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Tuesday 8.30 – 11.30am
Wednesday 1.00 – 4.00pm

There will always be an up to date message on the Partnership Office telephone giving any changes.

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To publicise any News or Events in the next edition of In Partnership covering January, please send them to the office no later than 16 December.

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In Partnership December 2016



Descendent.....love came down

C.S. Lewis wrote 'In the Christian story God descends to re-ascend. He comes down; down from the heights of absolute being into time and space, down into humanity...

For as long as I can remember the Nativity Play has always been my favourite part of Christmas. In 1977 I got my first starring role, I was perfectly cast as the 'mouse' who had no words to say but had to creep across the stage at the appropriate moment peeping into the crib to see Baby Jesus. In so many ways I wish I could still be that shy little mouse, stealing across the stage silently to get the best view of the Lord Jesus. Time has passed, life has moved on but the Nativity is still central to my Christmas and in fact I would go as far to say that it is the most important day of my year. The challenge and privilege for me now is to find a new way into the Christmas Story that brings about the same wonder to others as it did to that little mouse in 1977!

I am blessed to have an amazing group of people around me in Shaw who just smile and laugh at my latest creative suggestions and then support me in somehow making my imaginations a reality. The Christmas story is real, it changes lives, and there's always a little bit more to explore each year which is where I find new joy in the Nativity every year.

Love came down at Christmas,
Love all lovely, love divine;
Love was born at Christmas,
Star and angels gave the sign.

Worship we the Godhead,
Love incarnate, love divine;
Worship we our Jesus:
But wherewith for sacred sign?

Love shall be our token,
Love shall be yours and love be mine,
Love to God and to all men,
Love for plea and gift and sign.

Christina Rossetti

This poem describes simply yet profoundly what it means that God was descendent that first Christmas. God came down in human form to a messy and broken world bringing love, endless love. The dark uncomfortable stable was chosen as the perfect place for the birth place of the light of the world. A young mother was gifted with the most precious baby. Rossetti's words allow us to imagine Mary cradling Jesus and gently whispering to him 'love all lovely, love divine'. The mystery of God

FROM THE REGISTERS

Baptisms

13 November 2016 Joseph John Wills

20 November 2016 Hannah Lily Martin

Funerals

18 November 2016 Mrs Eileen Varney

PRAYERS

Please pray for:-

We have decided we cannot continue to support the Remix youth club. Please pray for Claire Camm, the Emerge team and the young people no longer involved. The After Schools Club and Saturday workshops will continue, please continue to pray for the young people who come along. Please also pray for guidance as we seek God's direction for the Emerge project

Partnership Nativity Workshop on 18 December

Christmas Prayer

Father,

Thank you for creating us and for loving us so much that you sent Jesus to become one of us and to be our way to you. This Christmas may we know the love, peace, comfort and joy that only you can give, no matter what our circumstances. And may we reflect your light and love in this dark world to bring glory to you. In Jesus' name. Amen.

By Daphne Kitching

West Swindon and Lydiard Tregoze Church Partnership Carol Services

Toothill

Carols by Candlelight and All Age Service at **4.00pm on Sunday 11 December.**

Holy Trinity Shaw

Carols by Candlelight at **6.30pm on Sunday 11 December.**

Hook Carols by Candlelight

Carols by Candlelight at **7.00pm on Friday 16 December Hook Village Hall SN4 8EA**

St Mary's Lydiard Tregoze

Carols by Candlelight with Organ at **6.30pm on Sunday 18 December.**

Westlea

Westlea church is holding its Carol Service at **6.30pm on Sunday 18 December.**

Come along and enjoy singing your favourite Christmas Carols at any of our services. You will be welcome, bring your friends along too.



For Your Diaries

01 January 2017 Partnership service 10.00am at St Mary's Lydiard Tregoze

Orient Express Coffee Afternoon Saturday 21st January 2017 2.00-4.00pm at Toothill Church

There will be an Orient Express Coffee Afternoon with coffee/tea and biscuits at 50p, plus memorabilia of the Orient Express and other Steam Trains. Also there will be goodies on the table in connection with the Orient Express. All are welcome.

29 January 2017 Covenant Service 10.00am at Toothill. Please note change of time.

in human form is pictured as an embrace, an enfolding of deep indescribable love.

