

NEWS FROM THE PEWS

St John's: A place of worship where all are welcome

Church Services in December

The National Coronavirus Lockdown is due to be lifted on 2nd December but that does not mean that we shall be free of restrictions through until Christmas. All of the services listed below are planned but if restrictions are reimposed, the schedule will be amended. However, our 10.30am services will continue to be streamed live on Facebook.

While Coronavirus measures are still in place, we must continue to observe social distancing within the building. This means that the size of the congregation at each service will be limited to approximately 30 people.

6th December:

9.00am Holy Communion (BCP)
10.30am All-Age Communion (CW)

13th December:

9.00am Holy Communion (BCP)
10.30am Morning Worship (CW)

20th December:

9.00am Holy Communion (BCP)
10.30am Morning Worship (CW)
6.30pm Online Carol Service

24th December & 25th December:

Please turn to back page for more information.

27th December:

9.00am No Service
10.30am Morning Worship (CW)

3rd January: Epiphany

9.00am Holy Communion (BCP)
10.30am All-Age Service (CW)

BCP - Book of Common Prayer

CW - Common Worship (Modern Language)

Contacts

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Pastoral Worker:

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A View from the Vicarage

At the time of the first Christmas, two thousand years ago, the nation of Israel was looking for a saviour. Living under Roman occupation, they were looking for release from foreign oppression and seeking an improvement in their living standards. It was their hope and prayer that God would raise up a saviour (a 'Messiah') from amongst them, someone who would rout the Romans and put their country back on its feet again.

As 2020 draws to a close, many of us will have similar feelings to those first century citizens of Palestine. Coronavirus has done much harm to our nation's health, liberty and economy. Our society has been rocked by the regulations imposed to try and tackle the pandemic. Like the Jews of Jesus' day, we long for greater freedom and a better quality of life in the year ahead.

But when Jesus Christ was born, he confounded all expectations. Jesus was indeed the Heaven-sent Messiah, but his agenda was about revelation and redemption rather than political revolution. In the wisdom of God, he knew that this world's greatest need (both then and now) is to know and love him. God's Son came into our world to reveal his Father's character and invite us into relationship with him.

This Christmas we all hope to spend quality time with our loved ones - those family and friends we are in close relationship with. The wonder of the first Christmas is that Jesus came to bring us into a relationship with a loving Heavenly Father. A relationship that can give deep joy, hope and meaning to our lives, whatever 2021 holds in store.

Happy Christmas!

Phil Weston

News

- **Bible Study** — The final (seventh) week of our current study will take place on Monday, 14th December during which we shall be having a look at the Christmas message itself. If you have not been able to join us so far but would like to take part or listen to this 'one-off' session please send an e-mail to alan@ashtonhayes.church to get joining instructions for this Zoom meeting.

Our next study will begin on Monday, 11th January and will consist of six sessions looking at the Book of Ezekiel — a book with messages of Judgement and Restoration. Further details can be obtained as above.

- **Food Bank** — As you are stocking up with Christmas goodies, please remember the Food Bank. Drop off points are behind the counter in the shop and in the porch of Brook House. (The drop off point in the church will be reinstated soon.)
- **Building Project Update** — After nine months' work, our building project is now close to completion. During November our underfloor heating became operational, and our new audio-visual system has also been installed. All that remains is the addition of a new glass front door, hopefully in time for Christmas! We would like to express our gratitude to our main contractors (Cartwright Pond), our carpenters (Cheshire Woodworking), and our audio-visual suppliers (Audioworks) for all their hard work. And thank you to everyone in the village whose fundraising efforts helped bring our vision to reality!
- **Thank You** — Alan Goodall would like to thank everyone who sent best wishes and cards prior to and after his recent hip operation. He says that whilst the operation has been a success the recovery of his mobility is expected to be rather slow.



100 Club

The winning numbers in
October's draw were
51 2 30 52

Pause for Thought by Alan Downen



Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world and everyone went to their own town to register. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

Luke 2:1-5

We are living in strange times: even as I write, we are in the midst of our second national coronavirus lockdown. And so I was amused when I read on Facebook recently saying that Christmas has had to be cancelled because the Wise Men were facing a travel ban, the shepherds had been furloughed and the inn has been shutdown due to tier 3 regulations. But in reality, nothing could be further from the truth.

We may not be able to sing carols together in the church this year; the attendance at our "midnight" communion service on Christmas Eve may have to be limited due to Covid regulations; there may even be a restriction on family gatherings on Christmas Day, but none of these things can affect the true meaning of Christmas. Mary and Joseph travelled from Nazareth to Bethlehem to register for a census but that night saw the birth of their son, the true Saviour of our World, the one who, even in times of restrictions and darkness, is still able to provide light and hope for everyone.

Christmas isn't cancelled, it's just a bit different this year, but the Christ Child will be born again in our hearts if we let him in. Have a blessed and peaceful Christmas everyone.

Nativity Trail

There is still time to join the Nativity Trail this Christmas. All you need to do is create and display a Nativity scene or character outside your home or in a window to be seen over Christmas from 18th December onwards. It doesn't need to be professional but it will help us all to celebrate the birth of Jesus on our walks.



Please contact Margaret Papworth on 07803242783 or drop her an email; margaretpapworth@icloud.com to be included on the trail guide. She looks forward to hearing from you.

Christmas Toy Appeal 2020

We are unable to have a Toy Collection for Save the Family this year. However, if you would like to make a donation to enable *Save the Family* to buy Christmas presents for the children on your behalf, please do so via this giving page:

<https://bit.ly/ChristmasToys2020>



In Memory

Colin Cook Lived on Manley Common and worked as an agricultural contractor. Sadly he died Sunday 15th November, at the age of 59 years.

His funeral was held in church on Monday 30th November and was followed by burial in churchyard.

Our thoughts and prayers are with his partner Carol, son Daniel, daughter Emma and her partner Dennis.

(Emma was once a Rose Queen and Colin drove a tractor to tow a float to the Fete.)

Christmas at St John's

St John's Christmas programme will be a little different this year, due to coronavirus restrictions. In particular, attendance in church will be subject to a maximum of 40 people, face masks must be worn and social distancing should be observed between different household groups. Our Christmas services will include:

- **Sunday 20th December, 6.30pm – Online Carol Service** – A service of Bible readings and traditional Christmas carols – available to watch live on Zoom or Facebook.
- **Christmas Eve, 3.30pm – Christingle and Crib Service** – A service in Church for children and their families. Pre-booking is essential for this service, as space will be very limited – please book online at Eventbrite to obtain your free ticket using this link:
bit.ly/Crib-Service2020
- **Christmas Eve, 11pm – Holy Communion** – Our traditional midnight service in Church.
- **Christmas Day, 10am – Family Service** – A service in Church, suitable for all ages.

All our Christmas services will also be live-streamed on our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/stjohnashton

A prayer for all those affected by coronavirus

Keep us, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy. Sustain and support the anxious, be with those who care for the sick, and lift up all who are brought low; that we may find comfort knowing that nothing can separate us from your love in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

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