



**The Shrevenham and Ashbury Benefice**  
 “Mirroring the hospitality of God”  
**Sunday 20th December 4th Sunday of Advent**



Vicar: The Rev'd Norma Fergusson. Tel 01793 784338

[vicar@shrivenhamandashbury.co.uk](mailto:vicar@shrivenhamandashbury.co.uk)

Associate Vicar: The Rev'd Canon Paul Richardson. Tel 01793 710241

[associate.vicar@shrivenhamandashbury.co.uk](mailto:associate.vicar@shrivenhamandashbury.co.uk)

Licensed Lay Minister: Mr Richard Fergusson. Tel 07788 436831

**Christmas Services**



As numbers must inevitably be limited in view of social distancing, attendance at services marked \* will be by ticket only.

Tickets are free on Eventbrite <http://shrivenham-and-ashbury-benefice.eventbrite.com/> or from the Benefice Administrator ([shrivenham.ashbury.benefice@outlook.com](mailto:shrivenham.ashbury.benefice@outlook.com) 01793 783519)

To allow as many people as possible to attend, please only apply to attend one service on either Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.

Our churchwardens and cleaning teams have been working very hard to make each church Covid-secure so that we can have public worship over Christmas.

Please play your part by ensuring you follow the guidance below.

Face coverings are mandatory. Hand sanitiser is available and remember to maintain social distancing. Please do not come into church if you think you may have symptoms of Covid 19.

**Saturday 19th December**

5:00pm Ashbury, St Mary \*  
The Christmas Story with Music and Readings \*

**Sunday 20th December**

9:00am Compton Beauchamp, St Swithun \*  
Matins for Christmas Week (BCP) \*

10:00am Bourton, St James  
Holy Communion

10:00am Ashbury, St Mary  
Holy Communion

11:00am Holy Communion. Live on [Facebook](#).

3:00pm Fernham, Elmside Green  
A Celebration of Christmas

4:30pm Shrevenham, St Andrew \*  
The Christmas Story with Music and Readings \*

6:00pm Longcot, The Green \*  
The Christmas Story with Carols and Readings \*

Rev'd Norma Fergusson is giving this week's sermon. Watch on [Facebook](#) or [YouTube](#) from 9am.

**Tuesday**

9:00am Morning Prayer. Live on [Facebook](#).

5:00pm Shrevenham, St Andrew  
Cloths for the Cradle

**Wednesday**

9:00am Shrevenham, St Andrew  
Morning Prayer. Also on [Facebook](#).

**Christmas Eve**

3:00pm Bourton, St James \*  
Crib Service \*

4:00pm Ashbury, St Mary  
Crib Service in the churchyard

4:00pm Shrevenham, St Andrew \*\*  
Crib Service in the churchyard

5:00pm Watchfield, St Thomas \*  
Holy Communion (BCP) \*

11:30pm Shrevenham, St Andrew \*  
Midnight Mass \*

11:30pm Longcot, St Mary \*  
Midnight Mass \*

**Christmas Day**

9:00am Compton Beauchamp \*  
Holy Communion by Extension (BCP) \*

10:00am Shrevenham, St Andrew \*  
Family Communion \*  
Also live on [Facebook](#)

10:00am Ashbury, St Mary \*  
Family Service followed by Holy Communion \*

**Sunday 27th December**

10:00am Watchfield, St Thomas \*  
Benefice Holy Communion \*  
Also live on [Facebook](#)

**Ashbury Cycle of Prayer**

Please pray this week for all who live and work in Chapel Lane.

**Rev'd Norma Fergusson will be off duty from Saturday 26th December until Friday 1st January.**

**Canon Paul Richardson will be off duty from Monday 28th December until Saturday 2nd January.**

**For pastoral emergencies please call 07799 545035**

The Benefice office will be closed from 24th December until 4th January. Emails will be checked daily.