Mission Descendent is perfectly unpredictable, perfectly radical, perfectly compassionate and perfectly human. God loves our messy crazy world so much so he sends his Son not to live the life of a King in a palace detached from the lives of everyday people, but to be a with us God descending right into our world of pain, struggle and brokenness. I am not sure the little mouse of 1977 contemplated the theology of the Incarnation but she understood love and she still does. Back then the mouse's life was simple, in 2016 the mouse's life is not quite so simple but that tiny spark of light that spoke to her core back then still flickers. I now understand more about the dark places, more about the pain, more about the brokenness and how the shadows may creep into our lives when we least expect them. However, I also know that the flame, however small it may feel, burns with pure light and it cannot be extinguished even in the darkest of times. That tiny spark, that tiny baby brings light and hope to the heart of humanity.

Our Nativity Day will be full of fun, laughter, mess, and chaos so we can share the joy of the Christmas story and develop our relationship with the Descendent God. We will listen again to the story of how God's descended presence on earth was announced by a star shining over Bethlehem and how singing angels revealed that the Messiah had been born in the dark of the night to bring hope and light to all. We will learn that God's descendent glory is made known to the outsiders, the foreigners, the unprepared, the surprised, that God chooses chaotic messy people just like us to witnesses the Good News that 'love incarnate, love divine' has descended for every person in every age.

In her poem Christina Rossetti asks us 'but where, and with what, will the descendent God's sign be shown today?' I encourage us all to reflect this Advent on how we will respond to Jesus and one another so that the Descendent God is visible in our lives? The still shy but less youthful mouse hopes that the answer is a simple one, 'Love came down at Christmas' and this love needs to be our prayer, our gift and our 'mark'. We are all part of the Nativity story and love shall be our token. God descends at Christmas as a human baby, a spark of light in a dark world. Jesus our Lord and Saviour enters our world and we are entwined in this amazing story of love that echoes timelessly through the centuries. God descends to the earth to find his precious children and to hold us in his loving embrace. May we all silently creep mouse like to the crib and kneel in the presence of our Descendant God of love.

Please come along and join us on our Nativity Day, come and join the story of love.

Every blessing, Gayle

Regular activities

2nd Sunday each month	
Messy Church	11 December 4 - 5:30pm @ Shaw
Every Monday	
After School Youth Group Contact Claire Camm 07981951381	3:30 – 6:00pm @ Holy Trinity Shaw
Every Tuesday	
Bell Ringing	7-9pm St Mary's Bell Tower
2nd Wednesday of each month	
Mothers Union Contact Doreen Henderson 07434377587	14 December 2pm @ St Mary's Stable Room
Every Thursday	
Toothill Tinies	10 -11:30am @ Toothill

Sat 17th December 2016, 3pm
Shaw Church

Emerge Christmas Show

'Welcoming the Stranger'

A story told in word, music and pictures

Refreshments & Christmas stalls

Tickets: Family £5.00; adults £2.00; children £1.00 (inc. refreshments)

In aid of Swindon Harbour Project

Words & action to make Jesus known

HOPE's dream is a growing church, showing Jesus' love and telling the Jesus story, at the heart of every community. HOPE's Executive Director Roy Crowne told 100 denominational and ministry leaders gathered at Lambeth Palace to launch HOPE 2018, 'There's a sense, across the UK, that it's time for a spiritual harvest.'

'Could we bring about a 10 per cent growth across the whole church in 2018?' he asked. 'Could every denomination, in every area, say "We commit to 10 per cent growth in the church of Jesus Christ in 2018"? I'm going to give myself to that over the next two years.'

'There's a need for us to be intentional about using words and actions to make Jesus known,' he added and he pointed to the Talking Jesus research: 'It shows that hundreds of thousands of people in the UK want to know more about Jesus. They are open to the gospel. They are ready to respond.'

He reaffirmed HOPE's commitment to evangelism in words and action in villages, towns and cities: 'Let's hold the two in tension – showing God's unconditional love and inviting people to respond to the gospel and become part of the local church.'

'I want every Christian in every church to be equipped to use words and action to make Jesus known. HOPE will help you plan mission, offering you something to do, something to say and something to give. Will you join us in 2018 praying, making Jesus known, and inviting people to become his followers?'

Welcoming the 100 guests to Lambeth Palace for the HOPE 2018 launch, the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby said 'We exist as God's people to enable the world to meet Jesus and then make up their minds; we can't force conversion but we can bring people face to face with Christ. We need to do that, and HOPE provides the tools for it – the stimulation and the resources.'

