

NEWS FROM THE PEWS

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

Church Services in January

All of the services listed below are planned for January but if the Coronavirus restrictions change or a lockdown is 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.

3rd January:

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

10th January:

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

17th January:

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

24th January:

9.00am Matins (BCP)
10.30am Holy Communion (CW)

31st January:

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

BCP - Book of Common Prayer
CW - Common Worship (Modern Language)

Contacts

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Readers:

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Pastoral Worker:

Margaret Papworth 01829 759086

Churchwardens:

Hilary Clegg 01829 458453
Alan Goodall 01829 752130



100 Club

The winning numbers in
November's draw were
59 68 4 56 67

And the winning numbers in
December's draw were
57 65 70 48

A View from the Vicarage

Over Christmas we had a conjunction in the night sky, as Jupiter and Saturn came into alignment for the first time in twenty years. It was visible for a few days during December - something for astronomers to train their telescopes on during these cold winter nights.

The season of Epiphany reminds us of Magi who were devoted students of the stars 2000 years ago. These Magi were men from the East rather than Jews, and probably educated laymen rather than royalty. One day these 'wise men' saw something in the heavens that truly caught their attention - possibly a conjunction like the one we've just seen ourselves. Whatever it was, the wise men believed this 'star' was a sign that humanity's Saviour had been born, and set off to greet him. But this star alone wasn't sufficient to discover the precise coordinates of the Christ-child. Divine revelation was required to pinpoint his location. They had to consult the Old Testament to discover that he would be born in Bethlehem.

You see, common sense can only get us so far in life. As we look ahead to the New Year and see all the opportunities and challenges in store, we need God's guidance. To live wisely in this world we need revelation as well as reason. To journey well through life we need God's words to navigate by. So why not challenge yourself to read a short passage of the Bible each day as we enter 2021? Why not resolve to spend a few minutes each day digesting God's words and meditating on their meaning. You might even become as wise as those (three?) famous Magi!

Happy New Year,
Phil Weston

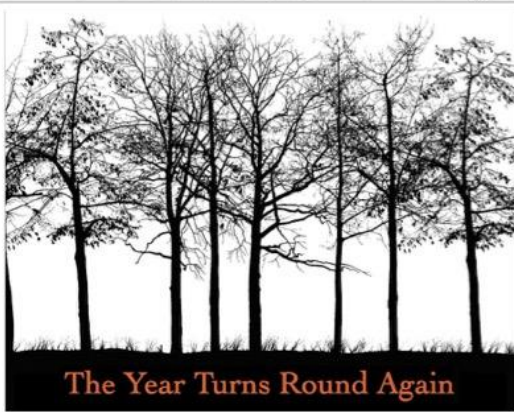


News

- **Bible Study** — Our next study will begin on Monday, 11th January and will consist of six sessions looking at the Book of Ezekiel — a book filled with messages of Judgement and Restoration. Further details can be obtained as above. For more information please send an e-mail to alan@ashtonhayes.church including joining instructions for this series of Zoom meetings.
- **Christmas Services** — Thank you to everyone who joined one of our services in-person or online over Christmas. Coronavirus restrictions on attendance and on singing meant that our celebrations had to be rather quieter than usual, but thanks to our flower arrangers the new church interior looked very festive and we made full use of our new audio-visual system to create a seasonal atmosphere!
- **Building Project** — Our renovations passed another milestone in December, with the completion of our vestry reorganisation, an upgrade to our CCTV system and the installation of a new glass front door. We look forward to welcoming many of you through our new entrance over the coming year!
- **Save the Family** — Thanks to your generosity we have managed to send £775 to *Save the Family* towards toys for the children this Christmas. **Thank You!**



A Happy New Year to all our readers.



The Year Turns Round Again

Pause for Thought by Alan Downen

**Cruel winter cuts through like the reaper,
The old year lies withered and slain.
But like Barleycorn who rose from the grave
The new year will rise up again.
And the snow falls, and the wind calls
And the year turns round again.** *John Tams*

I first came across the words of this song over thirty years ago when the theatre club performed "Lark Rise to Candleford" in the Village Hall (some of you may recall this memorable play) but I notice that the song has more recently received a reprise in "War Horse". However, whichever play you may listen to, the sentiments remain the same.

We are now in the midst of a winter following, what has been for many, a disastrous year full of isolation, cancellations, disappointments, fears and even bereavements: some have been affected by the virus whilst others have managed to avoid it all together. But the Old Year has now ended and with the New Year comes new hope.

There are already signs of new life in the fields around us: soon there will be a new crop of lambs and the wild flowers will bloom again as nature's annual cycle continues. And as I write, the Oxford vaccine is about to receive its license which means that there is even more reason for hope.

We have endured a lot during the last twelve months but in his letter to the Church in Rome, Paul reminds us that, "endurance produces character, and character produces hope". So may the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing, so that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit as this New Year begins.



Nativity Trail 2020

A heartfelt thank you to the 17 households who opened their front gardens or windows to display Nativity scenes across the Parish. Including the Church and the School there were a total of 19 contributions. The varied creativity certainly added to the interest and intrigue of the onlookers. Here are just a few examples. Well done all of you and a special thank you for maintaining the scenes whilst storm Bella was around.

On the journey there were 18 letters to collect to reveal a mystery Christmas message – entries have been collected in the box outside the shop and the winning entry will be announced in the New Year.

The trail would not have been such a success without the excellent support of so many people in the community who have made a special effort to visit – a big thank you to you all, your support it is much appreciated. Let's hope this is the start of an annual event.



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