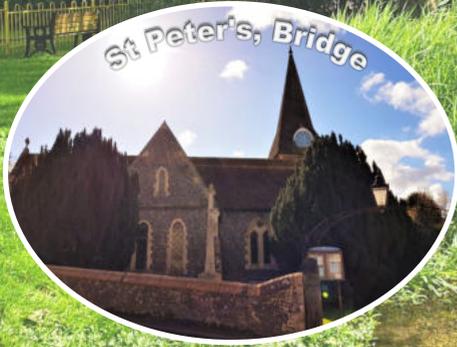




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December 2025/January 2026

Dear Friends,

I have been sitting here staring at a blank page, wondering what I could write to you all for the last pastoral message of my tenure as your Parish Priest.....and pondering too the forthcoming season of Advent and Christmas.

One of the most striking aspects of the Christmas story is how full it is of surprises—unexpected twists that defy human expectations and reveal deeper meaning. From the setting to the characters, nearly every detail carries an element of wonder.

The Messiah born in an ordinary home and laid in a manger in Bethlehem. Unlikely first witnesses in lowly shepherds and foreign magi. Angels proclaiming peace on earth (having first appeared in dramatic ways to both Mary and Joseph). Mary's courageous yes to the plan God had for her. God's promise fulfilled unexpectedly: reversing the expectation of a political or military saviour. Instead, the Messiah arrived as a vulnerable baby, redefining what salvation meant.

These surprises matter, each twist in the story emphasizes themes of humility, inclusivity, and divine reversal. The lowly are lifted up, outsiders are welcomed, and power is redefined. The Christmas narrative isn't just about a birth—it's about God showing up in ways no one anticipated, reshaping human history through unexpected means.

In many ways, that's why I do what I do, that's why I am what I am, called, ordained, and (please God) equipped to fulfil the role entrusted to me as I say yes to the God of surprises.

The last 8 years have been full of surprises, and it has been a privilege to live in Bridge. To grow as a person, as a minister and as a disciple of Jesus Christ. To see our family grow up here among people who have taken us into their hearts and lives. To share in ministry with all the many wonderful folk in the five villages of our Parish as we have sought together to fulfil our primary calling to make the love of God known here.

As I prepare to leave the Parish, I want to encourage you. Your willingness to embrace change, to listen to the Spirit, and to work together has been one of the great joys of my ministry here. Your care for each other and your communities (occasional Facebook grumbling aside) a real sign of the beauty of peace-making and togetherness, particularly during the Pandemic. There will be a bit of a gap now while the Parish reflects and prepares to recruit the next Vicar of the Bridge Group Parish and I pray that in the gap you discover even more of the capacity of God to bring about wonderful surprises.

It has been a big surprise to me to have been called into the role of Archdeacon of Maidstone at this time but as I prepare to step into a new chapter of ministry, my heart is filled with gratitude for the time we have shared. I want to thank you for your love, your patience, and your partnership in the gospel. You have taught me as much as I have ever hoped to teach you, and I will carry those lessons with me always.

Though God is leading me to serve in a new role, please know that my prayers remain with you. I trust that the Lord will continue to bless this parish and community with strength, unity, and vision. (And a fabulous new Vicar at some point!)

As Paul wrote to the Philippians: *'I thank my God every time I remember you... being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.'*

For the last time in this context, but forever,

Yours in Christ

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Estella Last".

Revd. Canon Estella Last, Vicar,  
The Parish of the Bridge Group

## Service details and readings for December 2025 and January 2026

7 <sup>th</sup> December	2 <sup>nd</sup> Sun- day of Ad- vent	Isaiah 11.1-10; Romans 15.4-13; Matthew 3.1-12	<b>10am Celebration Service at St Mary's Patrixbourne</b> – reopening of the building and dedication of the new extension and facilities. With the Arch-deacon of Canterbury.
Friday 12 <sup>th</sup> December			<b>6pm Community Carols at St Mary's Lower Hardres</b>
14 <sup>th</sup> December	3 <sup>rd</sup> Sun- day of Ad- vent	Isaiah 35.1-10; Luke 1.46b-55 (Magnificat); James 5.7-10; Matthew 11.2-11	<b>10 am Parish Communion at St Peter's Bridge</b>  <b>4pm Instant Nativity (Family Service)</b>
Friday 19 <sup>th</sup> December			<b>7pm Carol Service St Mary's Patrixbourne</b>
21 <sup>st</sup> December	4 <sup>th</sup> Sun- day of Ad- vent	Isaiah 7.10-16; Romans 1.1-7; Matthew 1.18-25	<b>10am Traditional Sung Holy Communion at St Mary's Patrixbourne</b>  <b>7pm Carol Service at St Peter's Bridge</b>
Wednesday 24 <sup>th</sup> December	Christ- mas Eve	Isaiah 52:7-10 Hebrews 1:1-12 John 1:1-14	<b>3pm Christingle Service at Bridge</b> <b>5pm Christingle Service at Bridge</b>  <b>10pm Christmas Eucharist Nackington</b>
Thursday 25 <sup>th</sup> December	Christ- mas Day	Isaiah 9.2-7; Titus 2.11-14; Luke 2.1-14, (15-20)	<b>9.30am Christmas Communion St Peter's Bridge</b>  <b>11am Christmas Carol Service St Peter's Bekesbourne</b>
28 <sup>th</sup> December	1 <sup>st</sup> Sun- day of Christ- mas	Jeremiah 31: 15-17 1 Corinthians 1: 26-29 Matthew 2: 13-18	<b>10am Parish Communion at St Mary's Lower Hardres</b>

