

Parish Life Magazine



**Parish of Cirencester with
Watermoor and Chesterton**



For unto us a child is born



**December 2021 and
January 2022 £1**

Parish of Cirencester with Watermoor and St Lawrence (Chesterton)

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The real Christmas

Who would have thought that a year could have passed so quickly? I feel almost dizzy as I sit and reflect on the year that has been. The recent events that have seen the Christmas tree come into the Market Place, and the festive lights adorning the streets, I really look forward to seeing the lights switched on, they bring a delightful glow to the town's streets. I note those shops that have already adorned their windows with lights and Christmas decorations in anticipation of the festivities in the town.



For us, we mark those festivities as we move from the Kingdom Season into Advent. For me probably one of my favourite times of the year, the great expectation that comes with Advent as we await the re-telling of the birth of our Lord. Those wonderful themes emerging from an appreciation of the Patriarchs, Prophets, and this year our own John Baptist watching over West Market Place and the Virgin and Child dancing with joy, as they look down upon the Market Place.

The activities that will fill this place over these next weeks will draw us back to a hint of normality as we continue to deal with the outworking of the 'covid' restrictions. People gathering, the place coming alive, and the Parish Church sitting right at the heart of it all.

What a wonderful opportunity we have to share the good news of Jesus coming into our lives. Carol Services, school concerts and various other activities that fill the place with music laughter and fun. What a joy to behold as we see so much happening across this parish in all three churches, indeed the opportunity to celebrate the outpouring of God's love for all of us. Indeed, God made manifest in all that we do, I hope!

This can only be crowned with the celebration that draws all things earthly together and centres our thoughts upon what is heaven sent. The spirituality that is captured in carols and of worship lifting our hearts and minds as we thank God for the abundance of his love, made known in the birth of the Christ Child. Despite

everything this year, we have made it through and soon with Christmas and the New Year upon us, we celebrate a new era and step out in faith with real optimism.

Thank you to each and every one of you who has contributed to the life of this Parish during this last year. I am humbled by the contribution and generosity of so many. As we celebrate this Christmas we thank God for the love that is instilled within us, and the love that is shared.

Immanuel, God is with us. John 10.10 reminds us that Jesus came to bring life and life in all of its fullness. I encourage you to get involved and play your part as fully as you are able in bringing 'new' life to our churches in 2022 as we reach out to share the love of Jesus with our community.

So much to look forward to;
so much to share.

I wish you all a reflective Advent, a
Joyous Christmas
and a very Happy New Year.



Canon Graham.



From Pub to Zoom : a brief Review

A number of you may be lamenting the loss of Rev'd Paul Springate's Pub discussion group at the Crown in West Market Place due to Lockdown ; it has now reinvented itself as the online 'Zoom Pub Group', but we are missing some of the original members.



We began with a Lent group leading up to Easter 2021, led by Rev'd Paul Springate, on the theme of Nehemiah and his total commitment to doing God's will by rebuilding the ruined walls of Jerusalem, and the community that lived and

worshiped within them. This occurred some years after the return of Israelites to Jerusalem following their exile in Babylon, but they were still at odds with their local governors who were loyal to Babylon.

Most recently, we have completed a six- week course exploring the meaning and impact of Jesus' seven 'I am' statements in John, led by Rev'd Joe Mottram. Joe compiled the course and emailed us prior to the first meeting with an outline of the course and the relevant bible texts. It also contained the link for the zoom meeting so we could join the meeting directly from our browsers. For myself, I found it helpful to read the entire chapter that the given text came from and indeed the proceeding and following chapter as this can add context, and also prevented me from staring blankly when the conversation opened out. Before the main meeting began, we were divided into smaller groups, which Joe was not present in. This was to enable us to discuss what we already knew about the topic. When we re-joined the main group, each sub-group then had the opportunity to share their thoughts with the whole group, which sets up a useful starting point for discussion.

During the meeting we read the relevant chapter from John out loud, and also additional passages from the Old Testament relevant to the theme. For example, we know that the Pharisees were upset and antagonistic to Jesus' teaching, and as one group member said 'they simply didn't get it'. Jesus repeatedly said 'I am', which in terms of Mosaic law is the name of God, so in the view of the Pharisee, who believes himself to be a strict and devout follower of the Law, it is blasphemy.

