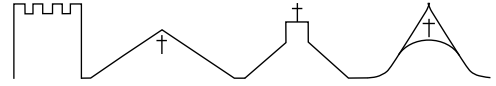


MAGAZINE OF TONBRIDGE PARISH CHURCH
 St Peter & St Paul · St Philip · St Andrew · St Saviour



PERSPPECTIVES

WITH LANGHAM
 PARTNERS IN EGYPT

CHURCH BELLS -
 TIME FOR AN OVERHAUL

DEAD SEA SCROLLS

FOSTERING IN KENT



Issue 65 - Winter 2024

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PERSPECTIVES FAREWELL- “A time for every purpose under heaven.....”

In the past 16 years, we at Tonbridge Parish Church have been publishing our quarterly magazine PERSPECTIVES, which we have distributed to different streets in the parish with each edition. It has been a joy and a privilege to have been able to do so. But as the writer to Ecclesiastes wisely wrote: “there is a time for every purpose under heaven”..... Had he lived 2500 years later, he might have added to his list – “a time to print, and a time to refrain from printing”!

Originally the vision of Rev'd Mark Brown in 2008, then vicar at the parish church, the work was carried forward by an editorial committee ably led by David Heyes. David had a unique gift for reaching out to people, drawing them into the ‘conversation’ and he had a group of those at the time who shared the vision and work of publishing and distributing the magazine each quarter. These included Liz Connell, Abi Dunn, Dick Longley, Aneta Van Bodegom, Jane Mata, Tessa Szcapanik, Barry Stagg, Jenny Macpherson, Morwenna Fernandez, and so many others – over the 16 years, there have been too many to be able to name them all. They gave of their time and abilities to write, edit, design and distribute the magazine, and it was a source of joy and inspiration to all who took part.

We are very grateful to them for their hard work over the years that made this possible. We must also recognise our loyal advertisers, without whose support it would have been impossible to take this forward. We owe them a debt of gratitude, and trust that their investment in the magazine has been rewarded by an increased flow of business.

Much has changed across the spectrum of communication media in our society since we started. We live the daily pressure of information overload, leaving less time available for reading. Even your weekend newspaper can absorb the best part of a day – and that is without doing the crossword! For younger generations, the screen consumes more and more time and attention.

When it started in 2008, the aims were to encourage people to think more deeply about life, to draw them towards God, and to build community. The format was bright and colourful, the articles told stories of some of the members of our four churches, their lives and experiences, and we featured many organisations working in the local community. For those working on the magazine itself, it connected them to the community, both within the church and beyond, as it carried information about local events and activities.

Having been for the last three years in an editorial role, I (John) have enjoyed learning more about the church members who have shared something of themselves in telling their stories, and shown how their faith in Jesus makes a difference in their daily lives. It has also been a joy discovering so many organisations and enterprises working in and around Tonbridge for the benefit of the community, and the dedication of those who give of themselves to make this possible.

This will be the last edition of Perspectives for the time being, as we review how we plan to continue to communicate with our church members and the wider community. Perspectives has always been about telling something of the forgiving and transforming love of God in Christ Jesus for our town and parish. We hope it has been an inspiration to our church members and people across the parish.

John Schluter
Editorial Group

The Rev'd Ben Thorndike
Vicar



Rev'd Mark Brown



David Heyes



Jane Mata

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It's Christmas again -

THE FIRST AND SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

As Christmas approaches, many will attend carol concerts, services, Christian celebrations. Some believe in the truth and implications of what happened with Christ's first coming, some do not. But He said he would come again.....

IT'S JUST A QUESTION OF TIME!

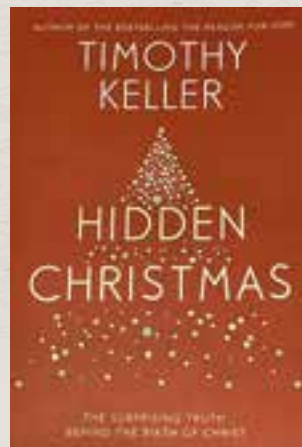
It's Christmas again! Does the thought fill you with joy, or a slight sinking feeling? All you have to get done between now and 25th December, the razzmatazz of the season, perhaps a lingering concern about the cost of all the festivities, and not wanting to disappoint the children.

We love the familiarity of the carols, the Christmas lights, the mince pies, the joy of gathering with family and friends, the goodwill which pervades the season. How easy it is, though, for that familiarity to hide the depth of meaning and purpose which lies behind all the festivities. Where would we be had there never been that first Christmas? If God, Creator of the Universe, hadn't appeared in human form in the baby at Bethlehem, what would the world be like today? What would be different?