4 <sup>th</sup> January	Epiphany	Isaiah 60:1-6 Ephesians 3:1-12 Matthew 2:1-12	<b>10am Benefice Communion Service at St Peter's Bokesbourne</b>
11 <sup>th</sup> January	Baptism of Christ / Epiphany 1	Isaiah 42:1-9 Acts 10:34-43 Matthew 3:13-17	<b>10am Benefice Communion at St Peter's Bridge – Revd Estella's last Sunday in the Parish</b>
18 <sup>th</sup> January	Epiphany 2	Isaiah 49.1-7; Corinthians 1.1-9; John 1.29-42	<b>10am Benefice Communion (Sung Eucharist) at St Mary's Patrixbourne</b>
25 <sup>th</sup> January	Epiphany 3	Isaiah 9.1-4; Corinthians 1.10-18; Matthew 4.12-23	<b>10am Parish Communion at St Mary's Lower Hardres</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> February	Presenta- tion of Christ in the Tem- ple / Can- dlemas		<b>9am BCP Communion St Mary's, Nackington</b>  <b>10am Songs of Praise St Peter's Bokesbourne</b>  <b>4pm Deanery Candlemas Evensong Service at St Mary the Virgin, Wing- ham</b>

	<b>December 2025</b>
Mon 1 <sup>st</sup>	2.30-4pm Caring and Sharing
Tues 2 <sup>nd</sup>	7-9.30pm Salvation Army concert at Nackington Church
Thurs 4th	9-11am Little Lambs Toddler Group, Bridge Pavilion Bridge School Advent Services 7.30pm Salvation Army Concert at Bridge School
Fri 5th	8.45am Coffee, Chat and Prayer at Bridge Church
Weds 10th	10-11.30am Bekesbourne Coffee Morning 5pm-7.30pm Nailbourne Scouts Christmas Service at Bridge Church
Thurs 11 <sup>th</sup>	9-11am Little Lambs Toddler Group, Bridge Pavilion 1.15-3pm Senior Citizens Tea Party at Bridge School
Fri 12 <sup>th</sup>	8.45am Coffee, Chat and Prayer at Bridge Church 10am Fish Scheme Pop in at Bridge Village Hall 6pm Lower Hardres Carol Event
Sat 13th	10.15-11.30 Christmas Coffee and Cake Concert at Bridge Church
Tue 16th	3-7pm Christmas Farmers Market and Carol Singing at The Red Lion Bridge
<a href="#"><u>Thurs 18th</u></a>	9-11am Little Lambs Toddler Group, Bridge Pavilion
Fri 19th	8.45am Coffee, Chat and Prayer at Bridge Church
Sat 20 <sup>th</sup>	2-5pm Crib Festival at St Peter's Bekesbourne

	<b>January 2026</b>
Thurs 8th	9-11am Little Lambs Toddler Group, Bridge Pavilion
Fri 9th	8.45am Coffee, Chat and Prayer at Bridge Church 10am Fish Scheme Pop in at Bridge Village Hall
Weds	10-11.30am Bekesbourne Coffee Morning
Thurs 15 <sup>th</sup>	9-11am Little Lambs Toddler Group, Bridge Pavilion
Fri 16 <sup>th</sup>	11am-12.30pm Lower Hardres Coffee Morning
Sat 17th	10.15-11.30 Coffee and Cake Concert at Bridge Church 4-6pm Messy Church at Bridge School
Thurs 22nd	9-11am Little Lambs Toddler Group, Bridge Pavilion
Thurs 29th	9-11am Little Lambs Toddler Group, Bridge Pavilion

## Bridge with Patrixbourne Womens Institute

Our November talk was given by Clare Boggia. Her subject was on the life of Clarice Cliff, whose ceramics have become famous as she was so much ahead of her time, both in design and the vibrant colours she used.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> December we shall be having a Christmas Celebration Lunch at the Red Lion. Names of those wishing to attend were taken at the November meeting.

