



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND

# REFOCUSSED

THE PARISH MAGAZINE OF  
ST ETHELDREDA'S CHURCH

WITH ST LUKE'S CHURCH

mid December 2019—January 2020



BISHOP'S  
HATFIELD

## Christmas letter to the parish from Fr. Darren Collins

Christmas means different things to different people. To most, it is a heart-warming time with family and friends. To many children, it's about presents and Father Christmas. To shopkeepers, it means a season when many retailers finally begin making money.

But if you were to go back seven hundred years before the birth of Christ and ask the prophet Isaiah what it means to him, he would tell you Christmas is about the birth of a special child:

*For to us a child is  
born, to us a son is  
given, and the  
government will be  
on his shoulders. And  
he will be called:  
Wonderful Counsellor;  
Mighty God;  
Everlasting Father;  
Prince of Peace.*

**Isaiah 9:6**



Adoration of the Shepherds  
by Dutch painter Matthias Stomer, 1632 \*

We hear these words each Christmas season during our service of Nine Lessons & Carols. This profound message is that God Himself would come to earth as both King and Saviour.

Most Jews, at that time, were waiting for the Messiah to deliver Israel from Roman oppression. They were looking for a Messiah of power and authority. But God had a different plan. He chose to send His son as a humble servant whose primary mission was to draw a world back to God, and surround them with his love and forgiveness.

The writers of the New Testament present Jesus as both fully human and fully God. Isaiah had said as much when he foretold the Messiah coming to earth as both child and God.

Confirming the words of Isaiah, the apostle Paul writes of Jesus: *The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.* **Colossians 1:15-17**

What would motivate the Creator of everything that exists to step down from his lofty position as the sovereign ruler of the universe to become one of us? Jesus tells us that he came because God loves us—each of us. The wonderful meaning of Christmas is that Jesus came to rescue us from the death sentence caused by our sin, and to give us

hope and peace with God. He did it because he cares for you and me, and wants to adopt us into his family—now and forever.

Why not take time this Christmas to reflect on God's great gift to you? The one who created you is the same one who came to earth and died for you!

In a world that can seem filled with corruption and selfishness, there is tremendous hope in knowing that God loves you. Can you think of a greater reason to celebrate Christmas?

*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**

# Parish of Bishop's Hatfield St Etheldreda with St Luke

## Regular Services

### St Etheldreda's Church

**SUNDAY:** 8<sup>am</sup> Holy Communion BCP

9.30<sup>am</sup> Holy Communion with Sunday School

**3RD SUNDAY OF MONTH:**

9.30<sup>am</sup> All age Eucharist

**TUESDAY:** 9<sup>am</sup> Morning Prayer

**WEDNESDAY:** 10<sup>am</sup> Holy Communion

**THURSDAY:** 9<sup>am</sup> Morning Prayer

7<sup>pm</sup> Holy Communion or Compline

**FRIDAY:** 9<sup>am</sup> Morning Prayer

### St Luke's Church

**SUNDAY:** 11.30<sup>am</sup> Holy Communion with Hymns

**CHILDREN'S  
SUNDAY SCHOOL**

meets at 9.20<sup>am</sup> on Sundays in term  
time at 12 Fore Street (STEPS office)

### December / January Weddings:

30th December—Thomas Stephenson and Lucy Sampson

### December / January Baptisms:

18th January—Christopher Wilson, Sienna Wilson

Please contact Fr Darren to book your Wedding or Baptism t: 01707 256638 e: frdarren@yahoo.co.uk

### What's on in December / January

6pm 14th December: **Joint concert Herts Music Centre & YES! Choir**, St Etheldreda's Church

2-4.30pm 14th December: **Community Christmas Party** (+ crib) for Salisbury Village, Howe Dell Hall

5.30pm 15th December: **Old Hatfield Resident Association Carols**, Salisbury Square

22nd January: **Team outing to Sonning Mill**, leaves from St Michael's & All Angels Church

4pm 25th January: **All Age Choral Evensong**, St Etheldreda's Church

9.30am 5th January: **Epiphany Eucharist**, St Etheldreda's Church

### Ever thought of coming to church?

It can sometimes seem daunting to take those first steps whether for the first time, or returning to church. We are happy to offer friendly encouragement.

