

**All Saints Church, Kempston
St James's Church, Biddenham**

Virtual Church News

21 November 2021

**Advent Sunday
4th Sunday**



Welcome to Virtual Church News. Hard copies will be circulated to those without access to email/social media. If you know of anyone without email who you think would benefit from a hard copy, please call Jacqui on 0778 6886 710 or email her at stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com

Our Sunday Services

1st Sunday of the month

- 8.00am Book of Common Prayer Holy Communion at All Saints
9.30am All Age Service (followed by said Holy Communion) at St James's

2nd Sunday of the month

- 9.30am Morning Worship at St James's
10.00am Holy Communion Service at All Saints
6.00pm Service of Evening Prayer at St James's

3rd Sunday of the month

- 8.00am Book of Common Prayer Holy Communion at All Saints
9.30am Holy Communion Service at St James's
7.00pm Revive: Coffee/Bible/Fellowship

4th Sunday of the month

- 9.30am Morning Worship at St James's**
10.00am Holy Communion Service at All Saints

5th Sunday of the month (when there is one)

- 9.30am Service at St James's
6.30pm Sung Evensong at St James's

We also hold online services during the week via Zoom at 9.00am on Monday and 6.00pm on Wednesday. To join these Zoom services, simply go to Zoom and enter meeting ID 998 074 6039.

We hope you will join us at our services as we explore a mixture of both traditional and new ways of worship.

This Week's Morning Worship

This week we welcome Rev John Bell who is Curate at Christ Church, Bedford to our 9.30am service at St James's.

Help Needed to Deliver Christmas Cards in Great Denham

If you can help, please collect a bundle or two from St James's Church. If you need help locating roads email stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com and we will send you a map. Thank you!

Message from Rev Eric Lomax

This is the first Sunday of Advent, the start of the Christian year, and our Gospel reading talks about us being ready for Jesus to return. It says that you do not know the day or the hour. Christ will come when he is ready to come. We should be alert for the signs of his presence.

As human beings, we have a tendency for all this to be mapped out, and when it comes to Christmas it has a tendency to turn Christians into real kill-joys, always reminding people that it is not Christmas yet; keep the celebrations at bay, don't sing Christmas Carols, leave the tinsel in the carrier bags in the shed, and don't fill December with partying.

With children this builds on their sense of excitement. 'How many sleeps now?' the child will ask, and parents find themselves counting down the numbers on the Advent Calendar as the great day approaches, but what if Christ does not work to our agenda and timing. What if he decides to come knocking on our door when he is ready, and not when we expect? The child may not get their presents until the 25th December, but Jesus is there for that child now, when he is ready.

Advent is the first season in the Christian year. The Church uses the dark and sombre purple as seasonal colour, and flowers and decorations should be absent until at least a week before Christmas. Everything is designed not to let us celebrate the birth of Jesus before God's time, and every year, God's time appears to be midnight on 24th December.

It looks back to the despair faced by the Jesus people as they experienced centuries of oppression by alien invaders; first the Syrians, then the Babylonians, then the Persians and the Greeks, then finally the Romans under the Emperor Pompey in 63 BC. Many of the Israelites longed for

Continued on next page...

Message from Rev Eric Lomax ... continued

... a Jewish King or Messiah who would deliver them and set them free. They were impatient and could not understand why this Messiah (Greek, Χριστός (Christ)) had not come.

When Jesus did come, he seemed to focus on something different from human invaders. He concentrated on the human heart. The real oppressor is the sin and death that separates us from God and from our neighbours. Jesus seemed to abolish the religion of law and power and replaced it, instead, with a message of love.

In retrospect, therefore, this period of waiting has become, for the Church, a time when we look in on ourselves, and wait for Jesus to come into our hearts to set us free with his love. Many may feel that Advent should be, for them, penitential and introspective, but actually it should never be prescriptive, but rather a recognition of the hope that Jesus brings, that he could come and deliver us at any moment he chooses.

My daughter was born at 12.15 on Christmas Eve, but she had been due a week and a half before. In the end, Anna Rose Lomax was born a happy and confident little baby. She was a Christmas baby, but she certainly was not intended to be a Christmas Baby. She came in her own time.

Last year I noticed one house not so far away, had filled their house with Christmas lights in the middle of October. Should this have made me, as a vicar, feel irritated? Should I see this as a sign of impatient secularism overriding our sense of timing as a Church? One of the things that particularly moved me about the house is that a month earlier, there was another light in the front window of that house that signified a bereavement in Baby Loss Awareness Month. It was moving that a family who had suffered such a hopeless loss, are so engaged with the real sense of a Christmas hope. I do not know if the Christ-child provides the core of Christmas for them, but I do know that Jesus was and is there for them.

Last year we faced the crisis that the traditional Christmas was cancelled because of COVID. This year it seems more likely that we will be able to celebrate again with our Church family, and for that matter, our own families. God's timing is not our timing, and the beauty of the Christian faith is that, despite our intended focus on the austerity of Advent, we are an Easter people who recall the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and also we celebrate, whatever happens, that God came to us in the infant Jesus, and provided us with a promise of his Kingdom; all will be healed, all will be made well, all will be restored, and his love can transform our lives.

So again, I said it last year, I will say it again; Light up your homes, put up the tree, be happy and have a very happy Advent. He is coming, and he is coming because he loves you.

God bless
Eric

A Reading for the Week

Luke 21:25-36

²⁵“There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. ²⁶People will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. ²⁷At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

²⁹He told them this parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. ³⁰When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. ³¹Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near.

