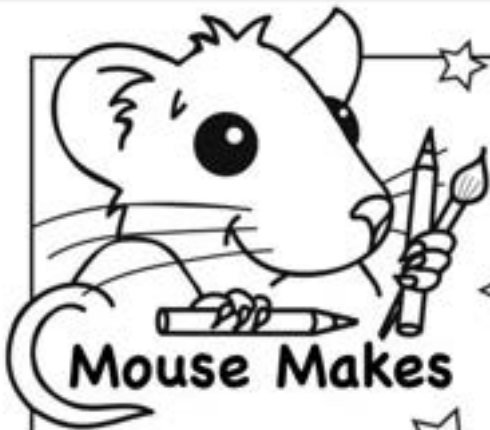
Answers:
ACROSS: 1, Lame. 3, Obtained. 8, Omit. 9, Merchant. 11, Burdensome. 14, Crafty. 15, Please. 17, Blacksmith. 20, Splendid. 21, Tier. 22, Singing. 23, Hand.
DOWN: 1, Look back. 2, Main road. 4, Breast. 5, Accomplish. 6, Near. 7, Date. 10, Pestilence. 12, Basilica. 13, Tethered. 16, Action. 18, Asa's. 19, Clan.

Across

- 1 'The blind receive sight, the — walk' (Luke 7:22) (4)
- 3 Got (Philippians 3:12) (8)
- 8 Leave out (Jeremiah 26:2) (4)
- 9 Castigated for using dishonest scales (Hosea 12:7) (8)
- 11 Weighty (1 John 5:3) (10)
- 14 'Now the serpent was more — than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made' (Genesis 3:1) (6)
- 15 'Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot — God' (Romans 8:8) (6)
- 17 Because Israel lacked one of these, tools had to be sharpened by the Philistines (1 Samuel 13:19) (10)
- 20 In his vision of the two eagles and the vine, this is how Ezekiel described the latter (Ezekiel 17:8) (8)
- 21 Rite (anag.) (4)
- 22 Nine gigs (anag.) (8)
- 23 'The eye cannot say to the — , "I don't need you"' (1 Corinthians 12:21) (4)

Down

- 1 'Flee for your lives! Don't — — , and don't stop anywhere in the plain!' (Genesis 19:17) (4,4)
- 2 Principal thoroughfare (Numbers 20:19) (4,4)
- 4 'The tax collector... beat his — and said, "God have mercy on me, a sinner"' (Luke 18:13) (6)
- 5 'The zeal of the Lord Almighty will — this' (2 Kings 19:31) (10)
- 6 'The day of the Lord is — for all nations' (Obadiah 15) (4)
- 7 Specified day (Acts 21:26) (4)
- 10 Deadly epidemic (Deuteronomy 32:24) (10)
- 12 Roman Catholic church which has special ceremonial rights (8)
- 13 Tied up (2 Kings 7:10) (8)
- 16 In his speech to the Sanhedrin, Stephen described Moses as 'powerful in speech and — ' (Acts 7:22) (6)
- 18 'Although he did not remove the high places, — heart was fully committed to the Lord all his life' (1 Kings 15:14) (4)
- 19 Tribe (Deuteronomy 29:18) (4)



Mouse Makes

"Jesus said,
I am the ___ Y
and the ___ U ___
and the ___ I ___.
No one comes to the Father
except through me."
John 14:6

"The child to be born
will be called
H ___ , the
___ of ___"
Luke 1:35

"For unto you is born
this day a
S ___
who is
___ R ___
the ___ R ___"
Luke 2:11

THE GREATEST GIFT

"She will bear a son,
and shall call his name

for he will save his
people from their sins."
Matthew 1:21

"Jesus said,
I am the

and the life."
John 11:25

B L I G H T L O
R A Y W O J J R
E M M A N U E L
A B Y J E S O
D S A V I O U R
S A V R J S D

O H O L Y O R C R T U
S O N O F M A N H A R T
N L S H E P H E R D U
O Y A E P E R G I F T G
C H R I S T M A S T H S
R E S U R R E C T I O N

**JESUS
—
THE
GREATEST
GIFT
OF ALL!**

P R O P H E T I
R E D E E M E R
I E M I L I G
E M E S S I A H
S R M E G F T
T E A C H E R E

E V E R L A S T I N G
K I N G O F K I N G S
I N K I G W F D O U
S E S O N O F G O D D
S E W O C O U W O R D
C O U N S E L L O R U

EMMANUEL • MESSIAH REDEEMER • KING OF KINGS • WORD
SON OF MAN • EVERLASTING • SHEPHERD • PRIEST • PROPHET • TEACHER
LIGHT • BREAD • VINE • DOOR • COUNSELLOR • CHRISTMAS • GIFT

A Very Special Baby

JESUS WAS BORN ABOUT 2,000 YEARS AGO IN THE SMALL TOWN OF BETHLEHEM, NEAR JERUSALEM.