## Nativity Scenes



One of the great things about Christmas is all the traditions and rituals we observe. Family ones and community ones. Things we always look forward to doing and enjoying at Christmas.

Many of them, sadly, curtailed this year, but nonetheless part of the festival.

One of my favourite Christmas traditions is the Nativity scenes that appear in all kinds of places. I look forward to following the Methodist Church's Nativity Trail round Shrivenham. There's something magical about standing in a dark, cold street, and looking in at a lighted Christmas scene.

Most of our churches have some kind of Nativity scene, and the Crib Service, when these are set up before Christmas, has always been hugely popular.

I don't know if the Nativity in the Tithe Barn in Great Coxwell is there this year, but we've enjoyed it in the past – it's amazing!

We have often gone abroad to Spain or Madeira for a break after Christmas, and the Nativity scenes in the churches and streets there are wonderful.

In fact, this tradition is really ancient. Apparently, it was started by St. Francis of Assisi in Italy in the early 13th century. He wanted a way to help people understand and wonder at the Christmas story in an age when not many of them could read the Bible for themselves. The tradition has been going on ever since.

We may have to wait till next year to do it, but to come into a quiet, empty church and stand still before a beautiful Nativity scene for a few minutes in silence is, for many of us, a moving experience. It's one way that we can 'in heart and mind go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which has come to pass and the Babe lying in a manger.'

Happy Christmas to you all.  
Robin Cardwell

## The Character Course

Each week, 'The Character Course' looks at one of eight themes: learning, hope, love, forgiveness, gratitude, humour, persistence and curiosity. The sessions last about 75 minutes. There is a short video to watch and a bible passage to ponder.

The course is free and will run online via Zoom on Wednesdays from 13th January to 3rd March 2021.

Join a morning session at 10:30am  
or an evening session at 8:00pm.

Contact Jane Ahern [thestable@protonmail.com](mailto:thestable@protonmail.com)

## Cloths for the Cradle

5pm on 22nd December at St Andrew's

A short, quiet and reflective service for the week before Christmas.

Christmas can be a bitter-sweet time as we remember those we love who are not around to share it with us, and worries about work, health or family can make it difficult to join in what seems to be compulsory jollity. The wise men brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, all of which link Christmas to Holy Week and Easter; this is an opportunity for us to bring our cares, uncertainties, hopes and fears to the God who knows what it is like to be human. The cloths and cradle will be left in the Lady Chapel after the service if you would like to add your prayers on another occasion.

**Alpha Online** - ask the big questions of life and explore the Christian faith.

Each session starts with a short video talk looking at different questions around faith, followed by discussion in small groups.



Alpha Online will be held via Zoom on Monday mornings (10.30am - noon) from 11th January to 15th March 2021.

More information from Jane Ahern  
01793 783521 [thestable@protonmail.com](mailto:thestable@protonmail.com)

A joint venture with Shrivenham Methodist Church

## Shrivenham Village Crossword Puzzle

First prize £20 - closing date 10th January 2021

You may know the answers, which refer to places or items visible in the village, or you may have to walk around to find them! Some of the clues are cryptic.

Set by the people who organised the Treasure Trail.

Entry is £5 for the crossword and clues.

Available from Shrivenham Post Office  
David Watson 783405 or Julian Stevens 782065  
In aid of St Andrews Church Restoration Project

## Churches Open for Private Prayer

Our churches will be open for private prayer once a week as follows:

Ashbury 10am – 4pm on Thursday  
Compton Beauchamp 9am – 5pm on Sunday  
Longcot 10am – 3pm on Wednesday  
Shrivenham 9am – 5pm on Sunday and Wednesday  
Watchfield 10am – 4pm on Wednesday  
Fernham church remains closed to allow Annabelle's pre-school exclusive access during term time.

Face coverings are mandatory, and you should either scan the NHS test and trace QR code or use the sign-in sheets on entering. Hand sanitiser is available and remember to maintain social distancing.

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