WI always welcomes new members. We are a small, friendly group who enjoy learning about all sorts of subjects from our different speakers, with social time for chat and refreshments, so do come along and find out for yourselves.

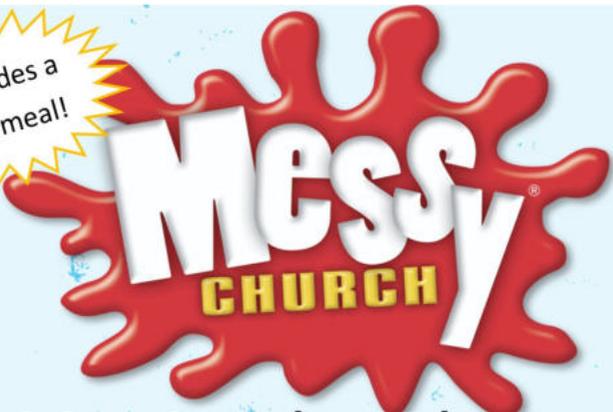
For more details, please contact the President Sheila Scrivener on 01227-831788,

Joan Hill

Nov.Dec. 2025

## Fish Scheme News

The December Coffee Pop-in will be on Friday 12th in the village hall from 10 to 11.15 with carols, mince pies and a visit from the playgroup. You'll love it. Do come. The January 2026 Pop-in is on Friday 9th and the Winter Warmer lunch is on Friday 30th. So a merry Christmas and a happy new year to us all



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**Instant Nativity Performance**

**Sunday 14th December**

**4pm St Peter's Bridge**

**The Nativity with a twist....**

The Stable is empty, the sheep have fled and the wise men are missing!  
Can you help?

**Fun for all the family!**

**Come along to the family service on 30th November (4pm) to help build our Nativity!**

## **Crib Festival at Bekesbourne Church**

Let Christmas begin in Bekesbourne church on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> December!

We are having a festival of Christmas cribs. There will be cribs of all shapes and sizes. Some old, some new, some handmade and crafted from wood or clay or wool. If you have a crib you would like to lend us, we'd be happy to display it.

The church will be open from 2-5pm so please pop in and share the festive joy. There will be carols and Christmas music playing and mulled wine, mince pies and Christmas treats to enjoy. The children might have fun seeing how many stars they can count on all the displays and they can pin a Christmas message on our tree.

Our celebrity guest, Banks, the Christmas donkey will be there.

For more information please contact Nicky Fry 07720895593

# FOLLOW THE STAR



**TO BEKESBOURNE CHURCH CHRISTMAS CRIB FESTIVAL**

**Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> December 2 - 5pm**

Seasonal refreshments, mulled wine and mince pies

Count the stars



Find the many cribs.

Take your own photo with our special guest



Banks the therapy donkey.



## **Nailbourne Scout Group news**

Nailbourne are now well into the autumn term, having returned after the half-term break. As always, we've been very busy, both with our weekly fun- and adventure-packed sessions and also with several events.

In September, Nailbourne adults and young helpers served drinks and homemade cakes at the Barham Horticultural Society meeting. This was a great fundraiser for us and we have been invited back next year! Also in September, our Scout and Explorer leader Skip joined two of our Explorers for an exciting climbing trip to the Peak District, where Explorers received their climbing badge. Beavers enjoyed an informative visit to the fire station, where they had particular fun having a go at the hoses! And we were very proud to receive a Bronze certificate from the district for the growth and development of our young people.

In October, Scouts took part in the artist open house event at Walderchain Woods as part of Canterbury Arts Festival, their second year supporting along with local schools and colleges. This year they displayed bunting made from reclaimed tent fabric. As well as lots of spooky activities across the sections, Nailbourne also held a food bank collection in Barham on Halloween, alongside displaying Scout-carved pumpkins donated by Barham Allotment Association.

November has so far seen our Beavers, Cubs, Scouts and Explorers parade through Bridge on Remembrance Sunday, before attending the service at the church, where they played a part with readings and the laying of wreaths.

By the time you read this, we will be preparing for Christmas! Scout Post will be operating in both Bridge AND Barham this year, and for the first time you will be able to post cards for Barham in the Bridge postbox and vice versa (please not the surrounding villages though, as deliveries are done on foot!). Postboxes may already be in your local shop by the time you read this. Please keep an eye on our Facebook page or see the box itself for our delivery date. Donations for this service are gratefully received.