As the proverb says, 'familiarity breeds contempt', and has perhaps made us blasé at the announcement to Isaiah that the 'virgin shall be with child' (Isaiah 7:14), whose name will be called 'Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace', (Isaiah 9:6), or the Astrologers from the East seeking the child 'born to be king'. The shock of these announcements is easily lost in the warm glow of the candlelight and familiar carols. In our Western society, where we are so inured to our interest in money, sex and power, the notion of the all-powerful God coming in weakness and poverty may seem simply too alien to be believable.

It is remarkable to observe that from his birth and throughout his life, Jesus never elicited a 'neutral' response. Whether it was the religious or political authorities who, from the word go, were determined to remove him, or the many in first century Israel who recognised in him God's long-awaited Messiah, including both shepherds and the first disciples who sought after and followed him. No one seemed to be indifferent to this man. Today, on the other hand, we are content to sing the carols, enjoy the party, and be a little patronising about Jesus, seeing him as a good man who lived a long time ago, but has little, if any, relevance to our modern life and society.

If you'd like to think more about all this, you may like to read Tim Keller's book - "Hidden Christmas"



The majority just ignore him, excluding him from their lives, society, and even the celebration of his birth.

But it's just a matter of time before he comes again! Over 300 prophecies in the Old Testament, written between 400 and 1800 years before Jesus appeared, were fulfilled with the birth of the child in Bethlehem 2000 years ago, and in his life, death and resurrection. There are many prophecies in both Old and New Testaments which speak of his Second Coming. We may not be aware of it, but we live between Christ's first coming and his second. His coming at that first Christmas led on to Good Friday and Easter. That was the point of it all - through his suffering on our behalf, to open a way back into relationship with God for us who had previously ignored him and gone our own way.

But his Second Coming, which we believe is equally certain, will be different. He is coming again, this time to call those who believe him into his promised new creation, the world as originally intended. For those who don't believe, who choose to ignore him, Jesus said it would be to face judgement, to be excluded. It's a tough proposition. But then a loving God would not oblige anyone who wants nothing to do with him in this life to have to spend eternity with him.

When will that Second Coming happen? Who knows? Only God himself. But as Jesus said: "At that time men will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory" (Mark 13:26). When it happens, we will all know about it! Perhaps this Christmas might be a good moment to spend a little time reflecting on life's bigger narrative and look behind the decorations for the real reason for the season.

John Schluter



DEAD SEA SCROLLS

Olivia Brown has lived in Tonbridge for many years, and is regularly at the Parish Church. She graduated this summer in Classical Archaeology and Ancient History from Oxford University, and is currently pursuing a teacher training course, while based at home in Tonbridge.

In 1946 a group of shepherds stumbled across caves, just a few miles from Jerusalem, filled with nearly 1,050 scrolls. The scrolls were left in a bag hanging on a tent pole for several weeks, until they eventually made their way to an antiques dealer in Bethlehem. Debates were held over the age of the scrolls once they appeared on the archaeological market. Interest grew when it was confirmed that these scrolls contained both biblical and secular writings. Archaeologists use a range of techniques to date objects, such as studying the handwriting to look for changes in character formation, and allusions to historical figures and events. Radiocarbon Dating was used to analyse the linen that the scrolls were wrapped in, and this showed that the earliest scrolls are from c.250 BC. This made the scrolls the oldest example we have of biblical texts.

The caves where these scrolls were found would have been in the Roman province of Judea. The relationship between Judea and Rome was complex. By AD 6 it was officially under Roman rule, and was expected to follow Roman laws, customs, and religious practices. There is much debate in current scholarship as to the extent to which all people in the Roman empire were expected to participate in Roman religious practises. In Judea, this led to conflicts, as the Jews revolted against the Roman rule. The First Jewish revolt, 66-73 AD, eventually led to even harsher suppression of the Jews by the Romans, and significant destruction of Jerusalem and Judea.



None of the scrolls date from later than this, which would suggest that this was the historical context when the scrolls were placed in the caves. This may explain why these texts would have been hidden in the caves, and why they remained there until discovered by the shepherds.

Understanding and studying these scrolls has been an enormous challenge. They mainly record writings of the Old Testament, and were written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. One of the challenges is that the Hebrew scripture was originally written in consonantal form only, that is, without vowels. Many words could therefore be read in more than one way, leading to different meanings when read and translated.

