

Hello Everyone

This past week has been a wonderful build up to Christmas in our churches with the various carol services and school visits. It was so special to welcome the entire lower school (and their accompanying adults) to church on Wednesday - a first since I have been minister at Toddington - and we managed to squeeze in over 370 people! What a joy it was to listen to the children's excited questions about the church, and to hear the readers and choir performing so capably. Mr Darlington and his staff will have been so proud of the children, and so were we. And just a few minutes after their return... I was asked if they can come back at Easter! Yes, they most definitely can!

On Tuesday, we hosted two special Key Stage Parkfields Carol Services...each with over 200 Parkfields students. This was also a joy but unfortunately, the weather wasn't kind, so many of the children arrived very wet and cold but they didn't complain and inside church we were warm and snug as we sang carols, heard readings and listened to the choir sing beautifully (one choir sang a piece written by Mr Winn their music teacher). How talented our young folk are. It is such a privilege to be able to host them.

The night before was our service of Lessons and Carols accompanied by the Quintet choir, led by Nicholas Hopton and brother Matthew. The church was full.. but not quite as full as Wednesday with the lower school. Thank you so much to everyone who read a reading or reflection. Thank you so much to the Quintet Choir for making that service extra special.. and also for singing at Chalgrave last Saturday for Carols By Candlelight. What a wonderful week it has been.

Last Sunday, someone at the lovely Christmas Toddington Band concert asked how many people the church can hold and I replied it depends how big or little they are... knowing that we were going to have some big congregations this week - of varying sizes. As Mr Hughes reflected in his talk to Parkfields students.. it is incredible to think that people have been attending this church for so many years to sing, worship and to pray. What history! What a legacy!

I want to offer a huge thank you to anyone who has contributed money or food towards the Christmas food hampers for families who need a little support this year. Ten sets of hamper bags were delivered into the two schools last week and three more bags distributed this week. They have been very gratefully received. Another food collection delivery was taken to the Dunstable foodbank this week. Thank you for your generosity of donation and care. If you know of any family who would appreciate some support, please let me know as I still have some provisions available to deliver.

Thank you also to the teams of folk who have carried chairs into church, and carried them out again as we juggled furniture to accommodate the larger services. Thank you to all who dusted, polished and cleaned, to prepare the church for our visitors. Thank you to the teams who have sorted and carried food parcels, or arranged beautiful flower displays in church in readiness for our Christmas services this week-end.

We have some special services to which you are warmly invited. Come and sing carols and enjoy being together as we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. (See attached poster for more information)

**St George of England Church, Toddington**

**Christmas Eve**

11am Benefice Holy Communion Service

Crib Service – Sunday 24 December 4pm (Children are welcome to come dressed as nativity characters, if they wish)

'Midnight Mass' - 10pm

**Christmas Day**

Benefice Holy Communion Service 10am

(31 December 11am Benefice Service)

**All Saints Church, Chalgrave**

**Christmas Eve**

11am Benefice Holy Communion Service at Toddington Church

Crib Service - Sunday 24th December 2.30pm

Midnight Mass 11.15pm

(Benefice Service at Toddington on Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> at 11am)

Wishing you all a peaceful, special Christmas time. May you have happy time with friends and family and, may you all (whether with others, or alone) feel the comfort, peace and love of Jesus surrounding you and blessing you.

With love

Linda

Rev Linda Washington

Rector

Toddington and Chalgrave