'The best way is through relationship. I came to Christ 41 years ago because a friend explained the gospel to me. He'd been a Christian less than a year; one brother telling another; one friend telling another; spreading from house to house.'

The HOPE 2018 vision is presented in a new 16-page brochure, which explains how churches can be part of HOPE 2018. Copies are available free. Contact the HOPE office to place a bulk order for churches in your area – phone 01788 542782 or email office@hopetogether.org.uk

The Rt Revd Lee Rayfield, Bishop of Swindon, on the seismic events of recent elections and the realities they express

“A house divided against itself cannot stand.” These words came to mind as I woke up to the news we had voted to leave the EU. Spoken by Jesus in a very different context, they resonated deeply with where so many countries now find themselves. The divisions being revealed in the USA and UK are considerably less destructive than those in Syria and Iraq, but they are nevertheless dangerous.

Speaking about societal tensions in America, Bishop TD Jakes said people had not been included in his nation’s strategy for success. He spoke of anarchy erupting when someone in power forgot somebody who wasn’t. The issue which Bishop Jakes identified was inequality of opportunity and its parent or sibling, economic inequality.

Of developed nations, the gap between the richest 20% and the poorest 20% in society is greatest in the USA. A study published in 2011 entitled *The Spirit Level* found a clear and worrying association between the degree of economic inequality and the prevalence of a wide range of social and health related issues: rates of divorce, mental illness, alcohol and drug addiction, life expectancy, and crime. These issues impact the most affluent as well as the least.

The worrying news is that the UK was the third most unequal developed nation in that study. We now have levels of inequality of wealth not experienced for 100 years and the gap has widened over the last four decades. Paradoxically, the bad news that inequality affects everyone – is a blessing in disguise as it can bring us together to address it. The causes of inequality are deep and complex but this does not mean we are impotent to act.

An atheist friend of mine is convinced churches have a key role to play and describes the Church of England as the conscience of the nation. Brexit and the US elections have surfaced deep divisions for which there will be no quick fix. In this climate, signs of God’s Kingdom and witness to our King may find greater traction. This is not about adding to our agendas, but how we might put flesh on our Diocesan vision of Creating connections and better embody a way in which nobody is ignored or forgotten.