Some have always argued that the church and some scholars, were deliberately hiding any evidence that might question the traditional views of Jesus and early Christianity. Many studies of the scrolls have shown the congruity of the Dead Sea Scrolls with biblical tradition. For example, a list of miracles appears in both Luke 7:21-22 of the New Testament and the Dead Sea Scroll, known as the Messianic Apocalypse. Such texts are especially interesting, since they show that some of Jesus' teaching in the Gospels and other information in various New Testament books was included in the very earliest writings about Jesus life and ministry, rather than being fabricated later on by the church.

The Dead Sea Scrolls offer us a remarkable picture of Jewish life under Roman occupation, as well as corroborating many of the Old Testament prophetic texts, and even parts of Jesus' life and ministry. There are still some scrolls which are kept in private collections and will most likely be 'on the market' in future years. There remains much to be studied about these scrolls and they will no doubt continue to offer fascinating insights.

Olivia Brown



THE CHURCH BELLS

Time for an Overhaul

The sound of church bells resonates with many of us, carrying down the years and reminding us of the centrality of the church and the call to worship, which characterised our British way of life. We may not often see them, but in normal times we hear our team of bellringers at the parish church, as week by week the bells ring out to announce the morning service, and often other events.

St. Peter & St. Paul, the parish church in Tonbridge, is home to the Tonbridge Change Ringing Society. It is one of many across Britain, as the UK is home to the tradition of “change ringing,” a method of ringing a series of bells in a precise, ordered sequence. This art form was unique to Britain and has been practised for centuries. In recent years it has spread to Australia, New Zealand and the USA, as well as one or two European countries.

Originally church bells were used to summon people to prayer and worship in the church, and to mark both significant liturgical events but also important moments, such as funerals or weddings, and times of national importance like royal jubilees or coronations

It is over 50 years since our bells last received a serious overhaul, and the ringers agreed that they were getting more and more difficult to ring. Something should be done. So it was, at the end of October, that they were removed from the tower, no small feat, and despatched to the bell founders Taylors in Loughborough. There they will be cleaned, retuned, and polished.

We were spurred into action when an anonymous bequest from a member of the congregation left £30K for “the bells”. This sum, together with our savings and some very generous grants from various organisations resulted in enough funds, both promised and saved, to enable us to apply for a faculty and place the order. We are so grateful for this support. We were joined by members of the Kent County Association of Change Ringers restoration team before the Taylors men arrived to lower and then load the bells. Hamilton Woods and Gavin Knight worked like Trojans to achieve this.

We will be without our lovely bells for 3-4 months, and we really look forward to their return. Meanwhile, the team have been invited to ring at other churches and you may find them at Shipbourne, Tunbridge Wells or Speldhurst.

Angela Clark



TOWER SECRETARY:

Angela Clark, 36 Avebury Avenue,
Tonbridge TN9 1TQ
Tel: 01732 364309
angelaclarkbuttons@btinternet.com

AND A BIG **“THANK YOU”** FROM US ALL IN THE CHURCH TO THE BELLRINGERS WHO SO FAITHFULLY RING OUR BELLS TO ANNOUNCE OUR SERVICES ACROSS THE TOWN.

CELTIC CHRISTIANITY

The Spiritual Heritage of the British Isles and Ireland

As the Roman cohorts retreated from Britain, and warring pagan tribes filled the vacuum in the early fifth century AD, some Latin scholars and teachers fled to northern fringes of the empire, taking with them their Christianity, along with precious manuscripts of St Jerome's Latin translation of the Bible - the Vulgate, John Cassian's Conferences and Institutes, Athanasius's Life of St Antony and Sulpicius Severus's Life of St Martin of Tours. Particularly in Ireland which had escaped Roman occupation, these monastic teachings struck a chord with the rural Celtic societies with their túaths and clan-based structures, much more so than the town-focussed, authoritarian, diocesan "bishop-priest" system of the Roman Church. In geographic isolation from Rome between the early sixth and eighth centuries, large Celtic monastic schools developed, from which the Celtic peregrini emerged, leaving their homes and native lands, seeking their "places of resurrection," setting-up new monastic centres across northern Europe, from which to conduct mission and evangelism.

Amongst the most prominent of the Celtic peregrini were St Columba of Irish aristocracy who founded a Celtic monastic centre on Iona in 563 AD, from which he and his monks evangelised most of Scotland and parts of northern England. St Aidan, called from Iona in 635 AD, established the important monastic centre of Lindisfarne in Northumbria, from which he and his monks enthusiastically evangelised northern and central Britain, even as St Augustine of the Roman Church arrived in Kent in 597.

