

NEWS FROM THE PEWS

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

Church Services in December

3rd December:

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

10th December:

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

17th December:

9.00am Holy Communion (BCP)
10.30am Morning Worship (CW)
6.30pm Nine Lessons and Carols

24th December:

9.00am No Service
10.30am Holy Communion (CW)
4.00pm Children's Carol Service (CW)

25th December:

10.00am All-age Communion (CW)

31st December:

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

BCP - Book of Common Prayer

CW - Common Worship (Modern Language)

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View from the Vicarage

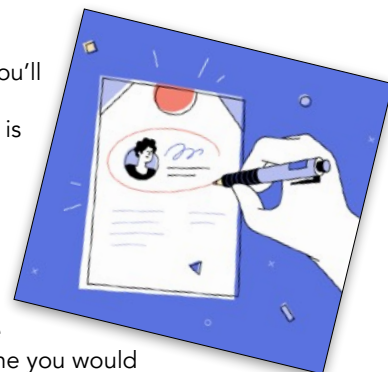
Have you ever signed up to a social media account, like Facebook, Twitter or Nextdoor? If so, you'll know that you're often asked to create a "personal profile" to appear alongside your photo. This profile is supposed to include a few lines that summarise your personality, career, relationships, hobbies and interests.

During our Sunday services this December we'll be spending time looking at the opening chapter of John's Gospel - known as his 'prologue'. A prologue that describes the personal profile of the greatest man who has ever lived. Not simply someone you would want to befriend on Facebook or follow on Twitter, but someone to entrust with your entire life.

In a few weeks' time we'll be starting 2024 and celebrating another New Year. But the character we're introduced to in John's prologue had no beginning. Because John tells us that "In the beginning was the Word". Before the cosmos was created, even before time itself - there was the Word of God. Astonishingly, John uses a personal pronoun to describe this Word - he's a "he" not an "it"! John wants us to know that God's "Word" is not a force, a phrase or a sound effect but a fully-fledged person. John goes further to tell us that this person was in a relationship "with" God. At the heart of the universe is a relationship comparable to the love between a human father and son. Indeed, God's Son is the Father's 'selfie' - a picture-perfect likeness in every way.

And the great news we celebrate every Christmas is that God's Word "became flesh and dwelt among us". It remains mind-blowing to think that the Son of God was born a baby at Bethlehem. It remains the greatest miracle that the Creator of the Cosmos walked on earth as Jesus Christ. And why did Christ come? He was born to offer eternal life and ethical clarity to every citizen of Planet Earth. Wonderfully, he also came to offer us God's full forgiveness for every wrong thing we've ever done - for all those things we'd be far too ashamed to put on our social media profile! So thank God - and Merry Christmas!

Phil Weston



In Memory

Last month we said a fond farewell to John Clegg of Duck Lane. His funeral took place at St. John's on 8th November, and our condolences go to John's wife Hilary and all his family and friends.

Notices

- **A Big Thank You** — to everyone who have donated Christmas gifts for the young people who are in the care of our local charity, Save the Family. Your generosity, particularly at a time when finances are stretched, never ceases to amaze us. Thank You!
- **Study Groups** — Our study groups are taking a short break over the Christmas period but will be restarting in the New Year. For more details contact Phil Weston or Alan Downen.

Christmas at St John's

**3rd December - 10.30am
Toy Service**

Be sure to bring your gifts along for Save the Family and we make sure they arrive in time for Christmas.

**17th December - 6.30pm
Nine Lessons and Carols**

Mark the start of the season by attending our traditional candlelit service to sing some of your favourite carols and hear the retelling of the Christmas story.

**24th December - 4.00pm
Children's Carol Service**

A time for the whole family to rediscover the real meaning of Christmas.

25th December - 10.00am

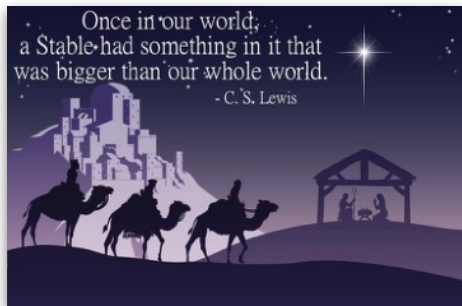
All-Age Christmas Communion

Children are invited to bring along their favourite presents to this celebration of Holy Communion.

Good Tidings of Great Joy — Happy Christmas!

Pause for Thought

by Alan Downen



Jesus said: 'Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.' Matthew 18:3

I miss the simplicity of the Christmases of my youth. On Christmas Eve, to escape the cold, we would huddle around the coal fire in the lounge (the only room in the whole house which was heated) either watching Christmas programmes on our 9"(!), black and white television screen or listening to carols on the 'wireless'. Often the room would only be lit by candles and the Christmas tree, which looked as though it was made from a collection of green bottle brushes, twinkling with its glass baubles and string of 12 lights (operating at 240 volts! — Health and Safety had yet to be invented).

By lunchtime that day, the shops had closed and they would remain closed until after Boxing Day — the Christmas Season was far less commercialised and it left space for the Christmas message to be heard loud and clear.

We children would have sent our 'simple' Christmas lists 'up the chimney' and there was a great sense of expectation, not only that Santa was on his way but that, that night, a Saviour would be born, in a stable, in Bethlehem — we all knew the story because in those days we were taught about it at school.

As I now look back as an adult, I notice that there seems to have more to do, more to buy, more to spend — but less time to think about the birth of Jesus and I want to be more like the child that I once was, filled with that sense of awe and wonder that made Christmas so special. So I wish you all a happy and joyous Christmas with space to 'ponder these things in your hearts'.

Christmas Revelries with Ashton Folk



Tickets
£10

Ashton Hayes Church

7:30pm on 29th December

The celebrations may be over, the mince pies may have been eaten, the needles may be falling from the Christmas tree, but there is still time for more fun before the Christmas season comes to an end.

Join us on Friday, 29th December, in St John's church for an evening of song and merriment with Ashton Folk. Tickets are available from the Community Shop or from Alan Downen. **[Bring your own drinks and nibbles.]**

Christmas Fair

It was a great to see so many people popping into church on 25th November to attend our Christmas Fair. There were lots of stalls with loads of potential Christmas gifts and refreshments for all.



Crafts and other bargains on sale at the church's Christmas Fair

St John's Café

Join us on Thursday, 14th December, between 2.30-4.30pm for our **All-Age Café**. Everyone is welcome to join us for a free cup of tea, coffee or glass of squash and a slice of cake whilst you have a chance to have a chat with friends (or play!)



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We can cater for all kinds of special occasions, be it birthdays, christenings, celebrations of life or weddings, with flexibility to accommodate parties of all sizes, be it cosy and intimate dinners in a private room, or larger parties with buffets, privates spaces on our terrace or the entire venue if required.

Celebrate with us and get in touch today to see how we can make your day, event or occasion extra special.

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