Read Bishop Lee’s full article at www.bristol.anglican.org



Wednesday 21 December 2016

Open Air Carols

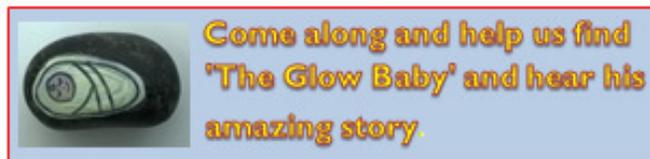
by Lantern light
at Lydiard Park

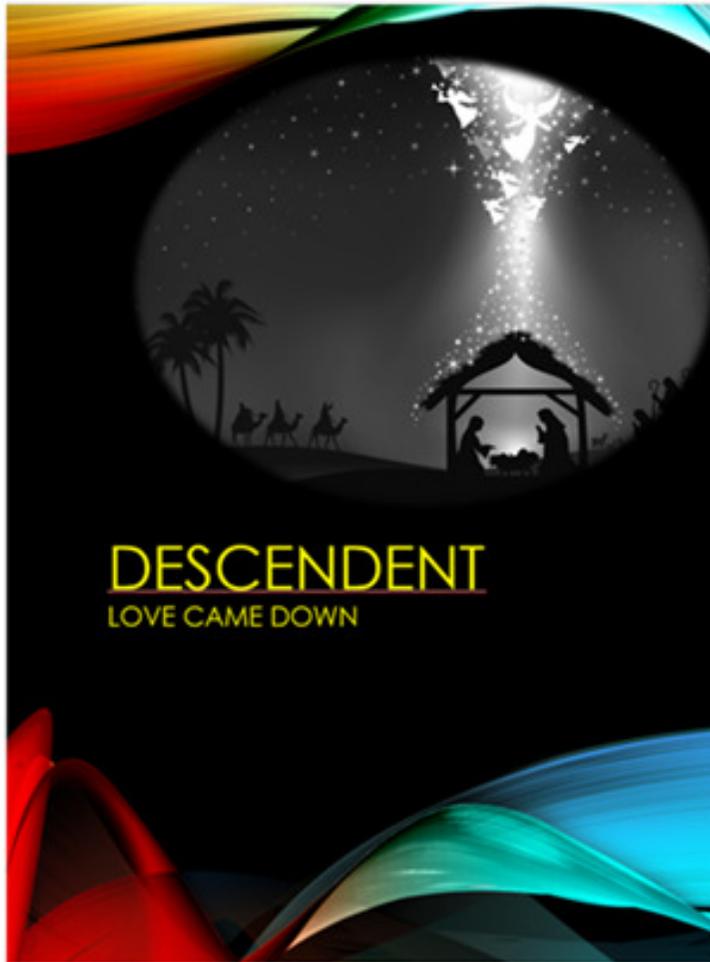
6.30pm

In front of the house

*You are warmly welcome to join us
singing Christmas Carols.*

Please bring your own Lanterns and Torches





Descendent Nativity Workshop
Sunday 18th December
10am-4pm.

At Holy Trinity Church, Shaw

All Primary school aged children are welcome.

Descendent Nativity Service at 4pm.

No Room? On the Contrary.

All over the world, doors are being slammed shut this Christmas. The closure of the Calais Jungle in the Autumn, which dispersed thousands of asylum seekers and would-be immigrants, brought into sharp focus the story of Joseph and the pregnant teenager Mary, for whom there was no room in the Bethlehem Inn. Vast numbers of Christians forced to flee from their ancient homelands in Syria and Iraq today mirror the Holy Family's escape into Egypt. Every time yet another infant dies violently, it will be a reminder of the first century massacre of babies in the Bethlehem region.

This year one carol will be sung with particular poignancy. It retells the message of angels, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom His favour rests" and continues:

*Yet with the woes of sin and strife,
 The world has suffered long;
 Beneath the angel strain have rolled,
 Two thousand years of wrong;
 And man, at war with man, hears not
 The love song which they bring:
 O hush the noise, you men of strife,
 And hear the angels sing.*

The angels' goodwill message will persist despite our clamour, for it proclaims God's all embracing and eternal welcome. Heaven's doors are ever-open: it is home for everyone. The final biblical vision is of an all-encompassing city: "On no day will its gates ever be shut... the glory and honour of the nations will be brought into it."

Jesus, for whom there had been no room at the inn, taught that God's kingdom is home for every race: "I say to you that many will come from the East and the West, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." He reassured those anxious about the future: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms..."

No room? Don't you believe it!

Christmas Care 2016

Caring For The Homeless And Lonely

www.christmascare.co.uk Charity Number: 1131756

Christmas Care 2016 will run from 11 am on Christmas Eve to 11 am on the 28th December.

We have now moved to our new home, **Buckhurst Park Community Centre, Burghley Close, Walcot, Swindon, SN3 3BS.**

We will gratefully receive donations of food such as non-perishable items, cheese, vegetables, tinned goods, fresh meat, milk, cereal etc; we also require 12 turkeys by the 19th December. We require toiletries, board games and books. Cash donations are greatly appreciated as they will help us to cover our expenses; cheques made payable to Christmas Care.

We are extremely grateful for all donations of clothing however can we ask that only **clean adult winter clothing and footwear in good condition** are donated. Due to the change in circumstances, we CANNOT ACCEPT summer clothing, children's clothing, dirty or worn out items or **bedding**.

Donations can be accepted at the following venues:

FOR TINNED FOOD AND TOILETRIES ONLY

Swindon Rugby Club, Greenbridge Road, Swindon, SN3 3LA

Saturday 10th December 10 am – 2 pm

Sunday 11th December 11am – 3 pm

DONATIONS OF NON-PERISHABLE FOOD

Tesco, Ocotal Way, Swindon, SN3 3LR

A container will be available from 1st December.

DONATIONS OF FOOD, TOILETRIES, LADIES AND GENTS WARM WINTER CLOTHING AND FOOTWEAR

The Brunel Plaza, Ground Floor next to Sue Ryder

Saturday 3rd December, 10 am to 4 pm

Saturday 10th December, 10 am to 4 pm

Saturday 17th December, 10 am to 4 pm

ALL DONATIONS

Buckhurst Park Community will be open for donations on Saturday 17th December, 12 noon to 3 pm.

Any queries at all please contact Diane Killick on 01793 336420

Information about Descendent

This year we have again decided to prepare our Nativity Play in one fun Workshop Day.

We will learn the songs, drama, narration, create art, dance and prayers in just one day!

Descendent is our own DIY Nativity idea which we will develop through the Workshop Day. We write our own play and use modern and traditional songs to tell the Christmas Story.

This year we will be exploring how God descended as a human baby that first Christmas in lots of creative ways.