Although originally from Leinster, St Columbanus set out from the key monastic centre of Bangor in northern Ireland in c.590, to undertake his peregrinatio journeys across Europe, establishing Celtic monastic schools at Luxeuil in France, and later Bobbio in northern Italy. His mission revitalised the European church which was in moral and mortal decline at the time, as evidenced by more than ninety-four monastic centres across Europe identifying with his lineage by the seventh century. Luxeuil itself became a supremely important monastic metropolis, sending out monks to found mission houses throughout France, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands.

But what was the spirituality of these Celtic peregrini who form the back-bone of our spiritual heritage, and why was their evangelism so effective? They were humble monastic contemplatives-people of the heart. They understood the universe to be a sacrament - all creation steeped in the presence of God-all creatures and things pointing towards the ultimate glory of His Kingdom. In risky living they undertook both physical and inner spiritual journeys. They emerged from monastic schools and long periods of seasonal formation. They embraced rhythms of ebb and flow, searching for silence and solitude, to breathe-in the Holy Spirit first, before enthusiastically embarking on evangelism. They drew boundaries - encircling the sacred core, whilst keeping distractions out. They developed frameworks of daily prayer and Scripture-reading, based on the Psalms, intentionally building scaffolding - Rules of Life and vows, constantly refocussing themselves on God and their neighbour - with their ultimate goal of praying without ceasing.

Peter Ruxton



St Columbanus

The Rowing Song

See! Through the waves our cutting keel bites on!
Hewn from the woods along the two-horned Rhine.

Pull! Men, our echo answers us: pull on!

High roars the wind, the rain storm lashes down.

Pull on, brave hearts and overcome the brine.

Pull! Men, our echo answers us: pull on!

Beat back the clouds, the howling wind must cease!

Drive the boat on, our labour ends in peace.

Pull! Men, our echo answers us: pull on!

Bear up! Be strong! A following wind will blow.

God guards us still, and He will see us through.

Pull! Men, our echo answers us: pull on!

Hated the foe who wearies our poor heart!

Evil temptations, tearing us apart!

Minds fixed on Christ, we shout aloud: pull on!

Keep at your places, laugh the foe to scorn.

Safe from all harm, with heavenly armour worn.

Minds fixed on Christ, we shout aloud: pull on!

Firm our faith, frail vessels conquer all,

Shipwrecked the foe, his ancient weapons fall.

Minds fixed on Christ, we shout aloud: pull on!

Pull for the prize God offers to the brave,

King, Lord and Wellspring, Ruler of the wave.

Minds fixed on Christ, we shout aloud: pull on!

**IF YOU ARE INTERESTED TO HEAR MORE,
THERE ARE TWO UP-AND-COMING OPPORTUNITIES:**

1. Attend a day retreat at St Benedict Centre, West Malling on January 25th 2025, where the Author will be leading a retreat on Celtic Christianity - www.stbenedictscentre.org/contact-us/

2. Peter Ruxton is also publishing an article on Contemporary New Monastic expressions and their foundation on authentic Celtic Spirituality in the online open-access journal, Ecclesial Futures, probably in the December edition - see www.ecclesialfutures.org/.

The monastery at Iona



VISITING EGYPT WITH THE LANGHAM PARTNERSHIP

David & Wendy Balcombe, members of our church, recently spent 10 days in Egypt with a group of friends of Langham Partnership, one of our church's Mission Partners. They tell something of their experience.

From a grey October Friday at Heathrow to riding camels the next morning in the desert sunshine close to the pyramids at Giza, on the Western side of Cairo – what a contrast! Cairo has a densely packed population of 22 million, still expanding; it covers 1,200 square miles, twice the area of London. There are some impressive new multi-lane elevated roads to relieve traffic on busy shopping streets, but traffic is still chaotic, a 'free-for-all' approach with frequent use of the horn. Pity the poor pedestrians trying to cross!

The Great Pyramids, the Sphinx and Step Pyramids round Giza are impressive, not least for their sheer scale. The largest of the three Great Pyramids took 20 years to build. One wonders how the huge stone blocks were moved 4600 years ago! The Step Pyramid built at Sakkara c.3150BC was designed by the world's first named architect, Imhotep, who was eventually deified for his trouble! The wall decorations and hieroglyphics in tombs nearby are well preserved and tell their story – for those with the patience and time to decipher them!

The next day in central Cairo we saw the enormous Tahiri Square, famous for the 50,000 strong demonstrations of the 2011 Revolution. We visited Cairo Museum nearby with its fascinating ancient artefacts, mummies preserved for over 2 - 3000 years, and some of the treasures of Tutankhamen's tomb, including his golden coffins and the famous golden mask.

