

Dear All,

A very happy, healthy and peaceful New Year to you! Thank you for all your support for our Benefice Churches over the past year; we hope you have enjoyed the services and events you have attended and hope to see even more of you in the year ahead.

Services are back to 'normal' in January (please check Diary) and you'll notice that where possible I have included the name of the person taking the service. This is not to encourage the development of Fan Clubs, rather to show how many people are involved in keeping our churches going. It takes a great deal of effort to prepare and read a service and it's great when the leader is well supported – both visiting priests and those lay members who have been brave enough to stand in front of the congregation. And there are many more involved in the services than those listed as different people from the ones taking the services may, for example, read lessons, write – and read prayers, and do many other assistive tasks. The teamwork in each church is not to be understated, and I can say with confidence that in all our churches we would love our teams to grow. You don't have to take a service but volunteering to help with sidesmen's duties, with reading, flowers, cleaning – anything – perhaps just once a quarter could make all the difference. Don't be shy, we'd love to hear from you.

Please check the Diary for details of services but just to note that there are **three Family Services** in the Benefice each month: **Brabourne on the first Sunday, Smeeth on the second (and this month Di Dawson is holding a Christingle service at Smeeth on 14th), and Stowting on the third Sunday.** All these are warm and welcoming gatherings so if you're new to the community please come along (whether or not you have a family is irrelevant).

I'd like to flag up one particular gathering on the **third Sunday, 21st at 9.30am at Brabourne.** Brabourne normally has Evensong on third Sundays in the summer but on winter mornings in January, February and March we try to do something different. Last year we looked at ancient British Saints, this year we have invited members of the clergy – all good speakers – to address the subject of ***The Relevance of Christianity Today***. It is a frequent criticism that the Christian church is out-dated and no longer relevant to our lives. So – we thought it might be a good idea to hear what the clergy had to say on the subject. After a short talk lasting 15-20 minutes, there will be time to raise questions and concerns. Please be assured that there will be no custard pie throwing or humiliating peer judgement of views and beliefs. We've all probably had the same thoughts whether we're committed Christians, agnostics or atheists and it would be good to raise some of these. Even if you are allergic to services please do come as this is not a typical service: we shall start with coffee to warm us up (you need it in Brabourne these days!), and after a prayer, the talk and opportunity for discussion will follow. The gathering will last less than an hour.

Regarding events, we start the month with **First Friday at Brabourne on 5th** for a friendly drink, nibbles and a chat from 6-7pm. On 12th **Knit and Natter meet in the Oak Room** and on 19th there will be **the first of Smeeth's coffee mornings** for the year. Kindly hosted by Barbara

Bamford at Southwood, Church Road, Smeeth, from 10.30-12 noon, this will be a great opportunity to catch up with friends after Christmas. **Fridays@3 will meet as usual on 26th** when a short talk will be followed by a delicious tea. And that brings us to the end of the month.

We very much hope to see you at services and events in the Benefice in the coming year and please remember – our churches depend on your support. If you know of anyone who'd like a lift to a service or event kindly contact your local churchwarden or just let me know. Thank you.

Warmest wishes for the New Year,

Kathy

Kathy Embleton-Smith
Acting Chair Brabourne PCC