AN ANGEL HAD TOLD MARY SHE WOULD HAVE A VERY SPECIAL BABY.



MARY AND JOSEPH MADE THE LONG JOURNEY FROM NAZARETH TO BETHLEHEM. THEY HAD BEEN ORDERED THERE FOR THE CENSUS.

BUT THE TOWN WAS FULL



...WHICH IS WHERE JESUS WAS BORN.



SHEPHERDS IN FIELDS NEARBY RACED TO SEE THE BABY



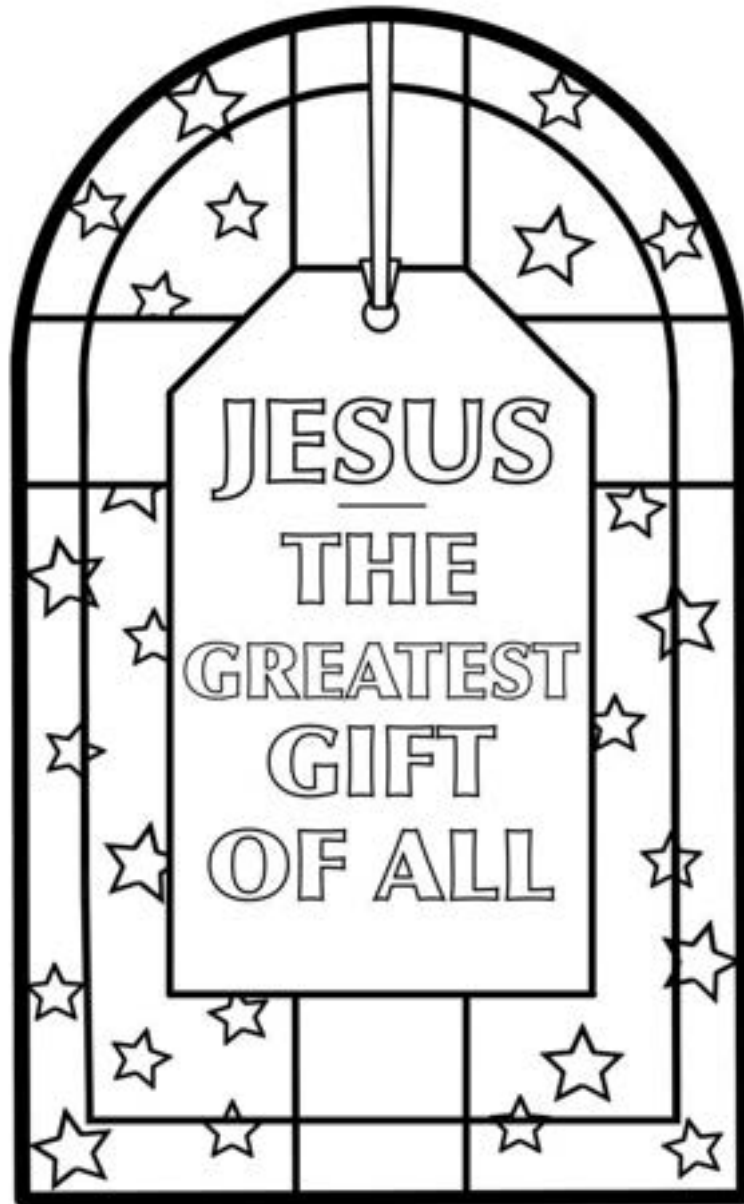
AN ANGEL HAD TOLD THEM WHERE JESUS HAD BEEN BORN.

WISE MEN CAME FROM THE EAST. THEY TOO WANTED TO SEE JESUS. THEY HAD BEEN GUIDED BY A STAR.



BUT MARY, JOSEPH AND BABY JESUS SOON HAD TO ESCAPE TO EGYPT...





Prayer for December 2024

Father, the days are short; darkness deepens in December and this year it seems to reflect the darkness in so many parts of the world. We think especially of the land You came to, all those years ago, and other nearby lands where so many are suffering.

Father, thank you that Jesus came into the world as Your Light; that He shines today as brightly and powerfully as He did then, and will do forever.

Help us to open our hearts and minds to allow His light to fill us with the assurance that, no matter what is going on, we are safe in Him.

Thank you that, in Jesus, You have conquered death and darkness; that one day, everyone will bow before Jesus as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, whose Kingdom shall never end.