From there we headed towards a town on the north-eastern edge of Cairo in the Mokattam Hills. Here, a community of Coptic Christians formed, seeking escape from persecution through the ages. They are now called Zabbaleen, (rubbish collectors) as their livelihood is based on collection and recycling of much of Cairo's waste. The houses are self-built and many live in slum conditions but seem happy with their simple life and bustling community. Here also is the monastery of St Simon the Tanner, visited by a stream of pilgrims, and with an amazing



David & Wendy Balcombe with the Sphinx at Giza



Arriving overhead Cairo

arena church with a capacity of over 10,000, built in the 1970s into a vast cave of overhanging rock.

Our journey then took us by plane south to Aswan, where we visited the huge dam, designed by the Russians and finished in 1970. We also saw the earlier British-built dam on our way to visit the beautiful Philae Temple, which was rescued from the higher water level created by the dam thanks to an ambitious UNESCO project. It was taken apart, transported and then rebuilt on a higher island between the two dams. Later we boarded our boat which would take us down the Nile towards Luxor. The boat had a sail both fore and aft, though the flow of the river did most of the work, aided by a tugboat!



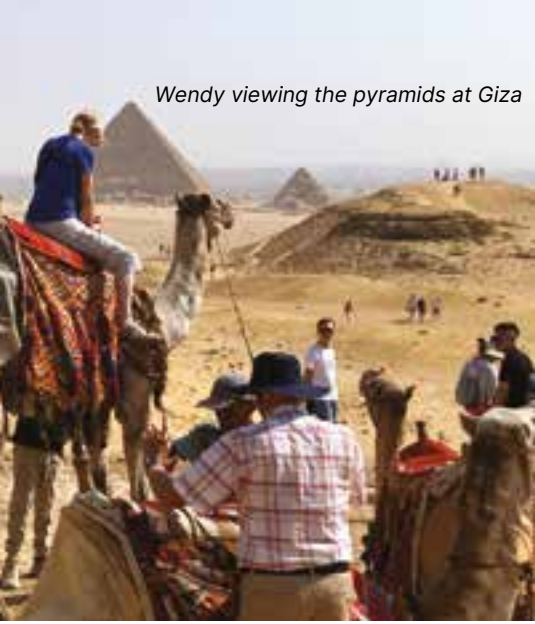
As we journeyed on peacefully down the river, we visited Kom Ombo Temple, a 'twin temple' dedicated to the Horus, the falcon god, and to the crocodile god, Sobek. There was a display of mummified crocodiles, which had been buried with many others, and other animals too, in a huge cemetery there. This was followed by a visit to the imposing Edfu Temple, with magnificent pylons and columns overlooking the Nile; this was amazingly well-preserved, partly because it had been filled, over the ages, with sand and silt, before being dug out around the early twentieth century.

On Saturday, we reached Luxor and visited the magnificent Karnak Temple complex on the Eastern bank of the Nile; it covers a huge area, and has rows of Ram-headed sphinx, enormous pylons, columns, needles and statues. There was also a big artificial lake for ritual use.

We then visited the slightly smaller Luxor Temple which has a rich history, first of the Pharaonic era, then part of it converted in 395AD by the Romans to a church, and in about 1200AD a mosque was built in another part. It has huge colonnades, which were awe-inspiring in the evening floodlights. Known in ancient times as Thebes, Luxor is sometimes called the 'world's greatest open-air museum'!

On Sunday we had an early start to avoid the crowds in the Valley of the Kings. The road wound up into the rocky, sandy pyramid shaped hill past a village where the original residents used to be tomb-diggers for the Pharaohs. We visited 3 tombs, one of which (of Merneptah - possibly the Pharaoh in the time of Moses?) went deep into the ground and had several interlocking rooms, with beautiful decoration and hieroglyphics carved into the walls, with much of the original colouring still preserved.

Wendy viewing the pyramids at Giza



The Arena Church



Inside Tomb of Ramesses VII



Temple at Karnak



Aswan Dam

From the very early Christian communities, Egypt became a predominantly Christian country, and there are still many Coptic Christian churches, and other denominations too, although the country now has a large Muslim majority. In Cairo we saw a beautifully decorated Coptic church, with ancient relics and icons, which are important to Coptic Orthodox Christians.

Our trip was organised by one of the leaders of our church's mission partners, Langham Partnership, and we were privileged to see something of their work in action in Egypt. On our first Sunday we went to an Egyptian evangelical church attended by Dr.Hani Hanna, the Director of 'Literature' for Langham. There were about 200 people at the lively evening service, which was conducted in Egyptian Arabic. We were given headphones with an interpreter. We also met Lydia, a Langham Scholar, normally working and studying in Lebanon, but taking temporary refuge in Egypt.

