

Virtual Church News

Sunday 29 November

1st Sunday of Advent



Welcome to Virtual Church News. Hard copies will be circulated to those without access to email/social media. If you know of anyone without email who you think would benefit from a hard copy, please call Jacqui on 356993 or email stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com

A Reading for the Week

Mark 13.24-end (NRSV)

The Coming of the Son of Man

²⁴But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, ²⁵ and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. ²⁶Then they will see "the Son of Man coming in clouds" with great power and glory. ²⁷Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

The Lesson of the Fig Tree

²⁸From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁰Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. ³¹Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

The Necessity for Watchfulness

³²But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. ³⁴It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. ³⁵Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, ³⁶or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. ³⁷And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.'

Services in Church

Following this week's announcements, we will resume our 9.30am Sunday services as follows:

- Sundays 6, 20 Dec - All Saints
- Sundays 13, 27 Dec - St James

For details of our Virtch services via Zoom, see below.

Message from Rev Eric Lomax

This is the first Sunday of Advent, the start of the Christian year, and our Gospel reading talks about us being ready for Jesus to return. It says that you do not know the day or the hour. Christ will come when he is ready to come. We should be alert for the signs of his presence.

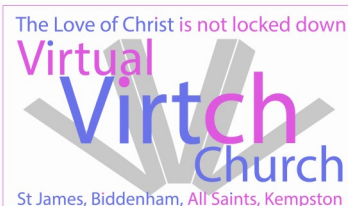
As human beings, we have a tendency for all this to be mapped out, and when it comes to Christmas it has a tendency to turn Christians into real kill-joys, always reminding people that it is not Christmas yet; Keep the celebrations at bay, don't sing Christmas Carols, leave the tinsel in the carrier bags in the shed, and don't fill December with partying.

With children this builds on their sense of excitement. 'How many sleeps now?' the child will ask and parents find themselves counting down the numbers on the Advent Calendar as the great day approaches, but what if Christ does not work to our agenda and timing.

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Virtch

Zoom services are held at 11am on Sunday and 6pm on Wednesday. Simply go to Zoom and enter meeting ID 998 074 6039.



Message from Rev Eric Lomax continued

What if he decides to come knocking on our door when he is ready, and not when we expect? The child may not get their presents until 25th December, but Jesus is there for that child now, when he is ready.

Advent is the first season in the Christian year. The Church uses the dark and sombre purple as seasonal colour, and flowers and decorations should be absent until at least a week before Christmas. Everything is designed not to let us celebrate the birth of Jesus before God's time and every year God's time appears to be midnight on 24th December.

It looks back to the despair faced by the Jesus people as they experienced centuries of oppression by alien invaders; first the Syrians, then the Babylonians, then the Persians and the Greeks, then finally the Romans under the Emperor Pompey in 63 BC. Many of the Israelites longed for a Jewish King or Messiah who would deliver them and set them free. They were impatient and could not understand why this Messiah (Greek, Χριστός (Christ)) had not come.

When Jesus did come, he seemed to focus on something different from human invaders. He concentrated on the human heart. The real oppressor is the sin and death that separates us from God and from our neighbours. Jesus seemed to abolish the religion of law and power and replaced it instead with a message of love.

In retrospect, therefore, this period of waiting has become, for the Church, a time when we look in on ourselves and wait for Jesus to come into our hearts to set us free with his love. Many may feel that Advent should be, for them, penitential and introspective but actually it should never be prescriptive, but rather a recognition of the hope that Jesus brings, that he could come and deliver us at any moment he chooses.

My daughter was born at 12.15 on Christmas Eve, but she had been due a week and a half before. In the end, Anna Rose Lomax was born a happy and confident little girl. She was a Christmas baby, but she certainly was not intended to be a Christmas Baby. She came in her own time.

This year I have noticed one house not so far away had filled their house with Christmas lights over a week ago. Should this make me, as a vicar, feel irritated? Should I see this as a sign of impatient secularism overriding our sense of timing as a Church? One of the things that particularly moved me about the house is that a month ago there was another light in the front window of that house that signified a bereavement in Baby Loss Awareness Month. It is moving that a family who had suffered such a hopeless loss are so engaged with the real sense of a Christmas hope. I do not know if the Christ-child provides the core of Christmas for them but I do know that Jesus is there for them.

Everything has put the Church's sense of timing out this year. It is becoming only too clear that the real legacy of this year has not been so much the COVID-19 virus, but rather the impact on people's mental health and wellbeing. Isolation, fear, and loneliness being the most serious factors.

Lockdown cancelled our Easter plans for this year, it has led us to rethink our agenda for Normal Sunday Worship, and now the COVID crisis is undermining our normal patterns for Christmas Worship. Still, despite this, I understand that God has a plan for you. He has not forgotten you, and in his own timing he will come to us and set you free. It is God's plan. It is God's timing, and he does not have to wait for Christmas for that.

So this is something that no other vicar has ever said before; Light up your homes, put up the tree, be happy and have a very happy Advent. He is coming, and he is coming because he loves you.

God bless,

Eric

Discovery Group

This bible study group meets via Zoom on Thursday evenings at 8pm. For further details, contact john.c.lambert@gmail.com

Shine a light of hope!