That was only one small example of how Joe constructed the course to stimulate discussion that allowed wider exploration of the text and free and open discussion. This style of discussion can be challenging, but it is stimulating and less limiting I feel, than some of the many course books which are available. By the end of the course, we all felt that we knew each other a little better, and were definitely more relaxed about entering the discussion.

We will be meeting up again on Zoom for an Advent course. For further details please contact either Rev'd Paul or Rev'd Joe.

Lynn Underwood

Julia Retires



Julia Hope-Simpson has recently retired as chairperson of the Parish Church Flower Guild after 14 years of service. Her dedication and inspirational leadership was acknowledged by Canon Graham who presented her with a subscription to a gardening magazine on behalf of the church. Past and present members of the Flower Guild presented her with a gift token and bouquet at her final AGM.

During her time as chairperson Julia has organised the flower arrangements for several very large weddings and the memorable flower festival which was part of the Abbey 900 celebrations.

Ceri Harding has taken over as chairperson and Pam Barnes remains as treasurer.

Pam Barnes

GHCT Celebrates 40th Anniversary Success at Gloucester Cathedral

Gloucestershire Historic Churches Trust had a hugely successful evening celebrating their 40th anniversary at Gloucester Cathedral and was able to announce they have raised a marvellous £37,000 so far in their anniversary year.



The evening was attended by around 200 people and consisted of a beautiful Choral Evensong, with music written by Gloucestershire composers, followed by a reception in the Chapter House, with Gloucestershire wine kindly donated by the Three Choirs Vineyards. Gloucestershire Lord Lieutenant & President of GHCT, Edward Gillespie OBE introduced the evening.

Chairman of the Trust Colin Senior reflected on the highlights of the last 40 years and updated attendees with the Trusts fundraising progress so far. The Trust is aiming to raise £1,000 for each of the years it has helped historic churches in its 40th anniversary year, enabling them to support many more projects over the coming years.

The evening finished with a thought provoking and heartfelt speech by Sir Simon Jenkins on the glory and needs of England's parish churches. Simon has allowed the Trust to publish *Simon Jenkins' Favourite Churches of Gloucestershire and Bristol*, a local edition of his *England's Thousand Best Churches* as part of their 40th anniversary celebration. Copies of the book are still available on their website - <https://ghct.org.uk/40th-appeal>

Colin Senior said “We would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who attended the event, and also to everyone who has donated to the appeal so far. We are incredibly grateful. We will keep you updated on our website and social media channels as we get closer to our £40,000 goal.”

To keep up to date with Gloucestershire Historic Churches Trust:

Website - www.ghct.org.uk

Jess Simmons

Holy Halloween



As a Christian alternative to the seemingly evermore scary and threatening (to many people) Halloween celebrations, Canon Graham's wife Angela, and I decided to hold a day time `drop – in` Holy Halloween at the Parish Church.

We had lots of willing volunteers to help with our all day event and a big thankyou to all of these who gave their time and enthusiasm to bring Jesus' light and love to all the families that attended. And attend they did! We printed out 100 plans of the inside of the church for our pumpkin trail and we used around 80 of them which is amazing!! A lot of the families that came in to the church were from the local community or tourists visiting Cirencester. I stood outside the church dressed as a giant pumpkin (which probably helped as passing children immediately noticed me!) and then invited them in to take part. As well as hunting for our 19 pumpkins

hidden around the church (thank you so much to the very kind lady who donated them), we had three craft tables. The children could decorate a candle to take the light of Jesus out into the world, make a sparkly lantern to do the same, and/or make a pumpkin 'windmobile' with a gospel message about Halloween pumpkins. We also carved a large pumpkin with Christian symbols on with an explanation in the form of a poem which could be taken away together with a copy of a lovely book produced by Scripture Union called Jesus is the Light.

Periodically I came into the church and performed a fun little song for the families with actions, about not hiding your light, but letting it shine,` not just on Sundays but all the time!`

We hope that we did indeed` let our light shine` out to the Parish of Cirencester at our Holy Halloween!



Fiona Hawes (Children's Worker)

Longfield Hopsice Christmas Events

Longfield Reindeer Romp 2021!