Help us, in thankfulness and love, to share Your Christmas Light and Hope and Joy. Hallelujah! In Jesus' name. Amen.

By Daphne Kitching

A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

The night began as any other
The world not aware of a special birth,
Prophesied so long ago
That God would come upon our earth.

Shepherds roused by a choir of angels,
Wise men saw a special star,
Gathered round the tiny infant,
Bringing gifts from afar.

God had sent His Son to call us,
Jew and Gentile, bond and free,
All may come to know His presence
Reaching out to you and me.

As we celebrate this Christmas,
Let Jesus come not as a stranger,
But as a friend and loving Saviour –
Not just a baby in a manger.

By Megan Carter

We've got very used to the Christmas story; we enjoy its comfortable message of peace and joy. But if you look at it as you might have experienced it in the first century, it would have been terrifying! Angels, strange men from foreign lands, murderous kings, a night flight to Egypt - it's more like a horror story than a festive tale of comfort. But yes, the bottom line - the punchline - is about Good News:

Nolite Timere (Do not be afraid)

Do not be afraid
Of angels in the sky
Nor of the Babe in manger laid
Or of the death He'd die.

Do not be afraid
Of magi bearing gold
Their clothes of velvet and rich braid
As mysteries unfold.

Do not be afraid
Of Herod's fatal rage
Or soldiers on a killing raid
On those of tender age.


Fear not, instead rejoice!
For joy the angels bring!
Good news is in the angel's voice
Of Christ, our Saviour King!

By Nigel Beeton


Welcome

Welcome, Jesus baby
To a world that is waiting,
Welcome, Jesus baby
To a world needing joy,
Thank you for the presents
That you bring us on your birth day,
Peace, love and hope
Wrapped in one baby boy.

By Daphne Kitching



Christmas at Bromley Parish Church



Advent Carols

1ST DECEMBER 6:30PM

Christmas Tree Festival

7TH-8TH AND 14TH-15TH DECEMBER 11AM-4PM

Light in the Darkness - a service for those who
find Christmas tough

8TH DECEMBER 6:30PM

Sing along Carols - come & choose your
favourite!

15TH DECEMBER 4:00PM

Carols by Candlelight

21ST DECEMBER 6:00PM

Christingle

22ND DECEMBER 4:00PM

Nativity Service

CHRISTMAS EVE 4:00PM

Midnight Mass

CHRISTMAS EVE 11:30PM

Christmas Day Communion

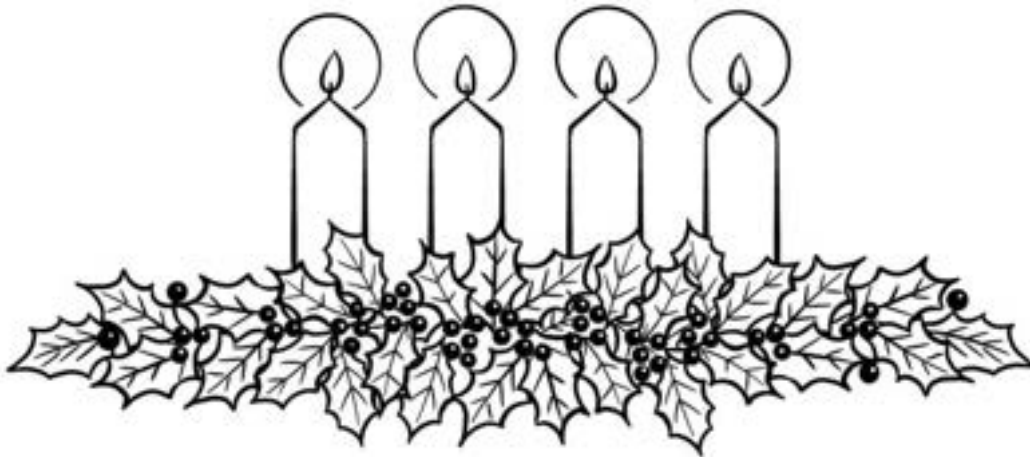
CHRISTMAS DAY 9:30AM



Join us as we celebrate the
joy at the heart of Christmas.
All are welcome!



Please refer to the weekly Pew Sheet for all the events taking place in the Church throughout the month, the pew sheet is available from the Church or is also published weekly on the website.



Sunday service begins at 10:30am.

The Children's Chapel is open daily for prayer and **Church is open for private prayer on Wednesdays** between 12.30pm and 2pm, consecrated bread is available for those who wish to receive

Morning Prayer is said at 9.15am Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday at 9.15am in the Children's Chapel

To join Sunday worship online please visit our website www.bromleyparishchurch.org and follow the link on our homepage.

Updates to services and events are posted on our website www.bromleyparishchurch.org