

Dear Friends,

Today is our Christingle Service right at the very start of Advent. A week earlier than usual. It forms part of our candle weekend. The strap line on the front of our Church Diary (do pick up a copy) is "Bringing Light into our community". Our little woollen candles may not bring a physical light – but they are symbols of love, a little gift. Last year we had hundreds of comments about the delight the angels brought and we hope it will be the same this year. The Christingle is a sign of hope in the darkness, a small glimmer of hope to help and support thousands of children through the work of the Children's Society. Rev Preb Sharon



God with us

Well, we are into the frantic pressie-buying month of December now. The American 'Black Friday' tradition appears to be firmly a part of our own pattern and has brought the search for the perfect Christmas present yet earlier in our calendar. Parish and school Christmas Fayres offer us home-made, Fairtrade, recycled and singular alternatives. And increasingly the inequalities within our economy become more apparent as people risk debt to bring a smile to their child's face.

When I was a parish priest, we found that many of our single parents felt trapped by the pressure of keeping up with those around them. We tried to introduce a maximum spend for all our congregational and family present buying in order to bring some parity. It wasn't easy!

I'm reminded at this time of year of the line that we are seeing more frequently, accompanying invitations to weddings and Birthday parties: **'No presents required, just your presence!'**

It makes me think about what Christmas really means. During this time of preparation and waiting for the big day to arrive, many of us will sing the words of that Advent hymn, 'O come, O come, Emmanuel', a 12th century hymn that invites God to fulfil his prophecy to his people. Will we really take in those words?

'Emmanuel' means 'God with us', such an important and comforting phrase in these times of uncertainty and anxiety, as we wonder what the new year will bring.

Christmas, we know is a time when people can feel lonely, disappointed, stressed. There are reputedly more suicides and marriage breakdowns during the course of this holiday period. One of the best Christmas presents we can offer then must surely be that of hospitality, a listening ear and simply our 'presence' among those who feel forgotten, rejected or overlooked.

In so doing we will find God's own present to us this Christmas, as in any and all other Christmases, His presence. The God to whom "every animal of the forest and the cattle on a thousand hills, belongs" (Psalm 50) has given us the best present of all - **He is with us.**

The Right Reverend Ruth Worsley

Bishop of Taunton



COLLECTS AND READINGS

2nd December: Advent Sunday Readings: **Jeremiah 33.14-16; 1 Thessalonians 3.9-end; Luke 21.25-36**

Collect: Almighty God, as your kingdom dawns, turn us from the darkness of sin to the light of holiness, that we may be ready to meet you in our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Post Communion: O Lord our God, make us watchful and keep us faithful as we await the coming of your Son our Lord; that, when he shall appear, he may not find us sleeping in sin but active in his service and joyful in his praise; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

9th December: 1st Sunday of Advent Readings: **Malachi 3.1-4; Philippians 1.3-11; Luke 3.1-6**

Collect: Almighty God, purify our hearts and minds, that when your Son Jesus Christ comes again as judge and saviour we may be ready to receive him, who is our Lord and our God.

Post Communion: Father in heaven, who sent your Son to redeem the world and will send him again to be our judge: give us grace so to imitate him in the humility and purity of his first coming that, when he comes again, we may be ready to greet him with joyful love and firm faith; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Our Pastoral Prayers



To include somebody on this prayer list please let Shirley in the office know by lunchtime on Thursday, making sure the person you wish to be included wants their name in print.

Baptisms: We pray for parents, godparents and those preparing to be baptised.

Those in need of our prayers:

Margaret Moyle, Hazel, Betty Montgomery, Stevie, Betty Player, Christine Marston

For those who have died: We pray for those who have recently died and their loved ones who grieve their loss.