³²“Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. ³³Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

³⁴“Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you suddenly like a trap. ³⁵For it will come on all those who live on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.”



Christmas

with **St James** and **All Saints** Churches

Sunday 5 December

9.30am Joint All Age Service with Nativity (St James)

Sunday 12 December

4.00pm Christingle Service (Church of the Transfiguration, Kempston – Joint with All Saints)

Saturday 18 December

9.00am Breakfast and Play Christingle (All Saints Hall)

Sunday 19 December

9.30am Christingle Service (St James)

4.00pm Nine Lessons and Carols (All Saints)

6.00pm Nine Lessons and Carols (St James)

Christmas Eve

4.00pm Carols in the Churchyard (St James)

11.30pm Midnight Communion (both churches)

Christmas Day

10.00am Joint All Age Service followed by Communion (St James)

St James's Church Christmas Sale

St James's Church Barn
Church End, Biddenham

5 December

10.30am – 12.00pm

Free entry



Christmas Cards

Biddenham Village Gifts
Cakes & Produce
Decorations & Bulbs
Coffee & Mince Pies

Raffle

Let us pray...

Dear God and Father,
Who loves us and cares for us.
Come to us,
Deliver us,
give us peace and healing.
In Jesus name
Amen.



Christmas Gifts

In addition to the Scenes of Biddenham Christmas cards (see below), we also have various Biddenham Village gifts which would make great Christmas presents. Call Jane George on 359014 for more details.

Revive - 3rd Sundays

A short act of worship over a coffee, then unfolding the scriptures together. 7.00pm in St James's Church Barn. Everyone invited.

Please note that there will be no Revive in December due to the Services of Nine Lessons & Carols.



Help Required for Christmas Sale

St James's Church Christmas Sale is on 5 December in the Church Barn (see left).

Would you be able to help on the day? Can you bake some cakes or make some jam/chutney etc. for the produce stall?

Please contact Sue Squire on 342373 if you are able to help in any way! Thankyou.

Prayer/Bible Study Groups

Join our prayer group at 8pm on the 1st/3rd Thursdays of the month via Zoom. Everyone welcome. We also have Bible study groups which are open to everyone.

Contact John Lambert for further details, or with any prayer requests. john.c.lambert@gmail.com

Christmas Tree Festival



St Paul's Church, Bedford MK40 1SQ

Wednesday 1st to
Saturday 4th December

10.00am - 5.00pm

Sunday 5th December

12noon - 4.00pm



Sponsored by



Admission: £3
Children under 16 free entry

Daily Concerts by
Community Groups

More information ... 01234 340163

Tag us on ... [f](#) Bedford Christmas Tree Festival

Scenes of Biddenham Christmas Cards



Raising funds for St James's Church
Mixed packs of 5 cards,
£3 per pack or £5 for two packs

Call Sue (342373) or Jacqui (356993)
for further details

Limited stock so buy early!

Bedford Foodbank

Please continue to support this valuable charity and help them prevent hunger in our community.

They are again asking people to consider a Reverse Advent Calendar this Christmas. Contribute something each day of December and deliver your contributions from 4-7 January to replenish their stocks following Christmas.

For further details of current requirements and the Reverse Advent Calendar go to www.bedford.foodbank.org.uk

Rev Eric Lomax Contact Details

Tel: 01234 328452

Mob: 07805 879537

Email: Rev.ejlomax@gmail.com

Suggested Music for this week

Come thou long expected Jesus

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WBGx_4PxO3g

Advent candles tell their story (Advent 1)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p0cZG6dvWIY>

The thrill of hope - Advent Hymn

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gNuY6I4OtoE>

Advent Calendar

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQBPBhQCsxE>

The All Age Bit

This Sunday is Advent Sunday - the start of Advent. But what is Advent? Do you know? It is the period before Christmas when we get ready for the coming of Jesus. The Gospel reading for this week can be found on page 2. In this reading, the disciples have been marvelling at their Temple surroundings, when Jesus tells them about the temporary nature of worldly beauty and talks of a time when the Temple will be destroyed. Jesus tells them to be alert to the heavenly signs of the kingdom soon to come. We too are encouraged to be prepared for what lies ahead and not to be fearful. How will we choose to respond? Will we duck and take cover? Will we take responsibility by making small changes to our lives and, with God's help, stand up confidently for Jesus?

Activities

Baubles: Can you make a bauble to hang on your Christmas tree (or to bring into church and hang on the church tree) with an advent candle on it! Cut out a bauble shape from some card and punch a hole in the top. Thread a piece of wool or string through the hole and tie it so that it can be used to hang the bauble. Then draw or paint a picture of an advent candle on one side of the card. Why not write your favourite Bible verse (or favourite Christmas carol) on the back?

Blindfold listening: Play this with your friends or family. Blindfold one person and tell them that one other person will give them clear instructions on what to do e.g. stand up, sit down, turn around, raise left arm. Have everyone else trying to confuse the blindfolded person by saying other instructions, all at the same time. This is just like us trying to listen to God when there is so much else going on around us!

Song

Turn your eyes upon Jesus

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5X85txs60yY>

Prayer

Heavenly Father, forgive us for getting so excited about Christmas and making our Christmas lists that we forget about the coming of your Son, Jesus. Thank you for coming with us on our Advent journey and help us to stand up for you amid all the festivities. Amen.

Resources taken from Roots