

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

Virtual Church News

**2nd January 2022
Second Sunday of Christmas**



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 Normal Sunday Services

1st Sunday of the month

- 8.00am** Book of Common Prayer Holy Communion at All Saints
9.30am Joint 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.

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.



Reading for the Week

Luke 2. 15-21

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.' So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.'

Message from Rev Eric Lomax

Today in the church calendar we remember the naming and circumcision of Jesus. This feast goes all the way back to the 6th Century and it reminds us of Jesus' Jewish heritage. The Jewish Law demanded Jewish male babies had to be circumcised exactly a week after birth, and in circumcision, he became a member of God's chosen people, and also he was given his name to identify him as a direct descendent of Abraham.

In normal circumstances, the first born son, at his circumcision, was given the name of his father, so this particular child should have been named Joseph after his apparent dad, and equally, John the Baptist should, by right have been named Zechariah, after his Father. The trouble is that Luke is very careful to remind us that these two children had their origins not in Abraham, but from God himself. For this reason, the son of Elizabeth is called John, and the son of Mary is called Jesus, the name that Mary was presented with by an angel. *Continued on next page...*

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Message continued...

The name Jesus is the Hebrew name Joshua. It was a common name in Israel, which meant 'God is our saviour.' It would have reminded the Israelites of the way God brought his people from slavery in Egypt, through the wilderness, and then into his promised land. The name is rarely used amongst Christians, because the name of Jesus is, according to Paul, the name which is above all names, to which every knee will bow. Parents who call their sons Joshua rarely understand that this is the same name as Jesus.

In terms of his circumcision, Luke wants his readers to see that Jesus completes God's work in Israel and, for this reason, he does not want to skip Jesus' circumcision. To Luke, Israel had missed the point of God's chosen people. God wanted Israel to recognise God's true call. God's promise to Abraham was not that they would be self contained and focussed on themselves, but rather that through Abraham, all the families of the earth would be blessed. The true Israel would be instruments of God's love and grace to all people, and not just to themselves. It was so important, therefore, that Luke showed Jesus to be a true Israelite, who fully followed the law of Moses. Just as Adam was shown to be a curse to the whole world, bringing sinfulness into the world, by his obedience to God, even to circumcision, and then ultimately to death on the cross, Jesus would be the new Adam who brought the fullness of God's blessings to the world; 'As in Adam all die, so in Christ, All should be made alive.' (1 Corinthians 15:22).

Before Jesus, God's work was incomplete in Israel. With Jesus, however, his work is finished (John 19:30). Luke sets the scene for this in Jesus' circumcision. The early church Fathers saw Christ's circumcision as fulfilling the final demands of the sacrificial religion of Judaism, the shedding of Christ's blood at his circumcision, foreshadowing the one final sacrifice of Christ's blood on the cross. The circumcision of the boy children of Israel was incomplete, because it was passed from one generation to the next, while Jesus' death on the cross meant that the shedding of blood through circumcision was no longer necessary.

Here, in Christ's circumcision two themes come together. We are liberated from the sacrificial demands of Jesus, because Jesus' blood was shed on the cross for us. Not only this, but in Jesus' name, which is above every name, the promise made to Abraham is fulfilled. Because of Jesus all people are blessed, and that includes each one of us.

This celebration, always for us, marks the beginning of a new year. Our new year resolutions for 2022, whatever they may be, help us to focus on what we will do for ourselves, to make the coming year better. The story of the naming and circumcision of Jesus gives us a new, more hopeful perspective on this. We are reminded that whatever we do, it is actually Jesus who saves us, and completes the promises that God has made. It is God's grace and love, demonstrated in Jesus that gives us a real and lasting hope in Jesus, and our new year resolution should really be that we put our trust in him, and not in ourselves.

God bless
Eric

Let us pray...

Almighty God,
whose blessed Son was circumcised
in obedience to the law for our sake
and given the Name that is above every name:
give us grace faithfully to bear his Name,
to worship him in the freedom of the Spirit,
and to proclaim him as the Saviour of the world;
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.



The All Age Bit

This week's reading (see page 1) is all about the Shepherds visiting baby Jesus. In the Christmas carol "In the bleak midwinter" the last verse says '*What can I give Him, poor as I am? If I were a shepherd I would bring a lamb, if I were a wise man I would do my part - yet what I can I give Him, give my heart*'. These words show us that it doesn't matter whether we have material things or not, all God wants is for us to bring ourselves to Him and He will give us the gift of Jesus.

Activity

Can you make a sheep? Perhaps you can draw one and colour it in, or make a model!

Song

Blessed by your name

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rw4H5t3TwHM>

Prayer

Dear God, not everyone gets presents at Christmas. We pray for those people who weren't able to get excited about seeing lots of presents under a Christmas tree this year. Please help them to know that you are the best present; a gift given to everyone. Amen.

Bedford Foodbank

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

For further details of current requirements go to www.bedford.foodbank.org.uk

All Saints' Table Top Sale

The next All Saints' Missions Table Top Sale will be held on Sunday 9th January. All donations of home grown and home made produce would be very welcome. The cash proceeds from the sale of the produce will go to the PCC's chosen charities.