

*Wishing your family  
a happy and peaceful Christmas  
from our family*



*Welcome to  
the Nativity Sheep Trail  
at Rathfarnham Parish Church*

*When we have something special  
coming up we take time to get ready.*

We have been preparing and getting ready during the season of Advent for the special celebration of Christmas.

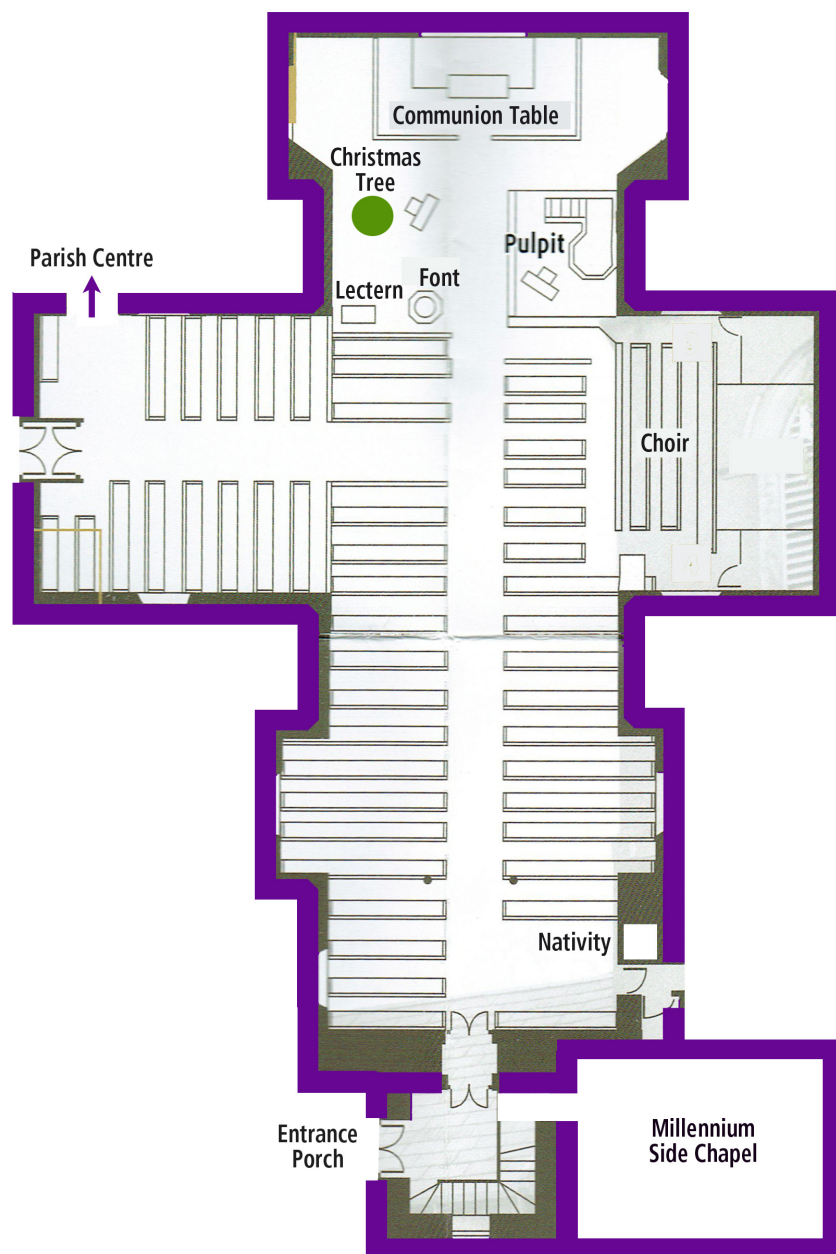
Take time out with your family on our Nativity Sheep Trail and help us to get ready for Christmas by finding all of our lost sheep!

Children, please make sure you don't lose any of the grown-ups!

Afterwards, come and join in the seasonal family activities which we have set up in the Parish Centre and enjoy some light refreshments.



Follow the trail around the Church, find the names of all the sheep and fill them in on your **Trail Booklet**. Afterwards, you can have it stamped in the Parish Centre next door and can enter our draw to be in with a chance of winning a prize.



## *Congratulations*

*- you have completed the Nativity Sheep Trail.*

Once you come into the **Parish Centre** and have your Trail Booklet stamped you can enter your name to be in with a chance of winning a prize. We hope **EWE** enjoy taking part in the family activities and games.



*We wish EWE a Merry Christmas!*

Although this is a **FREE** event for families, if you wish you can leave a donation in the basket provided to help cover costs.

This Nativity Sheep Trail has been adapted from the Messy Church Sheep Trail and the Advent Sheep Trail in Christ Church Cathedral.

# The Christmas Story

On December 25, we celebrate Christmas, the birthday of Jesus who was called Christ. Just before Jesus was born, his parents Mary & Joseph went to a town called Bethlehem. It was very busy and they couldn't find anywhere to stay. An innkeeper let them sleep in a stable with the animals. It turned out that this was the night that Jesus was born! Mary & Joseph wrapped the new baby in cloths and put him in a manger. A star appeared in the sky over the place where Jesus slept.

Out in the fields, some shepherds were looking after their sheep when suddenly an angel appeared! The shepherds were afraid! The angel told them not to be scared because he brought them **GOOD NEWS!** He told them about Jesus being born that night & that Jesus would be the **ONE** who would save the world. He told the shepherds to go see for themselves this baby Jesus. Then there were lots more angels who sang glory to God and peace on earth.

