

I hope you all had a healthy and happy Christmas and would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who helped make our Christmas celebrations this year so memorable. The Christmas Tree Festival was the best yet (I say that every time we have one, but it really is true – they just get better and better) and the churches were beautifully decorated for Christmas, thanks to our talented flower arrangers. It was lovely to see so many of you in the church over the Christmas period and the crowd at the Gun ‘stable’ after our Walking Nativity were treated to marvellous refreshments by the Gun Team, while listening to carols sung by the St John the Baptist School Choir and the Monarch’s Way Singers, all joining in with the well-known ones. A huge thank you to Mrs Stoner for all the time she spends encouraging our village children to sing with enjoyment, and to Carole Thomas for her support of adults who love to sing in the Monarch’s Way Singers. Singing definitely improves mental wellbeing!

Although our decorations are long gone, Christmas is officially only over on 2nd February, when the Church remembers how Jesus was taken to be presented in the Temple, observing the religious rites by offering a pair of doves or pigeons in thanksgiving for a firstborn son. This Feast in the church calendar is known as The Presentation, or Candlemas. A lit candle is a symbol of the light of Christ coming into the world, and at every baptism (christening) the candidate is given a candle that is lit from our Easter candle, with the words: Receive the Light of Christ, to which everyone present responds: Shine as a light in the world to the glory of God the Father.

It is heartening that we have many families coming to us asking for a christening, now that most of the restrictions imposed by the pandemic are lifted. The gift of a child makes us thankful, and it is a joy to welcome families and friends to a baptism in one of our churches.

At an infant baptism, parents and godparents make promises on behalf of the child, to help that child grow to know and love Jesus and to follow his teaching, then in time to come to confirmation, making those promises for him or herself. Sadly, this happens infrequently, but whenever I baptise a child, those words from Luke’s gospel account of when John the Baptist was born, ‘What will this child become?’ are always in my mind. Seeds of faith are sown and rekindled in the hearts and minds of those who come to support the family.

If you are reading this, and have not been confirmed, and would like to know more, please have a word with myself or Colin. It would be wonderful to see more people making this commitment of faith for themselves – and there is no upper age limit! Bishop Will, the Bishop of Lewes, will be presiding at a Worthing Deanery Confirmation Service after Easter and Colin and I will be offering confirmation preparation for adults and young people in the weeks leading up to Easter.

February 1st is Shrove Tuesday this year, and we will be enjoying pancake races and eating pancakes as part of Messy Church that day. Details of Ash Wednesday Services, as Lent begins, are at the back of the magazine. Traditionally churches are bare during Lent, without flowers. This makes the joy of Easter Sunday even brighter as the churches are once more bedecked with flowers. This year, our flower team are asking for donations for lilies, in memory of a loved one, or to commemorate a special event, part of the flower display traditionally used for Easter decoration, to help make our arrangements even more spectacular. Details for donations and information on everything that is happening in Holy Week and Easter will be in the March edition of Findon News.

Every blessing,

Helena