

NEWS FROM THE PEWS

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

Church Services in December

4th December:

9.00am Holy Communion (BCP)
10.30am Annual Toy Service (CW)
6.30pm Evensong (CW)

11th December:

9.00am Holy Communion (BCP)
10.30am Morning Worship (CW)
& Sunday Club

18th December:

9.00am Holy Communion (BCP)
10.30am Morning Worship (CW)
& Youth Club
6.30pm 9 Lessons and Carols

24th December: Christmas Eve

4.00pm Family Christingle

25th December: Christmas Day

10.00am All-Age Communion (CW)

1st January:

10.30am All-Age Communion (CW)

BCP - Book of Common Prayer

CW - Common Worship (Modern Language)

Contacts

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St John's 0-90's Café

Open to greet you on Thursday 1st and Thursday 15th December, from 2.30 'til 4pm. Whether you are aged from "nought to nineties", all are welcome to join us for drinks, chat, play and cake!

A View from the Vicarage

For the first time ever, the FIFA World Cup coincides with Christmas this year. The world's biggest football competition is being held in Winter to avoid the scorching Summer temperatures of Qatar. This small middle eastern nation, half the size of Wales and with a population of just 3 million, is playing host to a tournament expected to be watched by well over 3 billion people worldwide. Even the Premier League has been put on 'pause' to allow this unprecedented event to take place.

It is not just the timing of this year's tournament that has drawn attention. Qatar has been a controversial choice as host country. Questions have been raised about the criteria FIFA used to choose it as a venue (was corruption involved?) and about the poor human rights record of its government. Few people expected this tiny nation to be selected to host an event of such global significance.

There are more than a few parallels between the circumstances of this World Cup and the first Christmas two thousand years ago. Then, as now, a tiny middle eastern nation played host to an event of international significance. No one would have predicted that the nation of Israel would have been the birthplace of the Son of God. The little town of Bethlehem was not one of the great capitals or conurbations of the first century – quite the opposite. As a small community living under the ruthless rule of King Herod, the people of Bethlehem had first-hand experience of corrupt government and human rights' abuses.

Initially it was only angels who could see the global significance of the birth of Mary's child. As one said to the shepherds on the hills outside Bethlehem: "I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ, the Lord" (Lk 2:10-11).

This Christmas, let us all 'pause' once again to remember and celebrate the birth of Jesus. His life, death and resurrection revealed God to a lost world and secured the salvation of all who trust in him. Even if England experience an early exit from the World Cup, the coming of Christ is a victory we can all celebrate this December!

Merry Christmas,
Phil Weston

In Memory

The funeral of Harry Sproston, known to many because of his love of German Shepherd dogs, took place on 4th November at the Vale Royal Crematorium. We would like to express our sincere condolences to Harry's wife, Daisy, and all of his family.

Notices

Domestic Abuse — At St John's we treat all forms of abuse seriously but if you, or anyone you know, is suffering domestic abuse here are a couple of organisations which offer help. **Mankind** - For male victims of domestic abuse and domestic violence across the UK T: 01823 334244. **Women's Aid** - Freephone 24 hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline T: 0808 2000 247.



All-age Crafting Afternoon 3-5pm — 11th December in church.

Join us for some relaxing creativity with family or friends. There will be a range of activities to suit all abilities with resources provided free of charge. We will also learn a new song for the Christingle Service. Look out for posters and further information on the church website.

Pause for Thought by Alan Downen

Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. So Joseph also went up 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, 4 & 5*

The words of the Christmas Carol, "How far is it to Bethlehem?" were adapted from a poem written by Frances Chesterton, the wife of G K Chesterton, back in 1917. In the carol, the response to that first line is, "Not very far." but I can almost hear Mary sighing, "I wish!" In reality, the journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem was about 90 miles: for a man leading a donkey with a pregnant woman on its back, that journey would have taken about 4 days — slightly longer than the 20, uncomfortable minutes it took me to drive to the Countess Hospital with my wife when my own daughters were born — but that is not the real issue here. Frances wasn't asking how far away Bethlehem is from our houses, rather, she was trying to address our hesitancy in approaching Jesus. We seem unsure about whether we are worthy, or have permission to enter into his presence. We want to see Him, but we are shy about opening the door of the stable. Perhaps if we go in and just stand by the animals, lingering at the edges of the scene, we will be close enough, and yet, we still have more of the journey to make. As we gather up enough courage to approach Jesus, lying there in the manger, God, made man, sleeping peacefully and undisturbed, how far have we travelled to arrive at this holy place? How many miles have our hearts walked, or suffered on the back of a donkey, searching for the feeling of peace and comfort which only he can provide? So ask yourself, is it possible that what you seek can be found nestled in a cradle made of wood and straw? And, how far is your heart from Bethlehem?

*Celebrate Christmas with
us at St John's*

**11th December — 3-5pm
Christmas Crafts Afternoon**

**18th December — 6.30pm
9 Lessons and Carols**

**24th December — 4pm
Children's Christingle
Service**

**25th December — 10am
All-Age Communion**



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**Christmas Revelries
with Ashton Folk**

**Friday, 30th December
at 7.30pm**

The Christmas festivities may be over for another year but that doesn't mean the fun has to stop!

Ashton Folk will be performing seasonal songs from a mixture of genres, telling the story of a Nativity Play which was like no other and reading a poem involving a magic carpet.

Tickets £6 from the Community Shop or pay on the door.

Bring your own drinks and nibbles and Ashton Folk will provide the rest.

All proceeds from this event will be donated to St John the Evangelist, Ashton Hayes.



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St John's Website
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