The next day we visited the theological college, which partners with the Langham Scholar programme, which funds and supports students working for Doctorate qualifications. We met with several scholars. One is currently working for her PhD and told us how Langham's grant and support is enabling her to fulfil her distant dream of gaining higher education in order to serve Jesus. Another has completed and is now working as an Old Testament lecturer at the college. One was an ex-principal of the college, and another the current principal. It was encouraging to see these men and women, committed to the cause of the gospel, and being equipped to serve effectively in their home countries in their own language.

We were also privileged to meet another former Langham scholar, the Rt. Rev'd Dr Andrea Zaki, a highly respected church leader in the country, who is now also actively involved in advising the government on religious matters.



Boat on Nile at Dahabia



Temple at Luxor



Heliopolis Evangelical Church in Cairo



Rt.Rev'd Dr Andrea Zaki and other former Langham scholars with John Libby

Egypt is a striking country, built on its fascinating ancient foundations and in such expansive dimensions. Cairo is a complex modern city, with its huge population and endless traffic jams, interwoven with some of the older parts which are still apparent. We were very encouraged, on this 'Langham Supporter Trip', to see that the Langham Partnership is having such a positive impact in the modern church in both Egypt and beyond into the Middle East.

David & Wendy Balcombe

MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN A CHILD'S LIFE: HAVE YOU CONSIDERED FOSTERING?

For over 40 years, Kent Fostering has been a beacon of hope for the county's children in need. We're not just a fostering service – we're a dedicated team passionate about working with our foster carers to create and provide safe, nurturing homes for children when they most need one. Here's why Kent Fostering should be your choice of fostering partner:

Unwavering Support Every Step of the Way

We understand that fostering is a rewarding yet sometimes demanding journey. That's why we offer unparalleled support throughout your fostering career. Our team of experienced professionals – social workers, healthcare experts, and educators – are available 24/7 to provide guidance and address any concerns you may have.

Investing in Your Development

We believe in fostering excellence. Beyond comprehensive induction training, we offer fantastic ongoing training opportunities, allowing you to gain recognized qualifications and enhance your skills. This not only benefits the children you care for, but also increases your fostering payments. Additionally, regular social events connect you with fellow foster carers, cultivating a supportive community.

Making a Real Difference Locally

Unlike other agencies, we prioritize placing Kent children in Kent homes, usually within 10 miles of their previous residence. This minimizes disruption and allows children to stay connected to their communities and

support networks. Our local social workers have a deep understanding of the area and can connect you with resources specific to your needs.

A Fostering Service with a Heart

We're not driven by profit; our mission is solely focused on providing a loving environment for vulnerable children. Being a foster carer with Kent Fostering means becoming part of a public service with a genuine commitment to fostering excellence.

Expanding Your Fostering Network: Regional Collaboration

We're excited to announce our partnership with 19 other local authorities in the Local Authority Fostering South East initiative. This collaboration broadens your fostering network and access to training and support across the South East region. You'll gain access to a wider pool of resources and connect with a network of over 2,800 amazing foster families, all working towards the same goal: creating brighter futures for children in our communities.

Who Can Foster with Kent Fostering?

We welcome applications from individuals and couples regardless of age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, or disability. Our priority is to find loving and supportive homes, and we believe that comes in all shapes and sizes. We can accommodate various living situations, including those who rent, own, have pets (subject to assessment), work full-time (depending on the fostering role), are retired, or claim state benefits.



FOSTER FOR KENT

Interested in fostering?
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 Fostering SOUTH EAST

Ready to Make a Difference?

Kent Fostering is looking for passionate individuals like you to join our team. If you have a spare room and a heart full of love, we encourage you to learn more about fostering opportunities. Visit our website WWW.KENTFOSTERING.CO.UK or get in touch with our friendly team today on **03001 312979**. Let's work together to build a brighter future for children in Kent.





CHRISTMAS CHILDREN'S PAGE



Christmas can hold lots of joy, excitement and surprises.

Can you think what was surprising for these people in the very first Christmas?



An ANGEL told Mary she would have a baby!



The first people ANGELS told the good news that Jesus was born were smelly SHEPHERDS!



A STAR led wise men to visit Jesus with three incredibly precious unusual gifts!

The most surprising thing that happened was that God, the creator of the universe, sent His SON into the world to be our SAVIOUR!

That is the most exciting, joyful gift any of us could receive.

Check out the back cover for details of how the Parish Church is celebrating - do come to the Christingle at St Philip on the 21st and visit the churchyard at St Peter and St Paul on the 24th to see the donkey and other live animals and the Nativity inside!



Instructions: Find these 10 words in the grid and help the shepherd find his way to baby Jesus.

