



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: bearsted@rcaos.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

Year A

FOURTH SUNDAY of ADVENT

22nd DECEMBER 2019

FAITH in FOCUS: DIFFICULT DECISIONS If we are lucky, we might get through life without making any painful or difficult decisions, but we can't all be so lucky. There are some who will choose to give birth to a child knowing that the baby has a disability. There are those who will choose to care for a relative who is very ill or dying. These decisions are made with no real clue of what lies ahead, but they will always be made out of love. There's no doubt about it, for people who make difficult decisions in life there will be great difficulties ahead. What is equally certain is that there will be great rewards too. Our Nativity scenes show Mary and Joseph smiling fondly at the baby Jesus as though bringing the son of God into the world had been one of the easiest decisions to make. As we look in at the cosy scene, we have to remember that the history of salvation would have been completely different if either Mary or Joseph had said 'no' to God's plan. Saying 'yes' to God's plan didn't give Mary or Joseph an easy life, but being part of God's plan in such a direct and practical way must have brought them great fulfilment, and of course, it earned them a place in the history books for all eternity. We too are part of God's plan, though it probably doesn't feel like it. We too have a part to play in leaving the world a better place than we found it. What is God asking of each of us? Is there a nagging vocation that keeps throwing opportunities into our path, opportunities that up until now we have managed to sidestep? Advent is a time to make decisions that will turn our predictable lives into rollercoasters with difficult lows but rewarding highs. *Chapel Bell*



NEWSLETTER There is no newsletter next week, so Fr Geoffrey and Deacon Cyril send best wishes for a Holy and Happy Christmas, thanking parishioners for cards and gifts sent in. Monsignor Tim Galligan sends good wishes to us all, as does Fr Joseph, still in Rome as chaplain to the African community there. ☼ Thank you so much to all those contributing to the music, the liturgy and the decorations in our two churches at Bearsted and Harrietsham over the Christmas period. Mass will be offered for you all, as well as for those who give so much of their time and love to our parishioners, especially those unable to get to Mass these days, and to those who keep an eye on our property over the year. ★ Pick up a Knights of St Columba Christmas poster and display it in your window or other prominent position.

COFFEE MORNING at GOOD SHEPHERD After Mass, **today (22nd December)**: back by popular demand, a rare chance to linger awhile, drink coffee and meet fellow parishioners. ♦ Water problems at Good Shepherd: like many others we are having trouble with drainage. Please be careful!

CHRISTMAS EVE Since there are two Masses in the evening on Christmas Eve there will be no morning Mass; neither will there be Adoration, just for this week, to enable the church to be prepared. *Apologies.*

NATIVITY At Christmas there is a huge pressure on us to get everything right the right presents, a Christmas card list that doesn't miss anyone out, the perfectly cooked Christmas dinner, Christmas decorations that will rival the neighbours', not to mention all those awkward family politics. All this for just for one day! The key to coping with the pressure is to remind ourselves that the festivities really are only just for one day... the enduring message is that the birth of Jesus heralds a new way of living for each and every new generation.

RESULTS: GRAND CHRISTMAS DRAW Thank you to everyone who contributed a prize or bought tickets for our Grand Christmas Draw. This is our major annual fund-raising event and we are delighted to announce that we made a net profit of **£675.00** for parish funds. A list of prize-winners has been posted on the noticeboards at Bearsted and Harrietsham.

DIARY for WEEK BEGINNING 22nd DECEMBER 2019
(Masses and Devotions marked '(H)' are at Harrietsham)

✠ **FOURTH SUNDAY of ADVENT (A)** ✠
Day of Prayer for Expectant Mothers

Sun 22nd <i>O Rex Gentium</i>	Saturday	6.00pm	✠ Vigil Mass: John and Helen Nicol RIP
	Sunday	(H) 8.45am	✠ Mass: Gretl Bignell RIP
		10.30am	✠ Mass: Pro Populo
Mon 23rd <i>O Emmanuel</i>	Feria	7.00pm	✠ Mass: Elizabeth Ashfield
✠ The NATIVITY of THE LORD ✠ <i>Christmas Day</i>			
Wed 25th	Tuesday 24th • <i>Christmas Eve</i>	6.00pm	✠ Vigil Mass: Margaret and Len Richardson RIP
		10.30pm	✠ Mass during the Night: Ellen Walsh RIP
	Wednesday 25th • <i>Christmas Day</i>	(H) 8.45am	✠ Mass at Dawn: Pro Populo
		10.30am	✠ Mass during the Day: Rose Julia Greenrod RIP
Thu 26th	St Stephen, the first Martyr	10.00am	✠ Mass: Mrs H Murphy
Fri 27th	St John, Apostle and Evangelist	10.00am	✠ Mass: Celebrant's Intention Coffee after Mass
Sat 28th	The Holy Innocents	<i>5-5.30pm</i>	<i>Confessions</i>
✠ The HOLY FAMILY of JESUS, MARY and JOSEPH (A) ✠			
Sun 29th	Saturday	6.00pm	✠ Vigil Mass: Maureen Waltham-Smith RIP
	Sunday	(H) 8.45am	✠ Mass: Pro Populo
		10.30am	✠ Mass: Bill Watts RIP
Mon 30th	Christmas Feria	7.00pm	✠ Mass
Tue 31st	Christmas Feria	10.00am	✠ Mass: Eileen Callaghan RIP <i>(followed by Adoration until 12noon)</i>
Wed 1st Jan 2020	Mary, The Holy Mother of God	(H) 10.00am	✠ Mass: For all parishioners
Thu 2nd	Ss Basil and Gregory	<i>No Mass; the church is open from 7am.</i>	
Fri 3rd	The Holy Name of Jesus	10.00am	✠ Mass Coffee after Mass
Sat 4th	Christmas Feria	<i>5-5.30pm</i>	<i>Confessions</i>
✠ THE EPIPHANY of THE LORD ✠			
Sun 5th	Saturday	6.00pm	✠ Vigil Mass
	Sunday	(H) 8.45am	✠ Mass
		10.30am	✠ Mass: Pro Populo