We're excited to announce that our fabulous festive Reindeer Romp is back! Join us for a festive 5k walk, jog or run through Stratford Park, Stroud on Sunday 12th December at 10am. Pop on your free antlers and join us with your friends, family and even your dog and enjoy our Christmassy challenge to raise funds and help us support our patients and their families? To find out more please visit <https://www.longfield.org.uk/event/reindeer-romp>

Light up Life Celebrations

Light up a Life is an opportunity to remember and celebrate family and friends who are no longer with us. The Light up a Life Appeal culminates with two 'celebrations' with reading of remembrance, poems and uplifting music. Join one of our Light up a Life Celebrations being held on:

Friday 3rd December at Gloucester Cathedral

Friday 17th December at Minchinhampton Parish Church

For more information about how to dedicate a star to someone special and to book your place at our celebration events please visit <https://www.longfield.org.uk/light-up-a-life/>

Christmas Tree Recycling Campaign

Longfield Community Hospice in Minchinhampton has launched its annual Christmas Tree Recycling Campaign, where, for a donation, local volunteers will pick up your tree at the end of the festive season and take it to be recycled. To book your Real Christmas Tree for collection please visit www.just-helping.org.uk/register-tree and make a suggested donation of £10 or more. Registration will close on Monday 3rd January 2022. We will collect between the 9th – 11th January 2022 from households across Stroud District.



Claire Ellis

THE MAGIC MOMENT

This is an excerpt from the autobiography of Dorothee Soelle an adult woman looking back on a childhood experience.



“Suddenly the thing happened. It cannot be described in words. The phrase from the Bible “I saw the Heavens open” is as good as any, if not taken literally. I remember saying to myself in awe and rapture, “So it is like this. Now I know. This is what they mean in church when they talk of “Heaven”. Soon it faded. I was alone in the meadow with the brook and the sweet smelling lime trees. Though it passed I was filled with great gladness; I had seen the far distances. The memory remained with me all my life”.

This is another account of a childhood experience: *“I remember seeing the mist and the flowers all shimmering as if alive. The mist seemed like gossamer and the harebells as if on fire. Even as a small child I knew that this was Life, a living tissue appearing like a shining bundle of energy.*

It left me feeling an intrinsic part of something universal which was fragile and immensely strong, utterly good and beneficent. I was part of it myself. The writer goes on to say the memory remained with her all her life, giving her a reservoir of strength fed from an unseen source which even in the darkest times broke through as a bubble of pure joy.

Another writes of seeing the dew on the grass sparkling like jewels and of the trees being protective

“There suddenly welled up a deep and overwhelming sense of gratitude, a sense of unending peace and security which seemed to be part of the beauty of the morning, the love and protective living presence that included all that I had ever loved”.

Such experiences are not uncommon in childhood, occasionally later in life, sometimes in old age. In fact after listening to many people talking about their inner lives I know for certain that they occur far more often than any of us like to

admit. Our rationalist culture is not hospitable to private personal events. "It's just all imagination". We are nervous about "spiritual" experiences, and those of us who really do have spiritual experiences are cautious about being laughed at or derided. Yet I believe these wonderful experiences may be among the most important and life changing events in our lives, a bit like falling in love. My guess is that if there are a hundred people in church on Sunday fifty of them may well have had something like this happening to them at some point even if they have never mentioned it. Of course it's not only religious people who have these moments of "seeing the world transformed", although the great religions of the world all have a tradition of valuing them highly. Poets like Wordsworth and Coleridge, Thomas Traherne and George Herbert have written eloquently about them. I have had such "seeing" moments three or four times in my life and yet I have talked about them only very occasionally but they are precious beyond words.

I now think this reticence is a great mistake, but very understandable in a cynical materialist culture. In the Christian community we really should be freely sharing such moments with each other. It is wonderfully reassuring when we find someone has an inner life like our own. Going to a concert with a friend adds greatly to the pleasure. Christians should be taught to engage in mutual "personal" conversations about our inner lives as a matter of course. We need a "soul friend" or a small group of fellow travellers to talk about the internal journey we are all engaged in. We all have an interior life even if we don't realise it. We must share it.

