

THE CHURCH FROM ADVENT AND INTO THE NEW YEAR IN 2026

You can find contact details/information on our website <https://www.achurchnearyou.com/benefice/34-370BX/>. We also circulate the Courier digitally; if you would like a digital copy, please contact the Editor. Since January 1st, we have returned to the common cup during parish communion. We will continue to offer opportunities to join services via livestream (for the vulnerable) for the foreseeable future.

COFFEES AND TEAS AT THE RECTORY – Tracey & Les warmly invite you to a seasonal Coffee Morning (Tea will also be available!) at the Rectory, Damerham (in Mill End) on Thursday 11th December from 10.30a.m. – 12.00p.m.

JOINING US TO CELEBRATE THE SEASON – Our services through Advent and into the Christmas season include our annual Service from Darkness to Light at 5.00p.m. on Sunday the 30th November in All Saints Church, Martin. This service uses readings and poetry to tell the story of our community and explore the wider landscape of encounter and faith. Our nativity figures are distributed into the community to rest for a while in people's homes, before being returned at All Saints' Nativity Carols on Sunday 21st December at 3.00p.m. St Leonard's Church, Whitsbury has its Nativity Carols also on the Sunday 21st at 3.00p.m. Rockbourne's popular traditional setting for Lessons & Carols is at St Andrew's Church at 6.00p.m. on the same day. Damerham's Pulpit to Pub Carols is on Thursday 11th December, beginning at 7.00p.m. in St George's Church. Our ever-popular Christingle Celebration is on Christmas Eve at 3.00p.m. Helpers would be much appreciated from 1.30p.m. onwards in Damerham to help set up and prepare Christingles for the service.

This year's Traditional Communion on Christmas Eve is at 9.00p.m. in St Leonard's Church, Whitsbury. On Christmas morning All Saints, Martin hosts a shortened service of All Age Worship on Christmas Morning (with an opportunity for those who wish to receive Christmas communion to do so) and Rockbourne hosts Holy Worship on Christmas Morning at 11.00a.m. (where a brief communion liturgy is available immediately after the conclusion of the first part of the service).

We would love to see you at these or any of our services. A full list is printed in this edition.

ROYAL BRITISH LEGION – Thanks to all for supporting the recent RBL Coffee Morning which raised over £1000, and over £700 was raised in poppy sales in Rockbourne to help support our veterans.

FROM THE REGISTERS

Marriages

All Saints, Martin	27 th September	Hannah O'Brien & Ben Hughes
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Funerals

St Georges, Damerham	17 th November	Simond Ffiske (Interment of Ashes)
	17 th November	Amanda Ffiske (Interment of Ashes)
All Saints, Martin	16 th October	Jenny Bellwood (Interment of Ashes)
	13 th November	Susan Gibson (Service of Thanksgiving; Wimborne Minster)
St Andrews, Rockbourne	23 rd October	Judith Wallis

NB. For all pastoral enquiries including baptisms, marriages, funerals and other related matters, please contact the Rector, Rev'd Les Player, The Rectory, Mill End, Damerham, SP6 3HU (01725) 518642. **For matters regarding benefice administration support, please contact the Western Downland Team Administrator (Bernice Churchill)** on infowdchurches@gmail.com or (01725) 518816. **For information concerning individual parishes including matters of a general nature, please contact the Churchwardens: -**

Damerham	John Godber (01425) 650044
Martin	Alistair Groom (01725) 519204 and Lizzie Fernie (01725) 519542
Rockbourne	Patrick Thompson (01725) 518246 and Rory Smith (01725) 518215
Whitsbury	Chris Harper (01725) 518324 and Chris Cobb-Smith (01725) 518313

Please send contributions for the next Courier to the Editor Arron Shutt (arron@ashutt.myzen.co.uk). The deadline is 31st December 2025.

News and Views from the Church of England
in Damerham, Martin, Rockbourne and Whitsbury

THE COURIER

DECEMBER 2025 – JANUARY 2026

A Newsletter for the Communities of the Western Downland



Three Magi following the Bethlehem Star across the Desert. Photos: Bing Image Creator (DALL-E 3)

A Word from the Rector – What does Christmas mean to you?

