

St James's Church, Biddenham

All Saints Church, Kempston

Virtual Church News

Sunday 20 December

4th 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

Alone or Lonely on Christmas Day?



Use the usual Zoom details enclosed for a virtual drop in any time between 3pm and 5pm. Keeley Frampton (a member of St James's congregation) will be online between 3pm and 5pm for a chat/a virtual coffee/a prayer, or a festive game.

Virtch

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

The Love of Christ is not locked down

Virtual
Virtch
Church

St James, Biddenham, All Saints, Kempston

Service of Nine Lessons & Carols

Join us this Sunday at 4pm for our virtual Service of Nine Lessons & Carols. Simply go to Zoom and enter meeting ID 998 074 6039.



A Reading for the Week

Luke 1.26-38

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.' ²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. ³¹And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.' ³⁴Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' ³⁵The angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God.' ³⁸Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her.

Message from Rev Eric Lomax

Jesus never promised that if we follow him, our lives would be easy. What he did say, however, is that we should be obedient to him whatever he asks of us, wherever he asks us to go, and whatever that may involve.

In John Chapter 2, Mary had the job of catering for a seriously big wedding. Just as the celebrations got into full swing, there was a disaster, the wine ran out. She was the mother of Jesus and she trusted that only he would know what to do; 'Do what he says,' she said, 'follow his instructions.' The consequence of this was the first miracle of the Gospel, Jesus turned water into wine.

Even if Jesus' demands sound like utter madness, do what he says. You can trust him.

When the angel first visited this young girl, who was just a young, simple teenager, the angel encountered a tower house of faith. She had been asked to carry and give birth to the Lord of life. At one point she burst into song proclaiming the greatness of the Lord, and the favour that he has showed to the weak and vulnerable; 'For you have brought down the mighty from their seat and lifted up the lowly.'

In her compliance, Mary risked rejection by her fiancé, and the possibility, under Jewish culture, of being an outcast amongst her people, but she remained steadfast.

As she fed and nurtured the child, she shared with him that simple faith in God, 'The almighty has done great things for us.'

She watched her child move away from her, and she saw in him a hope that set him apart from everybody else. This brought her fear as much as anything else, and the full cost of her response was eventually be realised, when she, together with the other woman, stood at the foot of the cross on good Friday. Following Jesus is painful, and at times, costly.

Services in Church

Our 9.30am Sunday services in church will be as follows:

- Sundays 20 Dec, 3, 17, 31 Jan - All Saints
- Sundays 27 Dec, 10, 24 Jan - St James

Mary's faith and courage are the crown of all the faith we see in Israel's history, a young and unimpressive figure towers above the great patriarchs. What is most impressive is that in her God chose a woman, when in much of the ancient Near East, women were considered the lowliest of the genders.

Often popular theology have framed her call in terms of sexual purity. The word 'virgin,' is used as the celebratory word for the state of her body, untarnished by men. That, however, is not the emphasis of the Bible. Mary is chosen by a great God, because of her humility and obedience; 'Let it be according to your word.'

So, as indicated, she stands high above Noah, whose obedience led him to build a ship in a dry wilderness, Abraham who left his home in obedience to the Lord, Moses who liberated the Hebrew slaves, standing against the power of Pharaoh, and David who stood in the name of God against the power of the giant, Goliath.

This is the call of God; We are weak, he is strong. He calls and we follow his commands. No matter how foolish it may seem, how ridiculous the ask, and how much pain it may involve. He commands, and we must do his will.

God bless

Eric

Hymns/Songs of the Week

O come O come Emmanuel

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kKu0or0t8Uw>

Once in Royal David's City

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sgR48OpNmOA>

Hark the Herald Angels Sing

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

Away in a Manger

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gDYgl8qafXw>

The Christmas Child

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nDigraWMHj0>

Coventry Carol

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_jIYyPOoEc8

Church Services etc. on TV/Radio

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

Sunday 20 December

- 8.10am on BBC Radio 4 - Sunday Worship. Cities of Promise - a place for the Saviour.
- 11.00am on BBC 1 - Sunday Worship from Winchester Cathedral.
- 1.15pm on BBC 1 - Songs of Praise. The UK's Favourite Carol.
- 3.00pm on BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong from Hereford Cathedral.

Wednesday 23 December:

- 3.30pm on BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong from University of London.

Christmas Eve

- 3.00pm on BBC Radio 4 - Carols from King's.
- 5.30pm on BBC 2 - Carols from King's.
- 11.30pm on BBC Radio 4 - Midnight Mass from Manchester Cathedral.
- 11.45pm on BBC 1 - Midnight Mass from Clifton Cathedral.

Christmas Day

- 9.00am on BBC Radio 4 - Christmas Service: A Draught in the Stable.
- 10.00am on BBC 1 - Christmas Day Eucharist from Birmingham.

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

Discovery Group

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

For the Children (& young at heart!)

In this week's reading (see the front page) Gabriel visits Mary. As a young woman, Mary was not important in her community. By saying 'yes' to the angel Mary is agreeing to have her life disrupted and her reputation ruined. How do you think Mary felt? We too are asked to take risks in our faith and respond with faithfulness to God's call.

Activities

In the song video below the singers are signing with a sign language called Makaton - this is a language that deaf people use to communicate. See if you can learn the signing for the song and sing it to your family/carers with the signing actions.

Song

It was on a starry night

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MCHL2t7xxus>

Prayer

Lord Jesus, as we look forward to Christmas Day, we pray for those who are not so fortunate. We think especially of refugees, who have had to flee their homes, leaving everything behind. Bless them and their families, and may they know that you, Lord, who was born in a stable as one of us, are with them today. 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

Please pray with me

Eternal God,
as Mary waited for the birth of your Son,
so we wait for his coming in glory;
bring us through the birth pangs of this present age
to see, with her, our great salvation
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen



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

Rev Eric Lomax Contact Details

Tel: 01234 328452

Mob: 07805 879537

Email: Rev.ejlomax@gmail.com

Please include in your prayers

- Those for whom Christmas is not a happy time.
- Those who will be working over Christmas.
- Our clergy and leadership teams.
- Our Queen, our Government and all world leaders.

Prayer Group

Join our prayer group at 8pm on the 1st/3rd Thursdays of the month via Zoom. Everyone is welcome. 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