Jesus said "The Kingdom of God is within you!" Every human being has inside them a window into this transcendent realm, although for most people the window is shrouded by pollution or, worse still, covered over with a TV screen. What sort of people are we who put TV screens over our windows? Maybe this is why we are now producing so many "Nature" programmes. We are longing for the Real Thing, We are not just spectators. God's Natural world enfolds us and we become part of the Divine Beauty. Surely we should take the risk of asking our neighbours in church if they have ever had a magic moment.

HGD

Mothers Union Letter



Dear fellow members,

As I write this we approach Advent and the business of Christmas. There is a lot of MU activity ahead during December and January. It was encouraging to see the response to our return to a monthly Corporate Holy Communion service. The service is at 10:30 am which seems to work well for members.

Hopefully the numbers attending will increase.

I hope you are encouraged, enthused and inspired by the amazing initiatives now being undertaken by the World Wide MU. The presentation given online (no General Meeting in Belfast again this year) of the General Meeting, including an address by our World Wide President. Financial report and examples of projects etc. have been put on a disc by Peter Cottey. Perhaps if you do not have the technology yourself, you could watch and listen with a fellow member who does? Make it a social event. I found the content really inspiring and felt proud to be a member of a movement reaching out to thousands of families in 84 countries and making a positive impact for good on their lives, families and communities.

That all the mission can continue, does of course rely on the generosity and fund raising of the members. We hope the MU stall in the porch of the Parish Church on Friday December 3 at 10 to 12 noon will be well supported and raise much needed funds. PLEASE SPREAD THE WORD.

If there is sufficient support a supper will be held in the Parish Hall on Wednesday December 15 at 7:30 pm.

Below are the listed dates for December and January. Please support them in person if possible but by your prayerful support which is crucial and is always appreciated.

With love and every good wish for Christmas and the New Year.

Pat Harris x

DATES

December 1 “Advent and Angels“ Afternoon meeting Church Hall 2:30

December 3 Sale Parish Church porch 10am - noon.

December 15 Christmas supper 7:30 pm Parish Hall

December 22 Corporate Holy Communion 10:30 Parish Church

January 5 2: 30 Parish Hall speaker Meg Blumson “ Pheonix Gardeners”

January 26 Corporate Communion Parish 10:30

February 2 2:30 Parish Hall AGM followed by poems from Pauline. Bring and Buy.

February 9 Parish Hall Watermoor Soup Lunch 12 noon to 1:15 pm



Mary Lou Revue on December 3rd at the Parish Church 7.30pm.

Tickets from the Church shop or Eileen Chapman



PARISH CHRISTMAS TEA

December 4th 3-5pm in Watermoor Hall. Tickets £5.00 to include seasonal tea, glass of mulled wine and carol singing. Transport if needed.

Tickets from Aileen at PC, Dawn at HT, Marg at St Lawrence. Or call Parish office and leave a message

Pub Group for Advent starting Monday 29th Nov.

Theme of the coming of Jesus

Week 1 Into our lives

Week 2 into our fear

Week 3 into our pain

Week 4 into our doubt.



If you are interested contact Rev Paul on 07748 846164

The New Development has Started

It is the time for excitement, enthusiasm and vigour. To do nothing is not an option. The gradual arrival of 2,300 houses is a challenge but what an opportunity. There is no doubt the town will cope. It always has. When I headed for Thameside academia, the population was 11,000. When Penny and I came back it was 19,000. Recent signs are very heartening. The Barn/Ingleside development would enhance any town and exciting markets and events in the redesigned market place are making advent an exciting time. We must not forget the work of the Abbey 900 nor that of the Statues Group. Cirencester is what it has always been; a lively evolving town.

As is our Parish! Under Canon Graham's leadership we are also lively and evolving. Our three churches offer so much in their different styles. Happily the C of E is a broad church where so many can worship happily and that is so in Cirencester. If the Parish Church is not for you, then try Holy Trinity or St Lawrence.

Under the cheerful and talented leadership of Hugo Kennard our musical life is growing. There is no limit to what the choir can and will achieve.