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

GIFT HOPE JESUS JOSEPH JOY PEACE
ANGEL MARY SAVIOUR SHEPHERD

Nativity
 Tues 24th Dec, St Peter & St Paul




1.30-4.30pm
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live animals donkey rides
crafts refreshments

INDOOR NATIVITY
at 2.30pm and 4pm

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 Chislehurst - 020 8467 2222, Sevenoaks - 01732 742400, Swanley - 01322 619100, Tunbridge Wells - 01892 300330



Rose Sage was brought up in Tonbridge, and joined the Girl Guides at an early age. Recently graduated from Norwich University of the Arts, she is back in Tonbridge helping to lead the 1st Tonbridge Guides.

GIRLGUIDING IN TONBRIDGE

I remember my first time camping with Guides, grumpy at staying in a tent for the first time; determined to enjoy the activities with my friends; and being terrified of the woman in charge – the district commissioner – who didn't hesitate to yell at those who tested her. Unfortunately for us, our tent leaked so badly that night that we ended up sleeping in the communal marquee – our belongings soaked. Despite my reservations about the commissioner, I remember her staying up for us, making sure we were warm and giving out new sleeping bags, but, somehow, the experience never put me off camping.

After leaving for university, I found myself alone most evenings, searching for something to distract myself despite the enjoyment of my newfound freedom. On visiting home for Christmas, I popped my head back into the Tonbridge Scout and Guide Band (which had supported me in my drumming since growing out of Guides) and realised that I had a solution to the empty spot within me. I knew being a leader was different, and I thought it wouldn't be as much fun or rewarding as when I was a child, but despite my fears, I took a risk and volunteered.

According to a study from 2021, there were around 300,000 young people aged 4-18 enrolled in Girlguiding, growing rapidly each year. Every girl turns up to meetings to have fun with their friends, whilst learning to value and listen to each other. They follow a range of different activities meant to foster curiosity in areas such as engineering, health and service to their community. I take part in a historical re-enactment camp that dresses and camps like a 1940s guide group, and every year they never fail to surprise me with their enthusiasm and commitment. I remember overseeing the fire when a Guide appeared beside me, pointing and giggling at the ripped canvas tent that had slid down the tent pole with them sat inside. Two leaders sat and mended it by hand, and then we supervised a group of over ten girls hoisting and securing the tent material back up. As they retired at the end of the day, I remembered again my first run – in with a tent and recognised the same community spirit that rested in us to support one another and trust that we would have a safe place to sleep that night.

I still talk to every Guide leader I've worked alongside, and each one has taught me something different. Behind every early camp night, there's a group of tired leaders sitting by the fire trying to stifle their laughs at funny stories and all the interesting or bizarre situations that we've found ourselves in throughout the day. In fact, when I came back to Tonbridge, I joined a group which was losing a leader, and realised it was the same kind district commissioner who had helped me and my friends on my first Guide camp.

Girlguiding is built by the women within it, and for every adult that volunteers, there are dozens of smart young women who go off to better the world. I once thought that being a volunteer was just a duty to pay back for the fun I had whilst I was there, but I have learnt so much from the leaders and the guides I look after, that I know there isn't an age at which we stop growing with them.

*Rose Sage
1st Tonbridge Guides & 17th Tonbridge Scout and Guide Band*

If you or your children are interested in getting involved – please get in contact through the Girlguiding website –

www.girlguiding.org.uk/



SUNDAY SERVICES**ST PETER & ST PAUL: CHURCH LANE, TN9 1DA**

8am: Holy Communion

10.45am: Morning Service*

(Holy Communion on 1st Sunday of the month) and children's groups (school years R-5 and 6-9), plus crèche for pre-schoolers

6pm: Evening Service

(Holy Communion on 4th Sunday of the month)

**Also available online on our YouTube channel*

ST PHILIP: SALISBURY ROAD, TN10 4PA

10.45am: Morning Service

(Holy Communion on 2nd Sunday of the month) and children welcome

ST ANDREW: HADLOW ROAD, TN10 4LS

9.45am: Morning Service

(Holy Communion on 3rd Sunday of the month)

ST SAVIOUR: DRY HILL PARK CRESCENT, TN10 3BJ

9.15am: Morning Service

(Holy Communion on 4th Sunday of the month)

WEDNESDAY SERVICE**ST PETER & ST PAUL: CHURCH LANE, TN9 1DA**

10.00am:

Holy Communion on 1st & 3rd Wednesdays.