Every year each of us in our particular way approaches the celebration of Christmas. For some it's a deeply affecting religious or spiritual experience. For others it's primarily a holiday season, whilst others see it as a chance to let down their hair and party. Some people find it a particularly painful or difficult moment, because of loss or isolation.

Some of us try to ignore the whole thing as over-hyped, commercialised hocus-pocus. However we see Christmas, each of us - like the Angels, the Holy Family, the Magi and the Shepherds - makes a journey to and through the season. Yet in the end it is not so much how we approach Christmas, as how we depart it. Does our experience of Christmas make any difference to our lives. Does it thrill us? Or compel us to pay closer attention to those we love or those around us who need our care? Does it make us more determined to avoid over-sentimentality or excess? Or inspire us to value opportunities for rest and recreation within otherwise frenetic lives? Does it make us hold more tightly to those we love in life and in death? Does it make us mindful of those who take on an extra burden at this time of year to make our lives safer and more pleasurable? The narrative of the shepherds and angels, the Magi and Holy Family reveals that they did not only travel to Nazareth, to Bethlehem. They also departed from there to travel on. The messenger-angel Gabriel, and the angel host having come from heaven with purpose returned there, knowing God to be the touchstone of their existence. The shepherds returned to their flocks rejoicing, having woken half of Bethlehem up with their first-hand account of an extraordinary and significant birth. The Magi returned by a different road, their assumptions about royal identity radically and permanently altered. Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus fled as refugees to Egypt to avoid Herod's wrath.

How will you travel on from the Christmas season? Unchanged? Unaffected by the drama? Will you box up the trappings of Christmas for another year, heave a sigh of relief that it's all over and forget? Will you be left untouched by the deeper themes of Christmas? Of human peril and profound reversal of fortune between power and privilege on the one hand and marginality and humility on the other. Will you reflect on a surpassing narrative which unveils glory in a cowshed and divine will in a tiny human form. Will you hear and heed its message of radical change; creation's greatest ever paradigm shift, the promise of good news not just for those who believe, not just for all humanity, but for all creation.