House groups, Restore@4, Seedlings, all-age services are names some of you will know but not all our groups/good works are known by all of us. We are the best kept secret in Town. Perhaps we need a pew sheet. Also, editors, in the New Year why not produce a stock taking edition showing all that we offer. This would be a welcome not just to our own electoral roll members but to a wider readership. It cannot be left to Canon Graham and his colleagues. The PCC must rise to the challenge. No one can sit back. Words may need to be written and leaflets delivered, doors may need to be knocked on. All of us can, and must, offer a warm Christian welcome in our own churches and beyond. A Christian light might shine through our windows but it must speak as well.

Of course the Steadings development is a challenge but we must not be prophets of doom. We all know "God is in Gloucestershire" but making everyone aware is the opportunity we must not miss.

Please share my excitement, there is so much we can do collectively.

John Light

**‘Our prayers go where we cannot go’ –
Brother Andrew, founder of *Open Doors***

Every year *Open Doors* uses extensive research to compile a list of the countries where Christians face the most persecution – it’s called the World Watch List. The launch of the 2022 WW List will be on 19th January – it’s a parliamentary event to inform MPs of the 50 countries where following Jesus costs the most. They will hear first-hand accounts from persecuted Christians, and be given recommendations on what they can do to protect religious freedom.

What would you do if choosing to follow Jesus meant you lost your family, your home, your freedom, even your life?

For more than 340 million Christians this is a reality .Whether being watched by the authorities in China, socially excluded in India, or facing violent extremism across West Africa and the Middle East, daily life for millions of Christians throughout the world is a constant struggle. The 2021 list shows these countries as the top 10, where it is most dangerous to be a Christian:

- | | |
|----------------|------------|
| 1. North Korea | 6. Somalia |
| 2. Afghanistan | 7. Yemen |
| 3. Somalia | 8. Iran |
| 4. Libya | 9. Nigeria |
| 5. Pakistan | 10. India |

In the January 2020 *Open Doors* magazine there was news of three boys in Central African Republic (no.35 on the WW list) who had been injured in a grenade attack on their church in 2013. All of them had lost limbs and had extensive surgery and physio to get them out and playing again. They are all now in their teens, continuing to recover and heal. Jeovani, who had to have both legs amputated, says this – ‘If I should one day meet the Muslim man who shot the grenades at my church, I will not be angry. I will smile. I think he doesn’t really know how terrible it is what he has done. I will greet him and say, ‘God forgives you and he wants me to forgive you too.....’ Once I have told him that, I will never be angry with him.’ Jeovani is very happy that *Open Doors* pays the medical bills and the school fees, and he wants to be a doctor – if that’s what God wants too.

We are all part of the one body, and if one part suffers, we all suffer with it. So what can we do to ease that suffering? We can pray, we can give, we can speak up on their behalf – whatever we are able to do. But what they most appreciate is to know that their church family is praying for them. So do include them in your prayers, and do come and join us if you can on the second Monday of the month as we pray together as a group, meeting at 10.30 a.m at Holy Trinity.

Jill Wilkinson



Christmas Services

28th November

Holy Trinity 10am Advent Sunday Eucharist

St Lawrence 10.30am Advent Sunday Eucharist

Parish Church, 6pm, Advent procession of Light



5th December

Holy Trinity 8am BCP Holy Communion

10am **St Nicholas All-Age Eucharist**

Parish Church 10am Eucharist

St Lawrence 10.30am Eucharist



11th December

Parish Church, 1pm – 5pm, **Decorating the Christmas Tree**

12th December

Holy Trinity 10am Eucharist

Parish Church 10am Eucharist

St Lawrence 10.30am Eucharist

Holy Trinity 6pm Carol Service



17th December

St Lawrence, 6pm, Carol Service

19th December

Holy Trinity, 10am Nativity

Parish Church 10am Eucharist

St Lawrence 10.30am Eucharist

St Lawrence 4pm **Restore@4**

Parish Church, 6pm, Nine Lessons and Carols



23rd December

Parish Church, 11am, Shoppers' Carol Service

24th December

Parish Church, 2pm & 4pm, Nativity Service

Holy Trinity, 6pm, **Christingle Service**

Parish Church, 11.30pm, Midnight Mass

Holy Trinity, 11.30pm, Midnight Mass

25th December

Parish Church, 8am, BCP Holy Communion

Parish Church, 10am, Christmas Day Eucharist

Holy Trinity, 10am, Christmas Day Eucharist

St Lawrence, 10am, Christmas Day Eucharist



26th December

St Lawrence, 10.30am, Combined Parish Service (no services elsewhere)

Parish website : cirenparish.co.uk



Parish Website Guide

On the **front page** you will find the Calendar, how to view streamed services, the readings for the coming Sunday, past sermons and all the news - including details of the Christmas Services. There is also a **quick look up** box with all the favourite topics listed.