Vera Hatfield

Those whose anniversary falls this week:

Margaret Hartop, Suzanne Harris

PRAYER FOCUS

Sunday:

God is with us

Monday:

For those who received a candle this weekend (woollen or in an orange)

Tuesday:

For families under financial pressure

Wednesday:

Give thanks for someone today who brings a smile to your day

Thursday:

For the family of Vera Hatfield whose funeral is today

Friday:

For members of our emergency services

Saturday:

For King Alfred Concert Band and their concert this evening

And do speak to Rev Sharon if you would like to produce these prayers from time to time



HELP NEEDED PLEASE WITH CAROL SERVICE

Are you able to help out with welcoming or refreshments for our Carol service on **Sunday 16th December at 5pm?**

YES?.....then please get in touch with Shirley as soon as possible.

On your own this Christmas?



Community Christmas

If you, or anyone you know, fancy having Christmas lunch and fellowship with others for a couple of hours on 25th December from 12-2.30pm, do get in touch with:

Marion Hance 792082

Carolanne Palmer 786277

Linda Barratt 788068

You will be very welcome!



SHOEBOXES

Thank you to everyone who donated towards the Samaritan's Purse shoebox appeal – we managed to send off 67 boxes from our church members, and wider community.

THANK YOU

To everyone who helped out with the Christmas Fair in any way. At the time of writing we are still anticipating a good turn out so can't give you the total raised – but alongside the money there will have been good conversations, there will have been laughter, there will have been people we may not have seen in a while and perhaps new people to get to know. So thank you for staffing a stall, for being in the kitchen, for providing cakes and raffle prizes, for being ceative and for being there. ***On behalf of the Outlook group***

Men's breakfast



**Saturday 15th December
8.30am in the church hall**

Come along for a hearty cooked breakfast and good company – all for £4

Contact Chris Perry 783753 or Martin Angell 07860 624308 for tickets



For every day of Advent,

Stephen Cottrell provides short, practical steps to help us slow down, take time out - and enjoy Christmas without piling on the pressure. This eye-catching book is perfect if you need to slow down over Advent.

Normally sold at around £7- you can have one for just £5. Speak to Rev Dan.

With a get together on Thursday 10th January at 2pm & 7.45pm in The Vicarage to discuss the book and share our thoughts (*just for an hour or so*).

CALENDAR

Who's Who at St John's:

Vicar: Rev'd Preb Sharon Crossman 789290

Associate Priest: Rev'd Tonya Nixon 793950

Training Curate: Rev'd Dan Crouch 325194

Churchwarden: Chris Perry 783753

Sun 2nd Dec 8am Said Communion 9.30am Sung Communion 5pm Christingle

Tues 4th 10am Toddler Group in hall

Wed 5th 9.30am Said Communion & 10.00am Foodbank Listening Place in church hall

Thurs 6th 10.30am Little Angels in hall

12.00 Funeral of Vera Hatfield

Sat 8th 7pm King Alfred band concert

Sun 9th Dec 8am Said Communion 9.30am Sung Communion 11am Christmas choir rehearsal

Tues 11th 10am Toddler Group in hall

Wed 12th 9.30am Said Communion & 10.00am Foodbank Listening Place in church hall

Thurs 13th 10.30am Little Angels in hall

Fri 14th 10.45am Friendship Group Christmas service and last meeting

Sat 15th 8.30am Men's breakfast

Sun 16th 9am Said Communion 5pm Carol service *Please note there is NO 3pm Communion today

Tues 18th 10am Toddler Group on Christmas break

Wed 19th 9.30am Said Communion & 10.00am Foodbank Listening Place in church hall

Thurs 20th 10.30am Little Angels on Christmas break

Fri 21st Churchfield school Christmas services

Sun 23rd 8am Said Communion 9.30am Sung Communion

Christmas Eve 4pm Crib service 11.30pm Midnight Mass

Christmas Day 10am Family Communion & stocking challenge



To submit an article for the Signpost Weekly please e-mail
office@stjohnshighbridge.org.uk or leave a message on 01278 780633

Parish office opening hours:

Weds 8am-2pm Thurs 8am-10am Fri 8am -noon

Please ring in advance