



Parish of St Peter & The Good Shepherd Bearsted & Harrietsham

A Member of Bearsted Area Churches Together



Newsletter

St Peter's Church, Button Lane, Bearsted, Maidstone, ME15 8NJ

Church of The Good Shepherd, Rectory Lane (off East Street), Harrietsham, ME17 1HS

Parish Priest: Father Geoffrey Pointer: 01622 736100, email: parishpriest@catholic-bearsted.org.uk

Parish Deacon: Reverend Cyril Durbin: 01622 630055

St Peter's Hall Bookings: 07919 084730

Catholic Schools in our local area:

St Francis Primary, Queen's Road, Maidstone ME16 0LB (Telephone: 771540)

The Holy Family Primary, Bicknor Road, Park Wood, Maidstone ME15 9PS (Telephone: 756778)

St Simon Stock Catholic Secondary, Oakwood Park, Maidstone ME16 0JP (Telephone: 754551)

Parish Website and YouTube:
www.catholic-bearsted.org.uk

The EPIPHANY of The LORD



8th January 2017

FAITH IN FOCUS: A BEGINNER'S GUIDE to GUIDING STARS God reaches out far and wide to announce the birth of his Son. He reaches out to simple shepherds in the fields around Bethlehem, and to great intellects from the East. He reaches out to those of different religions, to politicians and to scientists. The revelation that a Saviour has been born is bigger than anybody. The story of the Magi, who followed the star and sidestepped the evil Herod, is tempting in its appeal to romanticise, but if we are to learn anything we have to focus on the nature of God's revelation.

It mightn't feel much as though God is reaching out to us. The stable with its shepherds and kings might seem very far away as we take down our Christmas decorations and recycle our Christmas cards. There's a sense of 'back to normal', and for most of us that means a humdrum cycle of boring jobs and making ends meet. Today's story tells us that it doesn't have to be that way. To follow the star is to make a conscious decision to cut out everything that is unimportant. The rules are simple. We have to make the right choices on a daily basis no matter what the consequences. In the light of poor decisions, we must learn to ask forgiveness and move away from regret. We must find time in a world full of distractions to listen to our inner voice. Most importantly we have to ask God to guide us as he guided the Magi.

Most of us get through life relying on the knowledge we already have. Today's challenge is to look for something new. Knowing where to look for our own guiding star is up to us, but one thing is for sure, if we are not looking for revelation, we will never find it. *Chapel Bell*

THANK YOU to all those who put so much effort into making our Christmas services really special: to those who arranged the beautiful flowers and decorations at both churches, to those who cleaned, those who served (at Mass, and coffee), those who led the music and those who took Communion to the housebound; indeed to all those who make our parish such a welcoming community, thank you! And thank you to those who do much of the background work in the parish throughout the year, helping it to function efficiently - work which is largely unnoticed but very much valued: God bless you all! ✨ The numbers attending Mass for Christmas were encouraging, with **186** at the Christmas Vigil, **41** at 'Midnight' Mass and very full churches at both Christmas morning Masses. Let's try and keep it up for the new year! ✨ **Parish Post:** there are still a few Christmas cards in the box marked PARISH POST in the porch at St Peter's: *recycling day is next Friday.*

CHRISTMAS The Church's liturgical celebration of Christmas (the Nativity of the Lord) continues this year until **tomorrow** (Monday), the feast of the Baptism of the Lord. Ordinary Time before Lent begins this Tuesday, **10th January**, the First Week in Ordinary Time, ferial cycle 1 (weekday readings at Mass), psalter week 1 (Divine Office). It lasts **7 weeks** ☉ before Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, **1st March**.

St PETER'S CHURCH TREES When the church was built 30 years ago, a very nice screen of trees was planted round the perimeter to give some character to the bare site. However, 30 years on the scene has changed dramatically: you can no longer even see the church through the forest which has grown up around it, and many of the trees themselves are either stunted in their growth, or growing so vigorously that they are damaging the roadways (see particularly the one at the top left corner which has heaved up the concrete!). We need to take remedial action before further damage occurs, and have engaged tree surgeons who will be working on **Wednesday 11th** and **Thursday 12th** January to thin down, and in some cases, remove the excess of trees, leaving the good trees (such as the oaks) freedom to grow correctly. **Only HALF the CAR PARK** will be available on these days, and there could be some falling branches whilst trees are lopped. There will be a safe pedestrian entry path to the church and hall at all times but please avoid parking in the church grounds if you can on these days and take care to follow the warning signs.