Christingle Celebration

4pm Christmas Eve (via Zoom)

Email stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com, call/text 0778 6886 710 or message us on Social Media and we will deliver your Christingle to you.

Join us for our Christingle Celebration when we will make our Christingles and celebrate the light of Jesus together, or make them in your own time.

St James's Church, Biddenham
All Saints Church, Kempston
Raising funds for The Children's Society

Church Services etc. on TV/Radio

If you don't have access to the internet, try tuning in to the following on Sunday:

- 8.10am on BBC Radio 4 - Sunday Worship. Cities of Promise - A place for good news.
- 12.20pm on BBC 1 - Songs of Praise. Young Chorister of the Year, Boys' semi-final.
- 3.00pm on BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong. A service for advent with carols, from Cambridge.

Wednesday 2 December:

- 3.30pm on BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong from Salisbury Cathedral.

St James's Christmas Cards Delivery

Final plea for help

Thank you to everyone who has pulled together to deliver our Christmas cards to the parish.

We just have a few bundles left for roads in Great Denham.

If you are able to help, please text 0778 6886 710 or email stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com.



For the Children (& young at heart!)

This week is the first Sunday of Advent which is a time of waiting and preparing for Christmas - the celebration of Jesus' birth. Usually in church we would light an advent candle on each of the Sundays in advent.

Activities

Can you make up a story called 'The Long Wait'. It should be about waiting for someone to return after they have been away a long time. Perhaps you could write your story out or make a story board for it.

If you have a candle at home, ask an adult if they can help you to safely light it today to celebrate the first Sunday of advent.

Song

Father we adore you

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2CPPUNCWzQ0>

Prayer

Bless us, Lord, this week as we watch, wait, listen and pray. Guide us to be the people you call us to be. Amen.



Christmas

with **St James's and All Saints Churches**

Sunday 20 December

4.00pm Nine Lessons and Carols

Christmas Eve

4.00pm Christingle

11.30pm Midnight Communion

Christmas Day

10.30am Family Service

All services will be held via Zoom
To join, just go to Zoom and enter meeting ID 998 074 6039

Unfortunately we will not be able to hold our usual events and services in church this year

Hymns/Songs of the Week

Come thou long expected Jesus

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WBGx_4PxO3g

Be still and know that I am God

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2zN0XfOTC8U>

Change my heart O God

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IISmG-_eJTU

The Advent Candle

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zl1zmUK_z5A

Daily Hope

Music, prayers, reflections and full worship services from the Church of England at the end of a free telephone line. **0800 804 8044** Available 24 hours a day.



A free phone line of hymns, reflections and prayers

Please pray with me

Dear God and Father,
who loves us and cares for us.
Come to us,
deliver us,
give us peace and healing.
In Jesus name
Amen.



Month of Prayer for the Nation

The Archbishops of Canterbury and York invite you to participate in a month of prayer as the second lockdown in England comes into force.

The Archbishop of York says "At this challenging time when all of us are fearful and anxious, and when so many are suffering, [prayer] is the one thing we can all do... Let's pray together at this difficult time."

Daily prayer themes are as follows:

- Sundays: Family, friends and loved ones.
- Mondays: Schools, colleges, children and young people.
- Tuesdays: Elderly, isolated and vulnerable.
- Wednesdays: Businesses, the workplace and economic wellbeing.
- Thursdays: NHS and other key workers.
- Fridays: National and local Government.
- Saturdays: The grieving and those suffering with ill-health (physical and mental).

To find out more, go to [churchofengland.org/PrayerForTheNation](https://www.churchofengland.org/PrayerForTheNation)

ST JAMES'S CHURCH



Biddenham Tea Towels
Mugs/Coasters
Jotters

Contact Jane: 359014

Village Christmas Cards
Marmalade/Jam
Jelly/Chutney

Contact Sue: 342373

Christmas Handicrafts
Contact Trissa: 950612

Also on Sale Outside St James's Church
after Sunday Services (approx. 10.15am)

There will be no Christmas Bazaar this year

Rev Eric Lomax Contact Details

Tel: 01234 328452

Mob: 07805 879537

Email: Rev.ejlomax@gmail.com

Prayer Group

Join our prayer group at 8pm on the 1st/3rd Thursdays of the month via Zoom. Contact us for login details or if you have any prayer requests.

Bedford Foodbank

Please don't forget that we support the Bedford Foodbank, who need our donations now more than ever. Donations of food can be placed in a box in St James's Church Porch, taken direct to the Foodbank (off Manton Lane) or put in the boxes in the supermarkets.



Alternatively please consider making a financial donation. Further details can be found on their website: <https://bedford.foodbank.org.uk/>

Community Support Groups

Do you need support? We can help with shopping and companionship (via regular phone calls). Can you volunteer to help? Let us know if you are DBS checked (for any organisation). It doesn't matter if you aren't, we still need your help, but safeguarding is important!

Biddenham:

If you need support, ring 01234 815393 (daytime only) or email help@biddenham.org.uk with your name/phone number/address.

If you can volunteer, please email help@biddenham.org.uk

Kempston:

If you need support or can volunteer to help, contact:

Rev Eric Lomax: 328452 or 07805 879537

Alison/Brenda Walker: 851597

Alan/Anita Lowe: 857212 or 07751 659695