If you would like to find out more about St Etheldreda's or St Luke's, please contact:  
Thomas Walters on 07971 513021

#### Father Darren Collins, Team Rector

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Parish of Bishop's Hatfield St Etheldreda with St Luke : Registered Charity No.1152011  
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# Christmas Programme at St Eth's & St Luke's

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## December 2019

1st—6pm **Advent Carol Service** St Eth's

15th—4pm **Nativity on the farm** Hatfield Park Farm

21st—3pm **Top Ten Carols** St Luke's

22nd—6pm **Nine Lessons and Carols** St Eth's

24th—4pm **Crib Service** St Eth's

24th—11.30pm **Midnight Mass** St Eth's

25th—8am **Holy Communion**

25th—9.30am **Christmas Day Communion** St Eth's

25th—11am **Christmas Day Communion** St Luke's

### **Girl with Christmas Tree**

By Franz Skarbina (1849-1910)

<http://www.stadtmuseum.de/php/sammlungen/sreb.php?id=264>, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2033118>

## What's On at Hatfield House in December / January

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### **FESTIVE SONG SING-ALONG** **7 DECEMBER @ 12PM - 5PM**

Wrap up warm and join us at Hatfield House for a Festive Song Sing-Along out in the Stable Yard on Saturday 7th December 12pm – 5pm. Come along and enjoy the merry atmosphere created by twinkling lights, our magnificent tree and live music.



### **MUSIC FOR CHRISTMAS** **8 DECEMBER @ 4PM - 7PM**

Join us for another memorable evening as once again, the Old Palace will be filled with the joyful and uplifting sound of Hertfordshire Chorus. Get the Festive season going with a wonderful mix of Christmas carols and songs old and new, including a chance to join the choir in singing some familiar favourites. And don't forget to enjoy seasonal refreshments including mulled wine and mince pies before the start of the concert.

Due to popular demand a second concert has been added.

4pm concert doors for the performance will open at approximately 3:30pm.

7pm concert doors for the performance will open at approximately 6:30pm.

Tickets: ADULT: £16.00 CHILD: £11.00

For more information on all events at Hatfield House

[www.hatfield-house.co.uk/events](http://www.hatfield-house.co.uk/events) t: 01707 287010 e: [visitors@hatfield-house.co.uk](mailto:visitors@hatfield-house.co.uk)



*Matthew 2:2 For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.*

This much loved scripture appears year after year in Christmas greetings. But can we dare to believe there actually was such a star that arose in the East to herald Christ's birth?

Whilst learned people in biblical times were sophisticated in their understanding of the movement of stars and planets, it was as nothing compared to what planetariums throughout the world reveal today, using advanced technology. So I decided to carry out some research on how astronomers today view this 2000 year old conundrum.

First some basics: Imagine central London is the sun and all the vehicles on the M25 are the planets and stars circling it. A blue VW travelling sedately on the inside lane, might be overtaken by a black Range Rover in the middle lane, at the same time the Range Rover is being overtaken by a red Jaguar in the outside lane. The blue VW driver will see a blur of red and black as the two cars hurtle by in **CONJUNCTION**. Also, to the Range Rover driver the VW will appear to be going backwards as he overtakes. Likewise the Range Rover will appear to be going backwards to the driver of the Jaguar as he overtakes that—these are optical illusions, of course, also known as **RETROGRADE MOTIONS**.

The website [www.bethlehemstar.com](http://www.bethlehemstar.com) argues that the Bethlehem star was a conjunction, viewed from earth, of the planet Jupiter and the star Regulus. What really caught the attention of the Magi was

that Jupiter and Regulus did not have just one conjunction (a common occurrence) and move on. But Jupiter continued on its path then appeared to move backwards for a second conjunction, and not just twice, it then returned for a third time.

A triple pass by like this is extremely rare and happens over a period of months. If this theory is correct, then during that time the watching Magi would have seen the Planet of Kings (Jupiter) dance out a halo above the Star of Kings (Regulus), appearing to present a celestial coronation crown in the sky. No wonder it got their full attention!

