

A Letter from the Vicarage Study

FAMILY TREES

Dear Friends

Over the past few years, it seems that more and more people have taken an interest in family history projects, or, in other words, finding out where they have come from. There are 'starter kits' and websites dedicated to this interest, an interest that can very easily become an obsession as the ordinary person finds they are becoming a detective. Now and again I get inquiries from members of the public seeking information on past relatives from church registers.

At Christmas time we begin the story of another family and one that has a long family tree. When we come to church over Christmas we will hear at one time or another the words, '**Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way**'. What we don't hear are the first 17 verses of Matthew's Gospel which is the family tree that leads up to those words. In the Authorised Bible, that passage is full of 'begats'. As one writer says, '**this roots Jesus in time and place, in history and geography. You cannot understand who Jesus is and what he is about apart from that history and geography**'.

So, on Christmas Day, we begin the story that is told afresh each year. We go through the seasons leading up to the events of Holy Week and Easter and then the continuing story of how his life affected the world and how his message spread through the lives of those who had had their lives changed dramatically.

All who follow Jesus are part of his family tree; there are branches everywhere including those in Manuden, Berden, Quendon and Rickling, and the story goes on through us.

Chris Bishop

Please NOTE that, due to the Swine Flu problem, there is a ruling that at Communion Services only the wafer is given to members of the congregation. This has been in operation for a few months now and will continue to be so well into the new year.