

The Diocese of Peterborough

GOOD NEWS STORIES - ADVENT and CHRISTMAS 2009

ST ANDREW, ARTHINGWORTH

Mary and Joseph and the donkey had travelled out from St Andrew's church, Arthingworth to journey around the village on the afternoon of Advent Sunday, spending each night in a different house in the village. Each day the figures were delivered to the next family along with a cake symbolising our desire to care for Mary, Joseph and the donkey on their journey. They arrived back in church on the afternoon of December 23rd when those who had hosted the figures gathered for a Posada Service. We sang carols and listened to a story and talked about the hardships of the journey and the birth which was to come. We ate cake together and looked forward to the birth of the Christ-child and the coming to earth of the Saviour of the world.

ST MARY, BADBY

Older children and some of the young people led the Christingle service.

ST NICHOLAS, COTTESMORE

We must have got the publicity right for our Christingle as there were more than 150 (as opposed to 43 last time it was held at our church, and 80 last year - at another church in the group.) Made one or two useful links in preparing for it, eg local Brownies, who helped make Christingles. Also a school assembly, which had positive feedback. Another church in our group now wants to take its turn in hosting a Christingle, which can only be good!

The Crib Service on Christmas Eve was good! In the end we kept to the previous format of children who wished to coming in role: shepherds; angels; animals. Only Mary and Joseph were pre-planned. We read and sang and built up a tableau - all the readers were parents of young children. About 80 there despite terrible weather and various people unable to come because of snow and mist. All the young families I could have wished to see there (and who weren't actually away) made it. One plus was a specially prepared powerpoint by a church member, complete with welcome, words, readings, etc. We gave everyone a star (from Wilcos) to hang on the Christmas Tree, with *Jesus is the Reason for the Season* on it.

HOLY CROSS, DAVENTRY

The first week of Advent they ran a Children's stall at the Church bazaar selling items they had made during the summer break and raising £60 for the charity "Smiletrain" and their church.

At the beginning of the second week 13 youngsters from toddlers to teens, alongside a Dad and two members of the children's team celebrated International Year of the Child Day as they held a St Nicholas' birthday party in an Upper Room and served members of the Congregation with homemade "Gingerbread Angels" at coffee time.

During the third week they were asked to decorate a children's tree for the church porch and this they did entirely unaided using 20 stars and bells

labelled with their Christian names and the traditional child choristers used each year.

Canon Michael sent them an e mail of thanks and ladies of the Church were grateful for their contribution in helping to decorate our church.

They mimed and dressed the crib on Christmas Eve as Cannon Michael read the Christmas Story under a huge Christmas tree.

On January 3rd they celebrated Epiphany by investigating treasure boxes containing real examples of the gifts brought by the kings. After a wonderful sharing of faith with adult leaders they composed this prayer about the gifts we try to place each day at the feet of Jesus.

"Lord help us to give to others, perhaps by making gifts for them, by being peacemakers at home and at school, by being there for lonely friends and by being forgiving. Help us to remember that for God EVERYBODY counts".

DIOCESE - CHILDREN'S MISSIONER

Two years ago I developed a story script for a children's goody bag to be given away at events in the run-up to Christmas. It encouraged children to play their way through the nativity account as they handled items such as cottonwool, strip of white cloth, paper crown and a party popper. I was delighted to see in the *Church Times* that this idea has been taken up in Rochester Diocese as part of the *Come Home for Christmas* campaign they run. They were planning to give away thousands of goody bags.

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST, EAST FARNDON

Children and their families gathered together for the crib and Christingle service on Sunday afternoon of December 13th. As we sang Christmas carols our stable scene was gradually built up using child friendly knitted figures. A whole flock of sheep meant that every child who wanted to carry a figure to place in and around the stable could do so. Christingles were given out, a circle made around the church and the lights turned out as we sang Away in a Manger lit only by the Christingle candles. The service continues to draw families to church who seldom come at any other time during the year and gives an opportunity for them to hear about the true meaning of Christmas.

ST MARY'S CHURCH, MAIDWELL

At 3:30 on the afternoon of December 12th, children from the villages of the Faxton Group of churches met in the Loder Hall in Maidwell to participate in fun activities, make Christingles and enjoy hot-dogs and ice-cream together. At around 5:30 the children and the Christingles were taken to St Mary's Church in Maidwell, where we were joined by the parents, other families and many of the regular congregation. The church was beautifully decorated, Philip and Debbie Ansell, who regularly lead worship at St Mary's Wollaston, provided us with live music (we usually have to use CDs) and there was a really festive atmosphere. We explored the meaning of the Christingle, sang carols together, listened to Debbie as she sang for us, and for the first time ran out of Christingles (the older children had to make do with light sticks) and made a mental note that we need to at least double the number of Christingles for next year!

A packed church celebrated a Family Eucharist on Christmas morning. We were joined by a sprinkling of people from other churches in the benefice. The children talked about the presents they had received and we talked together of the greatest present, the presence of Jesus Christ. The Eucharist was celebrated with all the children gathered quietly around the altar, and the service ended with balloons being dropped from a net suspended above the heads of the congregation. The atmosphere was wonderful, the presence of so many people, even though there was another very well attended service happening at the same time elsewhere in the benefice, was enormously encouraging, the conversations and fellowship that followed made the service a very special beginning to Christmas Day.

ST MICHAEL & ALL ANGELS, NEWNHAM

Newnham hosted a United Benefice service to mark St Nicholas' Day on 6 December. We visited Newnham School and they came to sing in the service. 85 of us gathered to worship together.

Older children and some of the young people led the Christingle service.

ST JAMES THE GREAT, PAULERSPURY

We had a lovely Crib Service on 21 December. 29 children and 19 adults came to our half an hour service, which was a journey around the church with Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem. The service was interactive with the children reading, carrying the figures around the church and ultimately creating the scene at the manger with the baby Jesus, Mary and Joseph and the shepherds with plenty of animals looking on! Earlier in the month, ten families in the village had welcomed Mary and Joseph (knitted figures) into their home for a couple of days and it was a great opportunity for the parents to explain the Christmas message and story. We had advertised the service in the benefice magazine, throughout the village and in the village school. We were very pleased with the response, as the previous week the school had also attended a Christingle service in the church. It is often the only opportunity for young families to attend a service over Christmas as our Christmas Day service is the 11.30pm Communion.

ST LAURENCE, STANWICK

Standing room only for the second year running at our Christingle. In fact the health and Safety Officer is so concerned.. the church was over full and verging on dangerously full. A small group of us will have to work out how we organise this service and other family and children's services next Advent.

ST GEORGE'S, WOOTTON

All the Christmas service numbers were up again this year. Church full for Christingle, Crib service, carols & midnight despite the weather! Thank you God!

We invited the nearest primary school to bring their choir to sing at the Christingle service - which they did on a Saturday afternoon.