It is always a fabulous and fun day for everyone involved.

Descendent will be run by Gayle Bryon, Ian Bryon, Sarah Taylor, Mark Taylor, Janet Clark and a team of helpers from the West Swindon and Lydiard Tregoze Church Partnership.

(All adult helpers are DBS checked)

For more details and to enrol please contact Gayle Bryon on gayleschoolswork@gmail.com

We look forward to seeing you on the 18th December.

Partnership Youth Work- an update?

Claire Camm, the Emerge team and the Partnership Council have decided that we cannot support the Remix youth club in its current form. The group will not re-start. Please pray for Claire, the Emerge team and the young people who were involved.

Please also pray for the continuing special needs work on Saturdays, the Monday after school club and for other opportunities for mission to young people locally.

Pray for our next steps as we seek God's guidance on where he will lead us with the project.

The Most Beautiful Story

Earlier this year a well-known atheist was being interviewed on Radio 4. In the course of an enlightening chat he was asked how he spent Christmas, and he said that he went to Midnight Mass at church. 'But you're an atheist', his interviewer protested. 'Yes', he replied, 'but what they celebrate at Christmas is the most beautiful story ever told'.

That 'beautiful story' tells of a Creator who sent His Son to share the life of His creation, to be born as a helpless baby, to grow up as a man of extraordinary wisdom, gentleness and love, who was executed by the authorities for contradicting the traditions of the time. His followers – who today number about two billion people all over the world – believe that He rose from the dead, and that by His death and resurrection He has made possible forgiveness and eternal life for men and women everywhere.

That is certainly quite a story, perhaps the greatest story ever told, and yes, beautiful. And that is the story that will be rehearsed again this Christmas, in children's Nativities, in hymns and carols, in Bible readings and sermons all over the country. People who stay away from church all year turn up to hear it, and who can blame them? This is a story of hope, of love and of heaven touching earth.

During 2016 we have all become familiar with probably the best-known statue in the world, Christ the Redeemer, towering over the Olympic city of Rio, His arms outstretched in blessing. Christmas celebrates the birth of that great Redeemer – a tiny baby laid in a feeding trough. His birth changed history, His life transformed our understanding of what it means to be human, His death was at one and the same time a tragedy and a triumph. Yes, 'the most beautiful story ever told'.

Enjoy it again this Christmas.



It's thought that the song might have travelled around the area with an organ repairman, Karl Mauracher, who could have taken an early arrangement with him in about 1820.

Then two singing families (like the 'Von Trappes' in The Sound of Music) seem to have discovered the song and performed it as part of their concerts. In December 1832, the Strasser family performed it at a concert in Leipzig. It was first performed in the USA in 1839 by the Rainer family, who sang 'Stille Nacht' at the Alexander Hamilton Monument outside Trinity Church in New York City.

During this time the tune changed to the one we know and sing today! It was translated into English in 1863 by John Freeman Young.

The carol was sung during the Christmas Truce in the First World War in December 1914 as it was a song that soldiers on both sides knew!

By the time that the carol was famous, Fr Mohr had died. Franz Gruber wrote to music authorities in Berlin saying that he had composed the tune, but no one believed him and it was thought that Haydn, Mozart or Beethoven had written it! But then the 1820 manuscript was found and in the top right corner Fr Mohr had written: 'Melodie von Fr. Xav. Gruber.'.

It's now one of the most recorded songs in the world!

www.whychristmas.com



Sara preferred to let people work out the hymns for themselves

Story behind the Hymn

Silent Night

The words of Silent Night were written by a Priest called Fr. Joseph Mohr in Mariapfarr, Austria, in 1816 and the music was added in 1818, by his school teacher friend Franz Xaver Gruber, for the Christmas service at St. Nicholas church in Oberndorf, Austria.

Fr. Mohr asked Franz Gruber to compose the melody with a guitar arrangement. It was several years later that Franz Gruber wrote an arrangement for the organ. Historians who have conducted research in recent years believe that Fr. Mohr wanted a new carol that he could play on his guitar.

There is a legend associated with the carol that says, Fr. Mohr wanted the carol to be sung by the children of the village at the midnight Christmas Eve service, as a surprise for their parents. But in the middle of practising, the organ broke and not a note would come from it! So the children had to learn the carol only accompanied by a guitar.

They learnt the carol so well that they could sing it on its own without accompaniment.

However, there are no records to indicate that a children's choir was involved or that the organ was broken!