As always, we are still looking for volunteers to lead and help in our sessions, with Beavers and Explorers in particular need of support (both on Wednesday evenings).

**Nailbourne Scout Group welcomes both boys AND girls and meets during term time as follows:**

**Beavers (6–8 years) – Wednesdays, 5.30–6.30pm, Barham Village Hall**

**Cubs (8–10 years) – Wednesdays, 6.45–8.00pm, Barham Village Hall**

**Scouts (10–14 years) – Fridays, 6.30–8.00pm, Barham Village Hall**

**Explorers (14–18 years) – Wednesdays, 7.00–8.30pm, Bridge Pavillion/  
Littlebourne Hall**

**Please note that the venue is subject to frequent change, particularly in the summer, when we meet outside as often as possible!**

For more information on joining Beavers, Cubs or Scouts or volunteering, please email Lynn Purkins at [akelanailbourne@gmail.com](mailto:akelanailbourne@gmail.com) or visit our Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/Nailbourne-Scout-Group-public-108853207216429](https://www.facebook.com/Nailbourne-Scout-Group-public-108853207216429)). For information on Explorers, please contact Phil Last at [explorersnailbourne@gmail.com](mailto:explorersnailbourne@gmail.com)

## **NAILBOURNE HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY**

The Society's last event of the year will be the Christmas Social on Tuesday, 2 December, 7.30 pm at Bridge Village Hall. Sue Thompson will demonstrate Christmas Floral Decorations, which will be raffled afterwards. The Social part of the evening will follow when we can reflect on and celebrate the Society's successes. There will be an entry fee of £10 to include festive refreshments. We hope that most members will attend and make it a successful event. All are most welcome!

### **Date for your Diary - AGM**

The Society's AGM will be held on Tuesday, 27th January 2026, 7.30 pm at Bridge Village Hall. The challenges the Society face are ongoing and therefore we need continued support and looking to have a wider membership to be able to thrive. We are hoping that there will be one or two more members who will join the Committee as well.

The speaker we have engaged for the evening is the renowned Kevin Toohar, who will talk about 'Winter Interest in the Garden' which should appeal to all gardeners, so we look forward to seeing you at this important meeting.



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or call on 01227 830276

we look forward to hearing from or seeing you soon.

Kind regards Helen and Morny

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**Saturday 17th Jan 10:15 to 11:30am**

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## **BLISTER PACKS RECYCLING**



**The blister packs recycling facility In Bridge Church is now closed until further notice.**

Canterbury Superdrug has removed its collecting bin and will now only accept small quantities of recycling via its pharmacy.

Boots at Wincheap is also only able to take small quantities in its recycling box (situated near the pharmacy).

We know that our Bridge recycling facility has been valued by the community and are sorry for any inconvenience.

If you are able, please continue to recycle your own used blister packs at Superdrug or Boots.

Thank you.

The Eco Church Team.



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## News from Woodpeckers Nursery

Woodpeckers are expanding their baby room provision to create 3 new spaces which will be available in January 2026. If you are interested in a space for a child age 1-2 years please see the notice below.



Woodpeckers Nursery, Bridge, CT4 5JX

Spaces Available for January 2026 Start

- ◊ 1 year old spaces available
- ◊ 30 hour funding accepted
- ◊ Term time
- ◊ 8am-6pm available

To book a viewing or reserve a place contact Jo at  
[info@woodepeckersnursery.co.uk](mailto:info@woodepeckersnursery.co.uk)  
or 01227831159



## Deanery Candlemas Service

Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2026, 4.00pm

St Mary's Church, Wingham

2.00pm Scratch Choir - come and learn a new song or two to sing in the service

4.00pm service starts

Mulled wine and hot drinks, delicious cake and lots of chat afterwards

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# People of the Bridge Group of Churches

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<b>Chaplain:</b>	Mrs Miriam Westendarp	01227 206272
<b>Administrator:</b>	Mrs Megan Shirley	bridgeoffice23@gmail.com
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## **St Mary's Patrixbourne with St Peter's Bridge**

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	Mrs Pauline Pritchard	01227-830685
	Mr Laurence Dunderdale	01227-830668
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<b>(Gift Aid Officer)</b>	Mrs Evelyn Andrews	01227-830960
	evepurlins@btinternet.com	
<b>PCC Secretary:</b>	Mr Rory Wetherell	01227-830318
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**To offer items for publication in this magazine**, including event information, please contact Mrs Megan Shirley [bridgegroupmagazine@gmail.com](mailto:bridgegroupmagazine@gmail.com) by the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the preceding month, ensuring that any emails and attachments are clearly titled to identify their content. Files should be submitted in .doc .pub or .jpg format. Posters should be A5 in size and both portrait and landscape versions provided.

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