

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

Virtual Church News

25th/26th December 2021

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.

*** Please note there will be no service at All Saints this Sunday.**



Christmas

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

Christmas Eve

- 4.00pm Carols in the Churchyard (St James)
11.30pm Midnight Communion (St James & Online*)

Christmas Day

- 10.00am Joint All Age Service (St James)
* *Via Zoom (Meeting ID: 998 074 6039)*

Reading for the Week

Luke 2:29-32

"Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel."

Photos of St James's Church

We are currently in the process of updating the St James's website and would like to include photographs of both the church and its people! If you have any suitable photographs, please email them to stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com

Please note that written consents will need to be obtained from anyone who is identifiable in the photos (we can obtain these where needed) and you must own the copyright (i.e. you must have taken them, not e.g. a professional photographer).

Thank you.

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Message from Rev Eric Lomax

What are your deepest needs?

As I write this, I have just conducted a funeral of a man who was part of the Windrush generation. The first part of the funeral was in All Saints Church, and the second part was a committal, in the freezing cold December air, at a graveside in Kempston cemetery. Knowing a little about the Windrush generation, it felt an honour to conduct the funeral of somebody who not only had that history, but also, from all accounts seemed a thoroughly lovely man. I did what I often do at the graveside, I read the words in the reading above. They are powerful words, because they are indicative of a life that is complete and well lived; 'Lord now let your servant go in peace, your word has been fulfilled.'

I remember presiding over a funeral, once, that was much more tragic. The man I buried (not in these parishes, I add) was a poor man who had a tragic background. The man had worked very hard all his life, but never achieved what he wanted to achieve. He had also spent a significant part of his income on gambling, and had never achieved that 'big win,' to make him rich, that he had always hoped for. Not so fulfilled, in the sense that his wife was filled with so many regrets. I cannot remember whether I prayed this same prayer; 'Lord now let your servant go in peace, your word has been fulfilled,' but I imagine that those words would have fallen on deaf ears anyway.

God's people are represented by an old man called Simeon who has waited all his life for the fulfilment of an undisclosed promise. Clearly he had worked the whole time in the Jerusalem temple, serving a faith that believed wholeheartedly that God was going to set them free with a King, a leader, or a Messiah. My God, they needed the Lord to set them free, because they had, as a nation experienced oppression, slavery, exile and invasion by foreign armies. God had to intervene, and as much as they speculated, they had no idea how.

Then, this old man, who had been a part of this tradition, encounters two careworn, battered and scruffy parents. These parents carried in their arms a tiny, fragile baby, the infant Jesus, born on Christmas Day. There would have been no way to distinguish this baby from any other baby, except that, somehow, Simeon knew that this was the promise fulfilled, everything he had all his life dreamed of and hoped for. That is when he spoke, on the edge of singing, the words we see above.

This man, like his people had been waiting for the fulfilment of a promise, that undefinable win of Israel. This was not a huge financial win, but something intangible, a victory of the heart, the victory of love in the midst of a broken society. Simeon saw in this baby that God had intervened in the world, and he was going to bring about freedom, liberation, justice, based not on a religious system, but on love.

Those Christians who worship this Christ-child are not a religious people but a community who, because of what Jesus has done, subscribe to a new way of being a loving, hopeful and serving family, known as the church.

Simeon had only seen a scruffy, snotty-nosed baby, nothing else, but his faith led him to believe that in his old age, all his hopes had been fulfilled in this child. He had no idea how this love would be demonstrated, but he did have the wisdom to understand that before the end, more pain would follow (Luke 2:35)

What are your deepest needs?

As a vicar, not only do I do lots of funerals, but I also baptise lots of babies. Just like Simeon saw in the Christ-child, I can see in the children I baptise, an enormous amount of potential for love. This is especially true for the children who, at a very early age are taught to reflect the love of Jesus in their lives.

At Christmas, behind all the festivities, we encounter, like Simeon, a baby. The bible tells us that this baby is the son of God, who has come into our world as an outward manifestation of God's love for us. To accept that love, and allow that love to enter your life, and the lives of your family, truly sets yourself, and your children on the road to fulfilment, to satisfy your deepest needs. This really depends on how much of a priority you give to the infant Jesus this Christmas.

Wishing you a very happy, and Christ-centred Christmas.

Amen

God bless
Eric

Let us pray...

Eternal God,
in the stillness of this night
you sent your almighty Word
to pierce the world's darkness with the light of sal-
vation:

give to the earth the peace that we long for
and fill our hearts with the joy of heaven
through our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

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

Suggested Services and Music for this week

- Carols from Kings - Christmas Eve, 6.15pm on BBC 2
- Midnight Mass from St Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham - Christmas Eve, 11.45pm on BBC1
- Christmas Morning from Coventry Cathedral - Christmas Day, 10.00am on BBC1

Links to online Church of England services can be found at <https://www.churchofengland.org/our-faith/what-we-believe/advent-and-christmas/advent-and-christmas-services> . These include:

- Midnight Mass, 10pm Christmas Eve,
- Christmas Day Family service, 9am
- Service of Morning Prayer, 9am Boxing Day.

O Magnum Mysterium

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GJrXhjt7Gwo>

Come and join the celebration

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AhW51VX3-SM>

On Christmas Night all Christians Sing

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0qo4_DHvTGQ

Tomorrow shall be my dancing day

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

Christmas Lullaby

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uMbQEjOVpP0>

At the Heart of Christmas

The Church of England's theme for this Christmas is 'At the Heart of Christmas'. An 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.



The All Age Bit

Do you love presents? They come in all shapes and sizes; some beautifully wrapped with lovely sparkly ribbon, others just wrapped in brown paper. But it's not the wrapping that matters, is it? It is what is inside that counts. The worst wrapped present could be the best gift of all! Sometimes what is inside is much more special than we anticipate. Christmas is a time to remind ourselves of a very important gift; one that was in a very peculiar wrapping and found in the most unexpected place. The greatest gift that Christians celebrate at Christmas is the birth of Jesus. God, who created everything around us, who created us and loves us so much, wanted to be with us, so he did an extraordinary thing. He came down to earth to be with us in the form of a baby. Now Jesus wasn't born in a fancy palace, and placed in a beautiful cot with a comfy mattress and the finest toys. No, he was born in a smelly stable and put in a manger - a wooden trough that animals eat from. Any many people - shepherds and wise men - travelled to meet this special baby. They wanted to share the news that Jesus was born. Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus at Christmas - the greatest gift from God. Not clothes, toys, games or chocolate, but the gift of himself. He came to be with us, as a baby, to share his love with each one of us. So as you open your presents this year, remember this greatest gift, that came to all of us, not in a grand palace, but in a most surprising place - a stable, wrapped up in straw and lying in a manger.

Activity

Spend some quiet time this Christmas (perhaps just before bed) to close your eyes and think about what Christmas means to you - is it family time? No school? Fun with friends? New presents? Or is it a difficult time of year - do you feel sad? Lonely? God wants Christmas to be a special time for us all as we remember his greatest gift.

Prayer

Dear God, the best of presents are given with love, powered by love, shining and bleeping and buzzing with love. Thank you for your gift of Jesus, shining with love. Amen.

Above Resources taken from Roots

The Church of England have links to some videos which you might want to watch:

The Nativity

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CO_ubBfLc9Q&t=1s

Jesus and the Teachers

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sxpgl2b7FEo>