

St James's Church, Biddenham

All Saints Church, Kempston

# Virtual Church News Christmas

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](mailto:stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com)

## Alone or Lonely on Christmas Day?



Use the usual Zoom details 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.

**Zoom meeting ID 998 074 6039**

## 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



## A Reading for the Week

**John 1:1-14**

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was with God in the beginning. <sup>3</sup> Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. <sup>4</sup> In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

<sup>6</sup> There was a man sent from God whose name was John. <sup>7</sup> He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. <sup>8</sup> He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

<sup>9</sup> The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. <sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. <sup>11</sup> He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. <sup>12</sup> Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God - <sup>13</sup> children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

<sup>14</sup> The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

## Message from Rev Eric Lomax

I am so sorry that you have had to endure such a painful year. It was heart-breaking that we could not celebrate Easter and most of us thought that around the summer all this would come to an end, but we hadn't predicted so many factors. Less than a week ago most of us believed that we could at least celebrate Christmas with the people closest to us. Yes of course it would be limited but at least we would be surrounded by loved ones. But then on Saturday the body blow that we did not wish to hear - most of the south-east would be completely locked down and travelling between homes would be forbidden. The physical church worship was of course exempt from these rules but still local clergy like myself had to listen to people around us and make judgements on how we should do things. Christmas would not be the kind of Christmas that we expected or wanted.

Before I continue, I need to say that I share these feelings with you. This time has been challenging for myself and for my family and I, like many of you, experience waves of fear and anxiety. When I pray I listen to the voice that tells me that we should not be afraid.

We have always felt quite lucky as a family in the way that we celebrated Christmas. We have a large family with five children and their partners, so we know more than most how lucky we are to have more than we need. In a home that has ample, sometimes there are little gifts that we are never quite sure who they belong to - they seem insignificant and sometimes only get discovered when the celebrations are over.

I want you to give some thought to this little gift. Imagine you are celebrating the perfect Christmas, and this gift appears beneath the tree, under everything else. You go and retrieve it. Then you sit down to open it with a glass of something in your hand. It is wrapped simply in brown paper which you remove, revealing a small miniature nativity scene. There is a tiny house with a star suspended above it. There are animals, two shepherds, a woman and a man, standing over a manger and in the manger, a tiny insignificant figure, a baby. This was the smallest gift and the one that takes up the least space, yet we must not lose sight of it.

## Service in Church Cancelled

Given the Tier 4 restrictions there will be no service at St James's on Sunday 27 December. We are in the process of reviewing our plans for services in Church in the New Year.

This unexpected Christmas, when so much of what we would hope for is missing, that tiny gift remains almost missed in the darkness of a pandemic and all the heartache that brings. I do not want to devalue those things we have lost. We do need our families and our friends. We need the hugs. We do need the eyes that we love staring back at us and the feeling of warmth and celebration. I miss, more than anything, the chance to sing carols with others around us. We must not forget, however, that in all this darkness, the Christ child is still here. He has not abandoned us; he has not left us.

God has not come to us in the tinsel packaging that we are most familiar with. He comes in unexpected ways even during unexpected times. I would urge you not to burden yourselves with the low-lying cloud of despair that seems to hang in our sky, as the Christ who carried his own cross to Calvary is more than strong enough to bear that weight. The Bible reminds us that it is the people who dwell in darkness who have seen a great light (Isaiah 9:2). We are also reminded that the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not defeated it (John 1:5).

One could say that the Christmases of previous years have been a time of collective forgetting. We forget the core of Christmas, we forget the narrative that tells us that the Word became flesh and lives amongst us (John 1:14), and we forget that small, simply wrapped gift under the tree.

This year, however, when so much is stripped away, it is a time to remember that there is hope, salvation and healing in the birth of the Christ-Child.

I hope that in all this uncertainty you will be able to keep focussed on that which can really transform our lives and our world. You are loved.

God bless and have a lovely Christmas.

Eric

## Church Services etc. on TV/Radio

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

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.

Sunday 27 December

- 8.10am on BBC Radio 4 - Sunday Worship: Will no one rid me of this turbulent priest - marking the 850th anniversary of the murder of Thomas Becket.
- 9.10am on BBC 1 - Sunday Worship: The First Sunday of Christmas, from Llandaff Cathedral.
- 1.20pm on BBC 1 - Songs of Praise: Soul legend Mica Paris's Faith Journey.
- 3.00pm on BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong from the Chapel of Royal Holloway, University of London.

## 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.



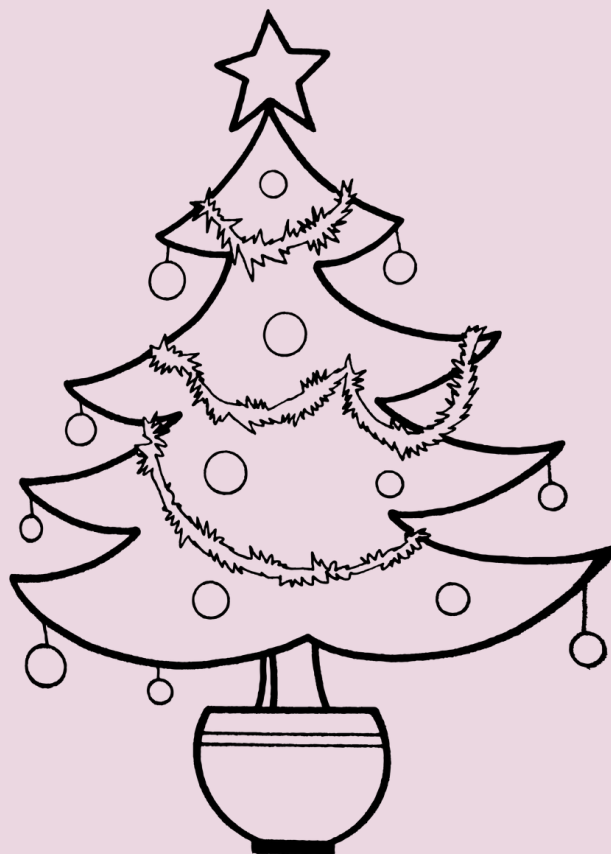
A free phone line of hymns, reflections and prayers

## Discovery Group

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

## For the Children (& young at heart!)

Print out and decorate this Christmas tree - send us a photo of your finished tree!



## 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

May the storm pass,  
may the rain cease,  
may the clouds clear,  
and may the light of his presence  
shine on you this Christmas,  
and bring you peace.  
May the Lord bless you.  
Amen



## St James's Nativity



Earlier this month some visitors arrived in the churchyard at St James's. If you haven't been to see them yet, do pay them a visit!

## 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.

## Rev Eric Lomax Contact Details

Tel: 01234 328452

Mob: 07805 879537

Email: Rev.ejlomax@gmail.com

## Please include in your prayers

- Those who are alone this Christmas, or who are anxious about family members who are on their own and those for whom Christmas is not a happy time because of illness, bereavement, financial worries etc.
- Our communities; that people will find peace and hope this Christmas.

## 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](mailto:help@biddenham.org.uk) with your name/phone number/address.

If you can volunteer, please email [help@biddenham.org.uk](mailto: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