

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

## **Virtual Church News**

**12th December 2021**

**3rd Sunday of Advent**

**2nd 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

### **Important: Face Coverings**

Please note that, in line with new Government guidance, it is once again a legal requirement to wear a face covering when in a church building unless you are exempt. Please help us all to keep each other safe!

### **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.



## **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)

### **Message from Rev Eric Lomax**

The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah. John answered them all, "I baptise you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." And with many other words John exhorted the people and proclaimed the good news to them.

When my children were young, I remember reading both of them a lovely story called 'The Star that fell,' by Karen Hayles.

*Continued on next page...*

## Message from Rev Eric Lomax continued

It told the story about a star that fell to earth. It was picked up by a fox who used it to light his den, so that his cubs felt safe in the dark. A badger borrowed it to use it to light his way through the woods, an owl then placed it in her nest, so that she could find her way back. Then the star was found by a squirrel, then a stag, a magpie, and then a dog. Finally a little girl found it, and hoarded it under her bed amongst her special things. Gradually the star began to fade. It was her dad who told her that the star belonged in the sky, so she had to let it go. When she released it through her window, it shone brightly in the sky for everybody, including herself to see.

The old religion of Israel could, at times, be a selfish religion. God was kept safe, in his temple away from everybody else.

John the Baptist was unusual, in that he took the faith of Israel away from the Temple in Jerusalem, across the river Jordan, and back into the wilderness where, before settling, the people of Israel had wandered for forty years. There, John could put Israel and the Gentiles back on a level playing field.

John the Baptist did not invent Baptism. Baptism was invented by the pharisees to give the gentiles the opportunity to enter the Jewish faith. They were expected to take part in a ritual of purity that may, indeed, have impacted on the body, but did nothing really for the core of the person, the heart. John was different in that he drew no distinction between Jew and Gentiles. For him, Baptism was an outward sign of an inner repentance. Not only this but entering the Jordan was highly symbolic for a faith-built nation who believed that they had passed through the Jordan into the freedom of the promised land. 'Pass back through the Jordan,' he was saying, 'go back into the wilderness and find God again, but this time he is the God of the Gentiles as well as the Israelites, the lost, as well as the found.'

Then came Jesus, and he was greater than even John had imagined. In him, the God, restricted and imprisoned in the walls of the Temple was set free, and he demonstrated that this God was not the God of a singularly identified space, but rather the God of everything, and nobody was outside the scope of his love.

### 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 the their stocks following Christmas.

For further details of current requirements and the Reverse Advent Calendar go to [www.bedford.foodbank.org.uk](http://www.bedford.foodbank.org.uk)

As the star hangs over the Manger in Bethlehem, we are reminded that with all the best intentions, taking that star from the sky, and limiting its light to the forest and the trees, and selfishly hiding it amongst our special things, is not the way of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. His light shines not only in the chosen city, but in the darkness of his wilderness. His love only has meaning in the hearts of those who experience no love, the lost, the sick, the alienated, the forgotten, the broken and those excluded by the boundaries of religion, because God, in Jesus Christ, is not religion, he is the God who gives us the 'power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,' (Ephesians 3:18)

God bless  
Eric

## Reading for the Week

Luke 3:7-18

### New International Version

John said to the crowds coming out to be baptised by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."

"What should we do then?" the crowd asked.

John answered, "Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same."

Even tax collectors came to be baptised. "Teacher," they asked, "what should we do?"

"Don't collect any more than you are required to," he told them.

Then some soldiers asked him, "And what should we do?"

He replied, "Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely - be content with your pay."

## Suggested Music for this week

Go peaceful, in gentleness

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_fNnWEnCiIU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_fNnWEnCiIU)

In the Lord, I'll be ever thankful

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2hbH6kznJeA>

Rejoice in the Lord Always

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kkh6WMcV\\_ic](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kkh6WMcV_ic)

May the mind of Christ my Saviour

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gE5fOXSymBc>

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# 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!**

## At the Heart of Christmas

The Church of England's theme for this Christmas is 'At the Heart of Christmas'. A special app is available to download for free which includes reflections, Bible readings, prayers and family Advent activities and details of events and services taking place locally. For more details and to download the app go to <https://www.churchofengland.org/our-faith/what-we-believe/advent-and-christmas/heart-christmas-our-2021-advent-and-christmas>

The At the Heart of Christmas reflections are also available on the free Daily Hope phone line - 0800 804 8044.



## 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.**



## Let us pray...

Dear God and Father  
As we move closer to Christmas,  
We begin to celebrate the light of  
your love,  
That shines in the darkness of the world.  
As you have showed your love to us,  
Give us the courage to share,  
And to show that love to others,  
In Jesus Christ name,  
Amen



## Christmas Gifts

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

## The All Age Bit

This week John the Baptist shares three kinds of teaching - a warning to the crowds not to rely on their religious pedigree, advice on some simple ways to live justly, and a prophetic promise about the greatness of the one who is to come. John wards people to prepare for judgement. He recognises their need to change, urges repentance and instructs them to show the fruits of that repentance in their lives. So what do you think God is calling us to do? What do we need to change and what practical actions will make a difference to those around us?

### Activities

**Colour changing:** For this you will need some clear cups/glasses and some food colouring. Fill the glasses with water and then put some drops of food colouring in - watch as the water slowly changes colour! What happens if you stir it? Today's story is all about changing our behaviour in small ways, just like the colouring gradually changes the colour of the water.

**Reverse advent calendar:** If you are able to, why not start a reverse advent calendar for the Foodbank either as a family or with some friends (see their website for details). Between now and Christmas, put one item of non-perishable foods into a box (or bag) and then take it to the Foodbank in the New Year.

### Song

Change my heart O God  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DwudqCO7mSQ>

### Prayer

For all the good things, all the good people and all the gifts of Advent, God, we thank you. For all we've been told, all we've been shown, and all we've learned of you, God, we thank you. For all that is promised, all that will come, and all that we'll learn of you, God, we thank you. Amen.

*Resources taken from Roots*