MARGARETHA (GRETL) BIGNELL RIP Gretl's funeral will be on **Monday 6th January, 12.30** at St Peter's.
PLEASE PRAY...

- **For those who are spending Christmas without a loved one for the first time**, that they be given strength and courage and find peace in the knowledge of God's love. For expectant mothers.
- **With the Holy Father for January 2020**: for the promotion of world peace, that followers of other religions, and all people of goodwill may promote peace and justice in the world.
- **For all the sick and for all who are unwell at home or in our care homes**, especially Terry Kinsman; for those who have died recently, especially Peter Walters and a schoolgirl from Madginford who died suddenly during the week; for all those whose anniversaries occur about now (see below); for all our relatives and friends and those who have asked for prayers.
- **Anniversaries (St Peter's Chapel memorial)**: ✠ Rose Greenrod, Ellen Walsh, Lilian Macklin, Nicholas Newman, Elizabeth Honywood, Anna Hale and Cindy Burrows Hollenbeck. ✠

Thank you for your offerings last week to help run our parish: **£387.08** (of which, **£195.62** was **Gift Aided**; in addition, weekly standing orders paid direct into our bank amount to **£185.00**). ♦ The Grand Christmas Draw made **£675** for parish funds. **The collection at all Masses on Christmas Day** is parishioners' personal offering to their parish priest. In this diocese priests rely for most of their income on the offerings made at Christmas and Easter, so please be as generous as your means allow. Envelopes are available for this. Thank you. ♦ **Crib offerings** throughout the coming season will be donated to the **Catholic Children's Society's Southwark Crisis Fund**, which provides support to children and families of the archdiocese who are facing a crisis in their life.

THURSDAY MORNINGS Mass on a Thursday morning has now been discontinued. Apologies for any inconvenience. The church will be open as usual.

FRIDAY COFFEE There were 5 of us who stayed for coffee last Friday at St Peter's. It seems the weather prevented one or two others. Our thanks to Tricia and Nelly who, laid this on! (They also provided some rather moreish cake.) We will do it all again this Friday and for the foreseeable future.

MAIDSTONE DAY CENTRE In **January** there will be a collection of toiletries for men and women. Please leave any donations in the parish room. In February we will be collecting new and good used clothing for men and women.

CONGRATULATIONS to Fr Peter Soper, reappointed Dean of Maidstone.

HOMELESS at CHRISTMAS (*Worth repeating from last week.*) We tend to have a preconception that those who are homeless are run-aways, addicts or those with mental health problems. Whilst there is truth in this, there are many other reasons why any one of us could end up homeless. It is said that any one of us could be just a couple of pay days away from being out on the street. Any one of us could fall prey to an unscrupulous landlord, job loss or the breakdown of a relationship. Charities like Shelter, Crisis or the Salvation Army are equipped not just to support the homeless at Christmas, but support people back into a safe place to live. Think about making a donation this Christmas to one of the homeless charities to help put someone's life back on track. **CHRISTMAS FOOD BANKS:** It isn't hard to know that we are increasingly dependent on food banks. Food banks have their critics, but for those with nothing to live on they are a lifeline. As you do your weekly shop think of families with nothing to eat this Christmas. Try looking out for those 'two for one' promotions and give one away. If everyone who went into the supermarket bought one extra item the food banks would be full this Christmas.

THE YEAR OF THE WORD In partnership with Bible Society, the Year of the Word focuses on celebrating, living and sharing God's word throughout the Catholic Church in England and Wales until the end of December 2020. Pick up a booklet 'The God who Speaks' for more information, or visit: <http://www.godwhospeaks.uk/>.

CLERGY SUPPORT FUND Those who supported this fund a couple of years ago will have received a Christmas Newsletter. Anyone else interested can pick up a copy.

COMING UP:

- **JUSTICE and PEACE** Meeting on **Tuesday 7th January**, 7.30pm at St Peter's.
- **FIRST COMMUNIONS** The next session for the children will be on **Friday 10th January** at St Peter's.
- **PEACE SUNDAY**, 19th January.
- **OCTAVE OF PRAYER for CHRISTIAN UNITY: 18-25th January 2020:** This year's theme will be a reflection on the shipwreck of St Paul and the obligations of generosity and hospitality. ✕ There will be a united service at Holy Cross on **Sunday 19th January** at 3pm.
- **New Episcopal Vicar for Kent:** Canon John O'Toole will take up this post in **February**.