Rev'd Les Player

A GIFT OF CAROLS – This year’s Carols on the Green in Martin begins at 6.00p.m. on Thursday 18 th December. Wrap up warm, bring a torch and bells or anything else to jingle to accompany the singing. There will be refreshments available at 5.30p.m. It’s a free event but donations to charity will be gratefully received.		DATES FOR THE DIARY		FORTHCOMING CHURCH EVENTS	
CAROLS AND SONGS AT CROSSWAYS – This will be taking place on Thursday 18 th December from 5.00p.m. to 7.00p.m at Crossways Farm, Damerham. There will be sausage rolls, there will be mince pies. There will also be Tim’s infamous mulled wine and carols. There is limited seating, so feel free to bring a chair! Donations made during the event will benefit St. George’s Church.		Wednesday 28th January 2026, 6.00p.m.		On Christmas Morning - This Christmas we celebrate Christmas Day at 9.30a.m. at All Saints, Martin and 11.00a.m. at St Andrew’s, Rockbourne. The service in Martin will be around 35 minutes whilst the 11.00a.m. service in Rockbourne will be around 45 minutes, both will include a very simple liturgy for those who wish to receive communion, with Rockbourne’s following a short break immediately after the service. We would be delighted to see you at either service.	
DAMERHAM CHRISTMAS GET TOGETHER in Damerham Village Hall on Saturday 13 th of December at 12.00p.m. until 3.00p.m.		CHRISTMAS COFFEE POT is happening in Damerham Village Hall on Wednesday 17 th December from 10.30a.m. until 12.00p.m. There are homemade cakes for sale, and a Christmas raffle. Donations of cakes and raffle prizes will be gratefully accepted. All proceeds will go to the Marie Curie charity. https://www.mariecurie.org.uk/		St George’s Pulpit to Pub Carol Service begins at Thursday 11 th December 7.00p.m. in St George’s Church and moves from there to the Compasses Inn where we’ll join in some traditional carolling. Please wear sensible shoes and bring a torch.	
ADVANCE NOTICE – SNOWDROP WEEKEND 2026 -The popular Spring event Snowdrop Weekend will be on the 14 th and 15 th of February 2026 at St George’s Church, Damerham. We would like to request donations of items for sale such as books, good quality bric-a-brac (i.e not unsaleable) plus cakes/produce (preserves etc). Following last year’s opening hours - Doors will open at 10.00a.m. for the stalls but note refreshments will not be served until 10.30a.m. and we will stop serving refreshments at 3.30p.m. with doors closing at 4.00p.m. Helpers would be very appreciated. Please contact John Godber on catherine.godber50@gmail.com .		HOMEGROUPS – are finishing their study of Romans before Christmas and then resuming in the New Year. For more information, contact Michael and Isabel King (519383), or Rory Smith (518215).		Rockbourne Service of Lessons and Carols – Come sing Christmas carols at St Andrew’s Service of Lessons & Carols on Sunday 21 st December at 6.00p.m. followed by mulled wine and nibbles.	
		CHRISTMAS EVE CHRISTINGLE – This year’s Christingle celebration will be at 3.00p.m. at St. George’s Church, in Damerham. However, there is even more than usual to do for services this year. So we are asking if you could please prepare and bring your ready-made Christingle(s) (as many as you need and one spare to share. You can find details of how to make a Christingle here or use the QR code to the right. Half the collection at the Christingle celebration will be donated to the work of the Children’s Society; a charity supporting children and young people facing significant challenges who live in England & Wales.		ALL SAINTS PCC NOMINATED GOOD CAUSE This year All Saints Church PCC Nominated Charity is raising funds for the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Air Ambulance. https://www.hiowaa.org/ . You can find out how to donate by contacting our Church Warden Alistair Groom (01725 519204) or Lizzie Fernie (01725 519542).Or pick up an donation envelope (available in church) and return it with your gift in the collection plate in any church in the benefice (up to 31st December) at the latest .	
***** SERVICES DURING DECEMBER & JANUARY *****					
We are livestreaming some physical services on Zoom denoted by three asterisks (***) in the service listing below. Links to join the stream are in the weekly church update sent out via email each week. If you wish to take communion but have a medically diagnosed gluten intolerance, gluten free wafers are available. Please speak with the minister before the beginning of a service.					
7th December 9.30a.m. 11.00p.m. Thursday 11th of December 7.00p.m.		2nd Sunday of Advent Whitsbury – Holy Communion (1662) Damerham – All Age Worship*** Damerham - From Pulpit to Pub: Village Carol and Nativity Service		11th January 9.30a.m. 11.00am	
14th December 9.30a.m. 11.00a.m. 21st December 10.30a.m. 3.00p.m. 3.00p.m. 6.00p.m.		3rd Sunday of Advent Rockbourne – Parish Communion (Contemporary) Martin – Advent Parish Worship*** 4th Sunday of Advent Damerham – Parish Communion (CW1) *** Whitsbury – Nativity Carol Service Martin – Nativity Carol Service*** Rockbourne – A Service of Lesson and Carols		18th January 9.30a.m. 10.30a.m.	
Wednesday 24th October – CHRISTMAS EVE 3.00p.m. 9.00p.m.		Christmas Eve Damerham – Christingle Celebration*** Whitsbury – Christmas Eve Communion (CW1 Traditional)		25th January 9.30a.m. 11.00am	
		Thursday 25th December - CHRISTMAS DAY 9.30a.m. Martin - Holy Worship on Christmas Day*** 11.00a.m. Rockbourne - Holy Worship on Christmas Day		25th January 9.30a.m. 11.00am	
		28th December 11.00a.m. Whitsbury - Benefice Communion (CW1 Contemporary)***		1st February 9.30a.m. 11.00a.m.	
		4th January 9.30a.m. Rockbourne – Sung Eucharist (CW1) 11.00am Martin – Parish Communion (CW1)***		3rd Sunday before Lent: Presentation of Christ in the Temple (transferred) Martin – Parish Communion*** Rockbourne – Choral Matins	