

## ***A time for Reflection and Celebration***

The time leading up to advent and into the Christmas season offered us at St James' the opportunity as a Church rooted in the village to reflect on what matters to a Christian community.

Our Remembrance Eucharist in early November began the period of reflection. A full church, comprising 120 people from across the age groups, focussed on the sacrifice made by the many who fought so hard for the peace we now enjoy: a chance for young and not so young to reflect. Our services during Advent and into the Christmas period were informed by the Follow the Star initiative which we embraced wholeheartedly. Our star-filled church, greatly appreciated by our congregations and visitors alike, led us with the Magi to the stable in Bethlehem for the birth of the Prince of Peace.

Our Christingle Service was embraced by a congregation of families including many from our village Scout Group who filled the body of the church to enjoy the Christingle story again, told by our Open the Book Team. Our two school nativity services filled the church twice over with children and their families: the Churches Together Carol Service outside the Parish Hall which brought people from across the village in worship led by the indefatigable Revd George Proud and sustained by seasonal refreshments!

The service of Nine Lessons and Carols, led by our splendid choir, sustained our community in praise and worship as the Celebration of Christ's Birth drew ever nearer. And then there was the Christmas Eve Crib Service: a glorious celebration filled with families, children and a great sense of wonder, led again by our Open the Book Team who brought the story of the nativity to life as only they could. Our huge thanks to Anne Foster for bringing this service together.

Christmas Day itself brought the joy of visiting families joining with our regular congregation in a way which is so special to Christmas Day.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who worked so hard to ensure that the Christian witness which is St James's Church was able to offer a holy and blessed Christmas celebration to so many people: the visiting priests, all those who led intercessions, read the Word of God, sang in praise both in the choir and in the body of the church, provided the drama of the story of the birth of Christ, arranged flowers, candles and Christmas decoration of all kinds. And we thank our Church Warden Team, who work so hard both upfront and in the background, to ensure that all is well. We do hope that our Wardens realise how much they are appreciated! And finally we thank all of those who chose to share part of the joy of Christmas with us:

Between Remembrance Day and Christmas Day we recorded the following attendances: Adults: 534 Children and young people: 253, not including regular Sunday and Wednesday services.

And that is only the Christmas Season. Our witness continues throughout the year. Everyone is always welcome to join us....

The PCC