I put this argument to Ralf Napiwotzki, Principal Lecturer, in the Centre for Astrophysics Research at the University of Hertfordshire, who kindly agreed to meet me to discuss the subject. He said it was entirely plausible that the Bethlehem star was a conjunction of Jupiter and Regulus. The optical illusion of the retrograde motion, he agreed, could account for the 'star' appearing to stop over Bethlehem. However, he also offered another plausible theory in which the planets in conjunction were Jupiter with 'Saturn', rather than with Regulus, known as the greatest conjunction. Alternatively, he suggested, it might even have been a rare triple planet conjunction. Ralph said each of these three conjunctions occurred in the area around that time.

For me it is not about the specifics of the planets and stars involved. The main thing is that modern day science can explain how wonderful cosmic displays in the sky can legitimately appear. Making it entirely plausible that the Magi saw something quite extraordinary in the sky at that time.

So, I say **YES WE CAN** dare to believe that a vision appeared in the sky heralding the birth in Bethlehem of Jesus the Messiah—as was foretold by the Old Testament prophet, Micah.

And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd  
my people Israel: Matthew 2:6, Micah 5:2

## Nativity on the Farm, Sunday 15th December...John Barnard, Lay Reader

Come and see an enactment of the most important event the world has ever seen – The birth of Jesus – Son of God – The Messiah – Emmanuel (God with us) – Our Lord and Saviour. The reason we have Christmas.

This Nativity Play is produced by St Etheldreda's Church in conjunction with Hatfield Park Farm and is presented by an adult cast for children, rather than the other way around as is usual, and involves real animals. It is completely free of charge.

It starts off in the car park of Hatfield House at 4pm on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> December, just as it is getting dark and we then walk through the farm to visit Nazareth, Elizabeth's house, the Inn (that is full), the shepherds in the hills over Bethlehem, Herod's palace and then



on to Bethlehem itself. As we travel along, we sing some of our favourite Christmas Carols.

Everyone is welcome! Children & mums/dads, children & grandparents, children & aunts/uncles, children & friends, as well as adults without any children to bring along. But please don't bring pets.

**Christmas Cheer!** There will be Christmas style refreshments served after the play to which everyone is welcome. There will also be a retiring collection for anyone who wishes to contribute—the proceeds of which will be split between our church and The Donkey Sanctuary. This is a wonderful way to begin the Christmas celebrations and is deeply meaningful for children and the whole family.

**Do come along and join us!**

## We Three Kings of Orient are...Jo Roscoe

This popular carol is sung at Christmas time, adding a golden, glittering sheen to the simple story of the babe in the manger.

I am not going to spoil this lovely Christmas story, but am going to explain where it properly belongs; and that although they came bearing royal gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, these men were not kings. They were Magi: wise men – probably from Persia – who studied the stars and their movements, sometimes called astrologers.

The history of the Magi as a priestly sect can be traced back to the Book of Daniel, the Old Testament prophet who served King Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon.

Our three wise men, having (seemingly) noted the birth of a new star, followed its

path across the sky to Jerusalem where they expected to find a new born King of the Jews. Meeting King Herod and realising their mistake, they turn to the Scriptures for guidance and read the prophecies about “one of David's line....to be born in Bethlehem”.

Thus Jesus was some days old before the Magi found him with his mother in the stable and bestowed him with their gifts. We celebrate this meeting on the feast of Epiphany on January 6<sup>th</sup>.



For twelve days Mary has held the baby close to herself, watched over by Joseph and the animals of the stable; but now Jesus has been seen and proclaimed by men from the non-Jewish world. The first encounter between Jesus and the Gentiles.

And light dawned on a dark world.

*Images used on pg. 4/5—Sue Bentley / FreeBibleimages.org*

# Hatfield Music at St Eth's 2019

by Jill Knight

St Eth's has been filled with the sound of music again this year from traditional choral services to fifteen different concerts. Many hundreds of people have attended and enjoyed some wonderful music from The King's Men, Da Capo Brass, Y.E.S!, St. Eth's Choir, Hatfield Chamber Orchestra, Mid Herts Music Service, the Eden Consort, Thelma and Friends and the Gamay Ensemble. We also hosted seven concerts as part of the Education and Outreach Programme of Hatfield House Chamber Music Festival.