The shepherds hurried to see the baby Jesus. They knelt down before the manger and were so happy to have found the one sent by God. When they left, they went and told everyone they met the GOOD NEWS about Jesus!

Later on, some wise men came from the east to see Jesus. They brought special gifts because they knew that Jesus was a king. They were surprised that he had been born in a stable and not in a palace. They worshipped Jesus and gave him their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

**And so.....**

...each Christmas we celebrate Jesus being born. God gave us Jesus as a present to show us he loves us. Each Christmas we give each other presents to show people that we love them.



*We would like to warmly welcome you to any of our Christmas Services:*

Sun December 17th: **Carols by Candlelight** at 7pm.

Christmas Eve: **First Communion of Christmas** at 11pm.

Christmas Day: **Family Christmas Service** at 10.30am.

## 1. Entrance Porch

**Sheep's Names:**.....

***These sheep are here to greet and warmly welcome you to the Rathfarnham Parish Nativity Sheep Trail and Christmas Special.***

Every Sunday at our 10.30am Service, a family from the parish are here to greet and welcome you to the service and to give you a service sheet. There is always a warm welcome for everyone here and during the week there's lots going on for families and children, from **Crèche** and **Sunday Club** on a Sunday morning, **Toddlerzone** on Tuesday mornings, **Good News Club** on Tuesday evenings, **Youth Club** on Sunday evenings and our **ACE Service** (Adults, Children, Everyone) once a month. We are also delighted to be launching our new group for dads and their young children (0-5 years old) **WLTD0?** (Who Let The Dads Out?) on Saturday 3rd February 2018 between 2-3.30pm in the Parish Centre.

Today is an opportunity for families to get to know one another so please don't be shy!

***YOU MAY PASS SOME OTHER SHEEP ALONG THE WAY, BUT DON'T WORRY, YOU'LL COME BACK TO THEM LATER! KEEP WALKING TO YOUR NEXT STOP EACH TIME.***

## 2. Baptism Font

**Sheep's Names:**.....

***These sheep are hiding as they don't want to get wet!***

This decorated basin is our Church Font. The font holds the water used for Baptism. Baptism is very special as it marks the beginning of our journey with God when we are welcomed into God's family. As we grow in the parish family we get to know God and learn how much he loves us and how much we can love him.

***Can you count how many sides are on the font's basin? What is the font made of? You might like to look at how it's decorated.***

## 3. Lectern

**Sheep's Names:**.....

***These sheep like reading and hearing messages from God.***

This stand, which is made from brass is called a lectern, and it is the special place from which the Bible is read during services. As we spend time reading or hearing from the Bible we can get guidance on how God would like us to best live our lives. ***Do you have a favourite Bible story?***

## 4. Pulpit

**Sheep's Names:**.....

***These sheep have a super view from where they are!***

They are sitting up high on our Pulpit. During church services the sermon or address is sometimes preached from the Pulpit. When we listen to sermons they can help us to understand parts of the Bible that we might find difficult or puzzling. Sermons can also give us encouragement to grow in our journey with God.

## 5. Choir

**Sheep's Names:**.....

***What an exciting place for these sheep to be!***

This is where our choir sings! Music is an important part in our worship. Through music we can express how we feel. Music also helps us to offer our prayers and our praise to God. Maybe someday when you are older you would like to sing here with the choir. ***Do you have a favourite hymn?***

## 6. Millennium Side Chapel

**Sheep's Names:**.....

***These sheep just love this quiet space in the church.***

Sometimes our lives can get very busy and we need to take time and make space to be still and quiet. This can especially help us if we are facing something difficult. This is our **Millennium Side Chapel**, a place to reflect (think about our lives) and pray.

Sometimes there may be things we are sad about, things we are worried about, things we have said or done that we are sorry about. All of these things we can bring to God in prayer, that we might know of his help and healing. ***Would you like to take a few quiet moments just to sit here and make space to be with God?***

## 7. Communion Table

**Sheep's Names:**.....

***These sheep are helping us to get ready for a very important time in our service.***

It is at this table that we celebrate Holy Communion; we share bread and wine and we remember the Last Supper Jesus had with his special friends (disciples) while we also remember how Jesus died for us. When we remember Jesus through this special 'meal' that we share together we are saying a big 'thank you' to God for what he has done for us. We are also asking Him to help us to journey with Him.

## 8. The Nativity Set

**Sheep's Names:**.....

***You have almost finished the Nativity Sheep Trail.***

These sheep are so excited to be here, waiting for the arrival of baby Jesus on Christmas morning. The Nativity Set helps us remember and tell the story of the birth of Jesus. Mary and Joseph had to take a long journey and find a place to stay where Jesus would be born. The shepherds and wise men all travelled a long way to visit Baby Jesus in the stable where he was born. Angels brought messages to the shepherds telling them of the birth of Jesus and where to find him. A bright, shining star led the way so the wise men arrived safely. You are almost finished your journey on the Nativity Sheep Trail and have just one more stop to go.

## 9. The Manger (by the Christmas Tree)

**Sheep's Names:**.....

***You have reached the last stop on the Nativity Sheep Trail.***

These sheep are asking God to help them in this season of getting ready and preparing. Before you head into the **Parish Centre** and busy yourselves with all the things to make and do, you might like to sit for a while and ask God to help you in a certain way. You might have a certain prayer you would like to pray today. You are welcome to ***write your prayer on one of the yellow strips of paper and add it to the manger.*** Your prayer becomes part of the life of Rathfarnham Parish.