Under the **Worship and Services** tab, are details of service times, all the seasonal services and study groups (e.g. at Advent and Lent)

The **Visits** tab menu shows details of all the churches, how to visit, the installation of the statues on the Tower and how to book one of the halls for an event.

Probably the **Community** heading is the longest. This tells you all that is going on and includes Canon Graham's bulletin and what is coming up, our home and study groups, details of the PCC, the Parish Magazine, Mothers' Union, Planned Giving and all the Social Events. There are details there too of how to volunteer to help our churches, the Foodbank news and even our Handbell team.

If you are interested in the children's work, then the **Youth and Children's** tab gives details of what is going on in Junior Church, Sparklers, Trinity Kids, Little Angels and shows the splendid home activities which can be followed by young and not so young.

The **Church Shop** is what it says on the tin; details of the shop in the Parish Church.

The **About Us** tab gives information about the Friends, the clergy team, who's who and does which job, Electoral Roll details, safeguarding, all our policies and what job vacancies there are currently.

Finally if you wish to contact the office or clergy team then details are there under the **Contact Us** tab.

All the sections can be reached through the tabs at the top of the front page or from the picture boxes further down the front page.

Check it out!

Howard Gray

Bethlehem



By decree of the great Caesar Augustus
The Roman world was on the move.
Who would have heard of Bethlehem,
That small and hill-top town,
Put on the map, you might say,
By the mighty Lord of Rome,
Had not the child born there
Cradled in a stable`s manger,
Been none other than creation`s Lord?



The mighty One indeed,
Born to us as one of us,
So small and yet so great,
He came in his redeeming love
To bring our sad and burdened world
New life, new hope, His peace.

Glory be to God on high,
Whose ways are those of mystery.

T.M.D.

3 CHOIRS AT CHRISTMAS



**AN EVENING OF
SEASONAL SONGS & CAROLS**

**THE CIRENCESTER SINGERS
CIRENCESTER COMMUNITY CHOIR
CIRENCESTER MALE VOICE CHOIR**

**CIRENCESTER PARISH CHURCH
SATURDAY DECEMBER 4, 7.30PM**

**TICKETS AVAILABLE ONLINE AT
WWW.CIRENCESTERMVC.CO.UK**

**AND FROM
CIRENCESTER VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRE**



CIRENCESTER
CHORAL
SOCIETY

Registered Charity
No 229449



Christmas Concert

*raising funds to help
Cirencester Choral Society and
THE CHURN PROJECT
rebuild after the pandemic*



Carols for choir and audience
including traditional favourites



Oboe solos: Grace Tushingham



Christmas readings: Judith Paris



Conductor: Carleton Etherington
Organist: John Wright

Adults £15, U18s Free (but require a ticket)