DIARY for WEEK BEGINNING 8th JANUARY 2017 (Masses marked '(H)' are at Harrietsham)			
✕ The EPIPHANY of THE LORD ✕			
Sun 8th	Saturday	6.00pm	✕ Vigil Mass: Pro Populo
	Sunday	(H) 8.45am	✕ Mass
		10.30am	✕ Mass: Sally Jones RIP
Mon 9th	The BAPTISM of THE LORD	7.00pm	✕ Mass
Tues 10th	Feria	11.30am	✕ Requiem Mass: Patricia Lavinia Curtis
Wed 11th	Feria	(H) 10.00am	✕ Mass: Vera Freed's wellbeing
Thu 12th	Feria	7.00am	✕ Mass: Mary Roche RIP
Fri 13th	Feria	10.00am	✕ Mass
Sat 14th	Our Lady	5.00-5.30pm	Confessions
✕ SECOND SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME (A) ✕			
Sun 15th	Saturday	6.00pm	✕ Vigil Mass: Bridie Leaman RIP
	Sunday	(H) 8.45am	✕ Mass: Pro Populo
		10.30am	✕ Mass: Michael Ashdowne RIP

FIRST HOLY COMMUNIONS 2017 Applications have now closed. Preparations for those parents who have enrolled their children have now begun; we have a group of 11 this year. We will continue to be in touch with parents by email.

ADVENT APPEAL 2016 Last year's appeal was in aid of The Maidstone Churches' Winter Shelter. To date the Advent Appeal has raised a total of **£472.55**. To this has been added the contents of the St Anthony poor box for 2016: **£209.60**. Thank you to those who have made contributions. **Maidstone Day Care Centre** would be very grateful if you could donate any of the following to help the homeless in Maidstone, mainly for men but also some women: • winter clothes, including shoes and boots, coats, pants and socks, gloves, scarves, hats; • sleeping bags and blankets; • toiletries. Please leave any donations, clearly marked, in the parish room at St Peter's; Marie Quarman will continue to collect until week ending **29th January**. Thank you.

CAFOD Thank you for all your support for CAFOD's campaigns during 2016. During the year we received over 24,000 messages of hope, inspired by the Lampedusa Cross, which were dedicated at a special service in Salford. These messages are now being given to refugees, and we still welcome your messages during the new year. Last year we also celebrated the UK's ratification of the Paris climate treaty and between us, held hundreds of conversations with MPs about climate change and renewable energy during 2016. Thank you. Homeless Sunday is on **22nd January** (<http://homeless-sunday.uk/>).

PLEASE PRAY...

- **With the Holy Father for January:** that all Christians may be faithful to the Lord's teaching by striving to restore ecclesial communion through prayer and fraternal charity by working together to overcome the challenges facing humanity.
- **For all the sick** and for all who are unwell at home or in our care homes; for those who have died recently especially Sally Jones, and for all those whose anniversaries occur about now; for all our relatives and friends, and the intentions on the notice board.
- **For peace throughout the world;** let us remember especially those who have suffered and died at the hands of indiscriminate terrorists recently.

Thank you for your offerings last week to help run our parish: **£257.44** (Gift Aided, **£126.00**; weekly standing orders, paid direct into our bank amount to **£134.00**). ♦ **Crib offerings** throughout the season will be shared between the "Friends of the Holy Land", offering help to the poorest families in Bethlehem; and "Crisis Fund in Southwark" to help support children, young people and families in immediate need.

SOCIAL COMMITTEE This **Tuesday** at the usual time and venue.

GOOD COUNSEL Friday **13th January** is the 20th anniversary of the founding of **The Good Counsel Network** in the UK; thousands of lives has been saved from abortion since then. Please pray and fast on Thursday **12th January** for the end of abortion and euthanasia, the eve of this anniversary. Your prayer and fasting is urgently needed (www.goodcounselnetwork.com).

PEACE SUNDAY Next week with the theme '**Nonviolence: a style of politics for peace**' from Pope Francis's World Peace Message 2017. See <http://paxchristi.org.uk/news-and-events/peace-sunday/> for more information.

CHURCHES TOGETHER There is to be a service for Christian Unity at Holy Cross Church, Bearsted, at 3pm on **Sunday 22nd January** (during the Church Unity Octave of Prayer).