However, we are not finished yet and there are some very special choral services and concerts to look forward to before the year is out:

**Advent Carol Service Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> December 6pm** – contemplative music and readings for the Advent season in candlelight.

**Joint Brass & Choirs Concert Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> December 6pm** – a joint concert with Mid Herts Music Service featuring their brass groups and two choirs as well as our own Y.E.S! The concert



Y.E.S! with their patron, Lady Salisbury, at Christmas last year, after singing in the Armoury at Hatfield House.

## Hope Shoebox Appeal 2019

37 filled Christmas shoeboxes, collected and packed by the mums from YES! leaving St Eth's on the first leg of their journey to poor families and the elderly in Eastern Europe as part of the Link to Hope Shoebox Appeal 2019. Thank you to everyone who donated and packaged gifts and shoeboxes and especially to Amanda for co-ordinating it all.



will finish with some joint items and a carol sing-a-long for the audience. Tickets £5 adults/£3 concessions/ accompanied children – free. Mulled wine and mince pies will be served in the interval.

**Top Ten Carols Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> December 3pm at St Luke's Church** – join us for a countdown of your top ten favourite carols in the run-up to Christmas. Voting slips available in church or just email me your top 3 choices. Closing date for entries is Sun. 15<sup>th</sup> December. Will your favourite carol be No. 1?

**Lessons and Carols Service Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> December 6pm** - a beautiful and traditional service of lessons and carols for Christmas by candlelight – sung by the joint Choirs of St Eth's.

Thank you to all the musicians at St Eth's and in the local community who give their time so freely on such a regular basis to enhance our worship and help to make us a beacon of musical quality within the local area.

Jill Knight, Choir Director and Organist  
e: [jill.jkmusic@gmail.com](mailto:jill.jkmusic@gmail.com)

# Christmas and the church in East Germany

by Kerstin Schmidt

You cannot separate one from the other, can you? I mean Christmas and Church that is. After all, wherever you are and whoever you are, there is one date that is fixed and will never move – 24<sup>th</sup> December any year, and the night Jesus Christ was born (according to the scriptures). And no regime in the Western world has ever succeeded in changing that. Not even the socialist or communist ones. We had our traditions that had never changed over the years and we hung on to them steadfastly.

Preparations began in the middle of November as the first snow was falling, especially in the mountains. Pure magic! We kids got out our skates, snow shoes and toboggans to embrace that new season that was predominantly dark but the snow lightened it up tremendously. The adults grumbled about icy roads...

Then there was the preparation for the famous Christmas cake, the “Stollen” – everybody had their own recipe and this was handed down through generations. Everybody’s Stollen was different and there was a saying in our area that one had to have tasted 12 different types to ensure a prosperous new year. I have never had any problem

with that with my healthy appetite for cake and I always had a more than prosperous New Year.

4 Sundays before Christmas we set up our wreath with 4 candles – One new one to be lit every Sunday until all 4 were blazing. We did it in church and were very excited to go to the children’s service where every week somebody else was lighting the candle. We did it again at home. The warmth of the feeling and the light gave hope to everyone even during difficult times. There were no special meals but the baking was going on – making gingerbread and biscuits sent a beautiful aroma around the house and the whole village in fact.

This was the best time to enjoy it as after Christmas most people could not see food again for a few weeks. As they say: “Anticipation is the greatest joy to have”. We went to

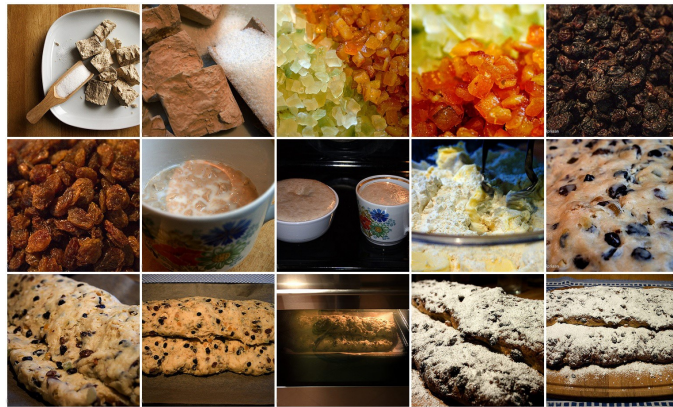
church every Sunday and sometimes on weekday evenings to watch and even participate in a Nativity Play.