Parish Administration Alison Minton Parish Office, Tonbridge Parish Church, Church Lane, Tonbridge, Kent, TN9 1DA	(01732) 770962 ext. 24 parishoffice@tonbridgeparishchurch.org.uk alison.minton@tonbridgeparishchurch.org.uk
Vicar The Rev'd Ben Thorndike	(01732) 770962 ext. 23 ben@tonbridgeparishchurch.org.uk
Associate Vicar The Rev'd Wendy Carr	(01732) 770962 ext. 32 wendy.carr@tonbridgeparishchurch.org.uk
Senior Minister for Families Alyson Bleakley	(01732) 770962 ext.22 Alyson.Bleakley@tonbridgeparishchurch.org.uk
Youth & Children's Minister Edward Pascoe	(01732) 770962 ext. 24 ed.pascoe@tonbridgeparishchurch.org.uk
Licensed Lay Minister Sally Musson	07713 352017 mussonsally@btinternet.com
Church Family Administrator Jane Thorndike	(01732) 770962 ext. 24 jane.thorndike@tonbridgeparishchurch.org.uk
Churchwardens David Balcombe, Mike Talbot	(01732) 770962 ext. 24
Parish Treasurer Andy Kirkpatrick	treasurer@tonbridgeparishchurch.org.uk
Perspectives Team	perspectives@tonbridgeparishchurch.org.uk

Events in the Parish of St Peter & St Paul, Tonbridge this Christmas

(see back page for our services)

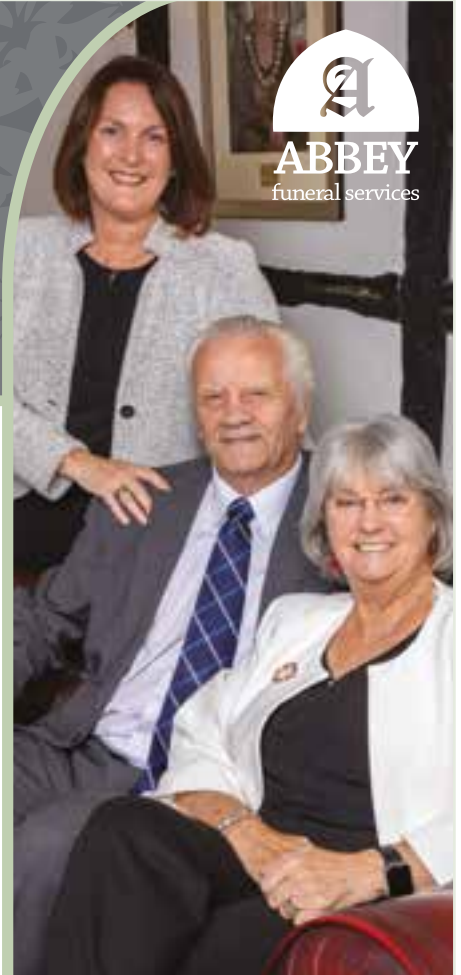


- **Carol Praise**
 - **Saturday 7 December, 3pm, St Andrew**
- **Gingerbread House evening**
 - **Wednesday 11 December, 7.30pm, St Philip**
(BOOKING essential via website)
- **Christmas Carol Singalong**
 - **Saturday 14 December, 4pm, St Saviour**
- **Nativity**
 - **Tuesday 24 December, 1.30-4.30pm, St Peter & St Paul**
(drop in for animals, crafts and refreshments with indoor nativity at 2.30pm & 4pm)

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1st and 3rd Saturdays in the month
10am-12pm

www.tonbridgeparishchurch.org.uk





Celebrate Christmas

in the Parish of St Peter & St Paul, Tonbridge

Sunday 15th December, 7pm

Carols by Candlelight

Particularly suitable for older children and adults
St Peter & St Paul, TN9 1HD

Saturday 21st December, 4pm

Christingle

For all ages but particularly suitable for primary school & younger children
St Philip, TN10 4PA

Tuesday 24th December, between 1.30-4.30pm

Drop in anytime for live animals, donkey rides, crafts and refreshments

Indoor Nativity at 2.30pm and 4pm

St Peter & St Paul, TN9 1HD

Tuesday 24th December, 11.30pm

Midnight Communion

St Peter & St Paul, TN9 1HD

Wednesday 25th December

Christmas Day Celebration Services

8am: Holy Communion, St Peter & St Paul, TN9 1HD

10am:

St Peter & St Paul, TN9 1HD

St Philip, TN10 4PA

St Andrew, TN10 4LS

St Saviour, TN10 3BJ



www.tonbridgeparishchurch.org.uk

Do also join us for a service of worship, witness and reflection on:
Sunday 29th December, 6pm at St Peter & St Paul
‘The year past and the year ahead’