

CHRISTMAS 2021 IN WESTERN DOWNLAND

You can always find a digital copy of our latest Courier, including contact details, on our benefice website westerndownlandchurches.org. We now also circulate the Courier digitally; if you would like a digital copy, please contact the Editor. It's our sincere hope that this Christmas we can once more accommodate the celebration of Jesus' birth and God's good news in our parish churches. Our aim is to hold our carol services, and our Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services in person. But to do so we need your help. In order to minimise risk, we ask that you please bring a face covering with you. We also ask that you fill in the attendance slips which will be in your pews and, where you can, that you maintain a social distance of at least one metre between you and those not from your household. We would also urge you not to attend if you feel unwell. We will continue to offer opportunities to join services via livestream over the Christmas period. Thank you.

CHRISTMAS EVE CHRISTINGLE – This year's Christingle celebration will be at 3p.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 of the collection at the service will go to the work of the Children's Society.



ON CHRISTMAS MORNING – This year the Christmas morning services (at 10a.m. and 11a.m.) will be similar in form, being a simple All Age Service. However, the earlier service in Damerham will be only around 30 minutes in length (while the one in Rockbourne will be its usual 45 minutes). There will be an opportunity for communion for anyone who wishes to remain immediately after each service has finished. Please choose the service which best suits your circumstances. We hope that this will help spread numbers attending across both services.

FROM THE REGISTERS

Marriages

All Saints, Martin 30th October Natasha Baker & James Sheehan

Funerals & Thanksgivings for Life

All Saints, Martin 19th October Ken Atkinson (Ashes)
St Andrew, Rockbourne 6th October Jean Smith (Funeral)
 30th October Meryl Lobb (Ashes)

NB. For general enquiries please contact, in the first instance, the Benefice Team Administrator for the four parishes of Western Downland, Harriet Roe. Tel. (01725) 519220. Email: harriet_tazzi@hotmail.com

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 information concerning individual parishes including matters of a general nature, please contact the Churchwarden: -

Damerham	John Godber (01425 650044)	Cathy Godber (01425 650044)
Martin	Fran Eardley (01725) 519423	
Rockbourne	Patrick Thompson (01725) 518246	
Whitsbury	Chris Harper (01725) 518324	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 12th January 2022.

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

THE COURIER

DECEMBER 2021 – JANUARY 2022

A Newsletter for the Communities of the Western Downland

A Word from the Rector



Holly and Berries, Damerham

Photo: Arron Shutt

Lost. That must have been the experience of Joseph and Mary as they arrived in a Bethlehem packed to the gills with people required to register in their home town as part of a 'global' Imperial census (most likely for Roman taxation purposes) ordered by the Emperor Augustus. That lost feeling must have been born for Mary in her betrothal to a man she barely knew, and in the angelic visitation which declared her pregnancy. It must have been heightened for them both by their arduous journey south from Nazareth. And when the best in terms of accommodation that Joseph could come up with for the heavily pregnant Mary was a bare corner of an innkeeper's cattle shed, that lost feeling must have seemed chasm-deep. But perhaps they felt most lost during Mary's agonising labour - and after the labour was over, when they both held a fragile infant life; their firstborn, in their arms. Though probably the feeling of being all at sea continued with the extraordinary declarations of the shepherds, the arrival of foreign soothsayers bearing gifts and the sudden flight into Egypt just ahead of the assassin swords despatched by Herod.

All in all, Joseph and Mary would have had every reason to feel abandoned, and utterly alone. I would imagine questions and doubts repeatedly spun around their heads, along with desperate plans for stepping off the merry-go-round (like Joseph's plan to privately break off the engagement to Mary when he discovered she was pregnant). But for the reader of the Nativity narratives, though it might have appeared that everything was chaotic and haphazard, the reality was far from meaningless and without purpose. The Nativity is the story of an unbroken and unbreakable thread, woven through the past and on into the present; a golden thread which creates a future quite beyond imagination; one of eternal hope and divine blessing. We may feel lost in our own confusing circumstances or tossed about by the vagaries of a world passing through tumultuous times, but the Christmas story is a message of eternal hope and sure purpose; a reminder that God will never turn a blind eye to our personal struggles, or his back on our collective heartache. God is always present. And always ready to transcend what we think is possible, to transform what we feel to be hopeless. That is God's Christmas gift, wrapped not in tinsel and fairy lights, but in the human form of a vulnerable baby who ultimately goes to hell and back for us, and never once throws in the towel.

Rev'd Les Player

NATIVITY AND MESSAGES OF HOPE

Watch out for the **Nativity Family**, who will reappear at St Leonard's Whitsbury in the days leading up to Christmas.

And in Martin this year you can place messages of hope, and concerns you want to place before God, as decorations to be placed on the Christmas tree in All Saints Church from Sunday 12th December.

ROCKBOURNE CHURCH CHOIR RECRUITMENT

Following the restrictions of the last year we're urgently looking for new members to swell our numbers, and would love to welcome singers of all voices into the choir. Please ring **Gill Scott**: Tel: 01725 518497 or Email: gill.mary.scott@gmail.com for more details.