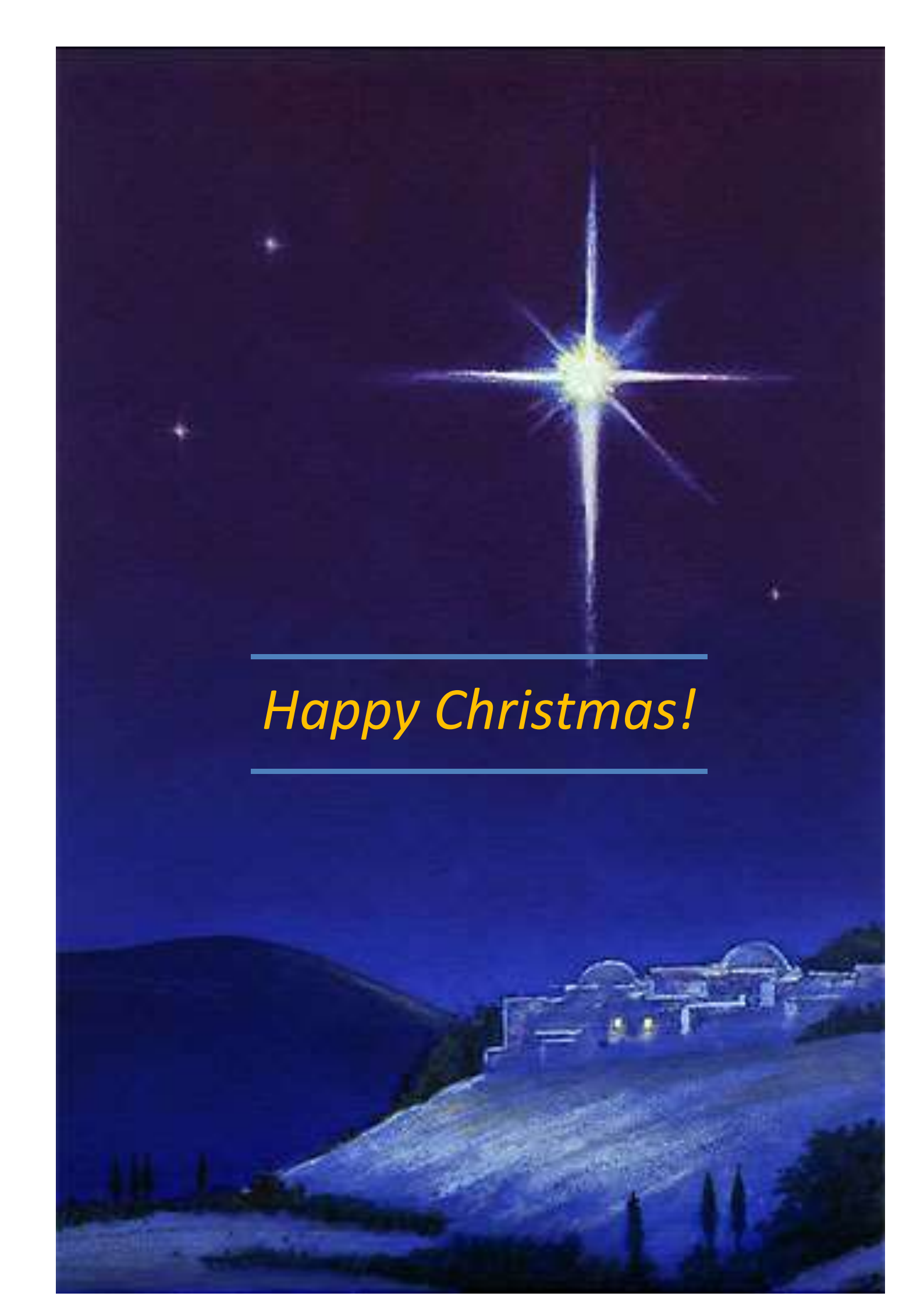
Tickets (unreserved seats) available early December from
Cirencester Visitor Information Centre (01285 654180),
CCS members, or CHURN (Mon-Wed 9-4 at 14-16 The Waterloo)



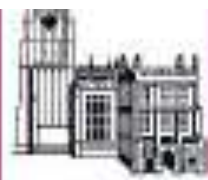
Tues 21 December, 7.30 pm
Cirencester Parish Church

Doors open at 7.00 pm

Covid-19 precautions will be in operation

A night sky with a bright star and a snowy landscape with a building. The star is a bright yellow-white point with a long, thin, vertical white streak extending downwards. The sky is a deep blue. In the lower part of the image, there is a snowy landscape with a building that has several arched windows and is illuminated from within. The building is situated on a hillside, and there are some trees in the foreground. The overall scene is a winter night landscape.

Happy Christmas!



CHURCH SHOP



Open Monday to Saturday 10am - 4pm

Why not take a look at our Parish Church Shop, there's more than you expect!

Books
CDs

Gifts
Cards

Souvenirs
Bibles

Diaries
Calendars

Maps
Pictures

Icons
Prayer Books



Website: <http://www.cirenparish.co.uk>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/churchshop>

Tel: 01285 659317