Everybody (almost) got into the Christmas Spirit. Decorations everywhere and my father cut the fresh tree just 2 days before Christmas from the forest we owned. My parents decorated it on their own and we were not allowed to see it until Christmas Eve, as was the custom in so many families in our area.

On Christmas Eve at 4pm. we went to see the Nativity Play in our local church as so many families did - present giving was not until 6pm so the hours in between had to be filled. There was always a treat to be handed out at church and we were encouraged to light candles for the ones we had lost.

At 6pm all the bells around the country were chiming the birth of

Jesus Christ and it felt almost surreal – so many different chimes and yet all for the same purpose! Christmas was here! There were Evening services for hearing a Sermon and singing Christmas hymns, but we always opted for the early morning hymns the next day as wading through knee-deep snow at midnight had never been a pleasure. Happy Christmas!



Ulrich van Stipriaan [CC BY-SA 3.0] Stollen How To <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Stollen-how-to.jpg>

## Goodwill to All Men (and women) By Jo Roscoe

This little story came to our ears some months ago. But it is still worth the telling and fits nicely into our season of goodwill. A lady known to us as Margaret – because that is her name – was enjoying a shopping spree in Tesco’s. Packing her bag as her goodies slid across the checkout, she found that she had forgotten to bring her purse. Confused and embarrassed, she was astonished when the person behind her in the queue leaned forward and said “It’s OK, I’ll pay for these”!

Struck almost dumb in the face of this kindness, Margaret tried to protest but – no – the shopping was paid for. The kindness of a stranger gladdened her heart and will not soon be forgotten.

At this season of Christmastide we should remember there are good people everywhere, and it behoves us to remember to be one of them! Spreading joy is so easy. Let us make a resolution to do it more often.

Happy Christmas and a Joyous New Year to all.

## Come in from the cold by Jo Roscoe

St Etheldreda's Church is currently open to visitors from Tuesdays to Sundays, 9am to 5pm, and will remain so until the twelfth day of Christmas, which is 6th January.

Our lovely old church exudes the warmth and love not only of the people who currently worship there, but of the many, many generations who precede us. Drop in to refresh your memory of its loveliness, to light a candle to a loved one, or to sit for a moment of quiet reflection or escape from a troubled world.

This church is yours, and it bids you welcome.

If for nothing else, come in during this time to see our glorious Christmas tree, which seems to get bigger each year and is possibly now the largest indoor Christmas tree in Hatfield!



### Stop press-stop press!

As we go to print, we hear the great news that our Church of England school, Countess Anne, has been awarded 'outstanding' in their latest OFSTED report.

Countess Anne is the first school to be judged by OFSTED under their new all embracing survey of school activities and curriculum.

Many congratulations from St Etheldreda's and St Luke's to headmaster David Lodge, all staff and pupils. Well done everyone!

### Tail End.....News from the Bellringers

On Remembrance Sunday, we rang six bells half muffled – although the muffle on the 2nd bell slipped slightly during the ringing and so I had to run up the 45 steps into the belfry and re-adjust and re-tighten the straps which hold the leather muffle in place so that ringing could continue.

Two of our ringers (Graham and David) started ringing in 2018 as part of 'Ringing Remembers' to commemorate the 1400 ringers killed during WW1. Graham now splits his time between South Mymms, Ridge and Hatfield as he finds the bells at Ridge and South Mymms easier to ring than Hatfield. David still rings regularly at Hatfield and is now learning Plain Hunt.

Both practice nights and Sunday mornings are well attended and we plan to ring for most services over the Christmas period.

If you want to learn to ring – please contact us...

Mary and Rob Goss (01438-718038)

[mary.rob.goss@gmail.com](mailto:mary.rob.goss@gmail.com)

## University of Hertfordshire's

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Interested in learning  
how to ring St Eth's bells?

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Mary and Rob Goss

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