At Midnight Mass in 1818, Fr. Mohr and Franz Gruber sang each of the six verses with the church choir repeating the last two lines of each verse.

Mohr set down the guitar arrangement on paper around 1820 and that is the earliest manuscript that still exists. It is displayed in the Carolino Augusteum Museum in Salzburg. There are a number of manuscripts of various 'Stille Nacht' arrangement that were written by Franz Gruber in later years.

The original words of the song were in German (and it was called 'Stille Nacht! Heilige Nacht!') and translated in to English went:

Silent night, holy night,
Bethlehem sleeps, yet what light,
Floats around the heavenly pair;
Songs of angels fills the air.
Strains of heavenly peace.

The Challenges of Christmas

Christmas is a great time of year, but it's not without its challenges! One household had 250,000 Christmas lights, but could not boil a kettle for fear of blowing the system!

The challenge of over-indulging

We all remember the episode of the Vicar of Dibley, where she had to consume four Christmas dinners! Christmas is a time when we usually eat and drink far too much, the average person gaining 6 pounds in weight. But Christmas is not simply about gaining weight, but losing what weighs us down. *'Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.'* (1 Peter 5:7). Whatever your concerns or worries this Christmas, bring them to God.

The challenge of overspending

In the rush to buy Christmas cards, a woman bought a pack of 50 identical cards. Without reading the verse, she hastily signed and sent them off, but for one. A few days later she read the message: *'This card is just to say a little gift is on the way.'* Christmas is not about getting into debt, but God getting us out of debt. He spent exactly what was needed on the first Christmas night: *'You are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins.'* (Matthew 1:21).

The challenge of over too quickly

Christmas doesn't last very long, yet the effect of the first Christmas is long-lasting. *'For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.'* (John 3:16). Jesus has come to bring us life in all its fullness, both for now and all eternity.

How do we face the challenges of Christmas? *'Yet what I can, I give Him - give my heart'*.

Messiah

A visiting choir was due to come and sing The Messiah at our church just before Christmas. When a big snowstorm postponed the performance, the minister put up a sign outside which read: *'The Messiah is postponed - due to snow.'*

Church Services in the Partnership St Mary's Lydiard Tregoze

Date	Time	Form
04 December	10:00am	Communion
07 December	2:00pm	Mothers Union Service
11 December	10:00am	Christingle
Friday 16 Dec	7:00pm	Carols @ Hook
18 December	6:30pm	Carols by Candlelight with organ
Weds 21 Dec	6:30pm	Open Air Carols @ Lydiard Park
Christmas Eve	4:00pm	Family Crib Service
Christmas Eve	11:00pm	First Communion of Christmas
Christmas Day	10:00am	Family Service with Communion

Holy Trinity Shaw

Date	Time	Form
04 December	10:30am	Morning Service/God.com/SS
11 December	10:30am	Communion
11 December	4:00pm	Messy Church
11 December	6:30pm	Carols by Candlelight
18 December	9:45am	Partnership Nativity Workshop
18 December	4:00pm	Partnership Nativity Service
Christmas Eve	3:00pm	Crib Service
Christmas Day	10:30am	Christmas Day All Age Service
8.45am Morning Prayer on Fridays during term time.		



Westlea

Date	Time	Form
04 December	10:00am	Morning Service
11 December	10:00am	Family Service
18 December	6:30pm	Carols at Westlea
Christmas Day	10:30am	Family Service

Toothill

Date	Time	Form
04 December	10:30am	All Age Service
11 December	4:00pm	Carols by Candlelight All Age Service
Weds 14 Dec	11:30am	Midweek Worship
18 December	10:30am	Carols and Communion
Weds 21 Dec	11:30am	Partnership Christmas Holy Communion
Christmas Eve	11:30pm	Christmas Eve Communion
Christmas Day	10:30am	Christmas Day All Age Service

Uganda School

The Partnership Council at an earlier meeting approved, as an outward looking step, the development of a link between the Partnership and a School in Uganda.

We are delighted to inform you that we have been Partnered with Katikamu Sebamala Church of Uganda Primary School. Oliver Tomkins Schools will be joining us in this venture.

For the foreseeable future, at all of our major Partnership Services the offering will be used to support the School and build this link.

These services will be Advent, Covenant, Palm Sunday and Pentecost

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At the Advent Partnership service on 27 November we collected £225 for Katikamu Sebamala Church of Uganda Primary School.

Thanks to all for their generosity.”