DAMERHAM VILLAGE GET-TOGETHER

is on Saturday 11th December in Damerham Village Hall from noon onwards. Good quality raffle prizes would be welcomed, and the lunch is a buffet-style Bring & Share.

DATES FOR THE DIARY

Whitsbury PCC - 25th Jan 2022 6.30p.m. Whitsbury Village Hall
Damerham PCC - 1st Feb 2022 7p.m. Damerham Village Hall
Martin PCC - 15th Feb 2022 7p.m. Blandford Hall
Rockbourne PCC - 22nd Feb 2022 10a.m. Priory Cottage

30 MINUTE PRAYER AND REFLECTION

Every Tuesday @ 9.30am. (except Tuesday 28 December)

ADVENT WINDOWS

will be taking place in various homes throughout Martin on Saturday 11th & Sunday 12th December from 6pm-8pm.

A Quick Health Check - At Christmas more people may attend our services, including those who are vulnerable. Please help protect them and yourself by taking a Lateral Flow test before attending services. And if you feel unwell, even if the symptoms are not Covid related - **Please stay at home.**

LIVING IN LOVE AND FAITH

During January, as part of a national Church conversation, our churches will be providing a space in which Christians and others can share their experience and understanding of issues of Identity, Sexuality, Relationships & Marriage. We would be pleased if you can join us. **For further details contact Leslie Player on 01725 518642**

CHRISTMAS CAROLS

This year's **Carols on the Green** in Martin begins at 6.30p.m. on Thursday 16th December. And in Damerham on the same day from 5pm till 7pm on Thursday 16th December there are hot dogs, mulled wine and **Carols at Crossways Farm**. Donations will be for St George's Church. Rockbourne **Service of Lessons & Carols** is at St Andrew's at 6pm on the 19th December and followed by mulled wine and nibbles.

LAST CALL FOR ENCIRCLES

All Saints PCC Nominated Charity - Final donations for the All Saints, Martin 2021 Nominated Charity 'Encircles' should be given (preferably in one of the envelopes provided) at any service up to 31st December.

***** SERVICES DURING DURING DECEMBER & JANUARY *****

As mentioned previously - we are continuing Sunday services based largely in our parish Churches subject to COVID measures. *Physical services may be subject to alteration or cancellation at short notice due to increased COVID risk.* Some of these services will continue in our online (Zoom) services. We are also hoping to livestream some physical services on Zoom denoted by three asterisks (***). These will be recorded and uploaded onto the Western Downland Churches YouTube channel so that those who cannot attend physical services can either watch live or the recorded programme later.

5th December 2nd Sunday of Advent
9.30a.m. Damerham Holy Communion (1662)
11.00a.m. Rockbourne Advent Morning prayer ***

12th December 3rd Sunday of Advent
9.30a.m. Martin - Parish Communion (CW1) ***
3.00p.m. Whitsbury- Nativity & Carols

19th December 4th Sunday of Advent
9.30a.m. Whitsbury - Parish Communion (1662)
3.00p.m. Martin - Nativity & Carols***
6.00p.m. Rockbourne - A Service of Lessons & Carols

Tuesday 21st December
7.00p.m. Damerham - Carol Service

CHRISTMAS EVE
3.00p.m. Damerham - Christingle***
11.15p.m. Martin - Communion (contemporary)
11.15p.m. Whitsbury - Communion (Traditional Language)

CHRISTMAS DAY
10.00a.m. Damerham - Shortened Family Communion***
11.00a.m. Rockbourne - Holy Worship on Christmas Day



Christmas decorations at St George's Damerham during the night filming of the 2020 on-line Christmas service during the COVID-19 pandemic. (Photo: Arron Shutt)

2nd January Second Sunday of Christmas
9.30a.m. Martin - Parish Communion (contemporary)***
11.00a.m. Rockbourne - Matins

Thursday 6th January (The Epiphany)
9.30a.m. Zoom - A short service to mark The Epiphany

9th January 1st Sunday of Epiphany (The Baptism of Christ)
9.30a.m. Whitsbury - Holy Communion (1662)
11.00am Damerham - All Age Worship***

16th January 2nd Sunday of Epiphany
9.30am Rockbourne - Sung Eucharist (contemporary)
11.00a.m. Martin - Parish Worship***

23rd January 3rd Sunday of Epiphany
9.30a.m. Damerham - Parish Communion (contemporary)
10.30am The Burgate School & online: Churches Together Unity Service*** (Livestream joining details will be published in the Weekly Update)

30th January 4th Sunday of Epiphany
9.30am Rockbourne - Holy Communion (1662)
11.00a.m. Whitsbury - Parish Worship***

Wednesday 2nd February: The Presentation of Christ in the Temple
9.30a.m. Zoom - A short service to mark Candlemas

6th February 4th Sunday before Lent (Octogesima)
9.30a.m. Damerham - Parish Communion (contemporary)***
11.00am Rockbourne - Choral Matins