

**All Saints Church, Kempston
St James's Church, Biddenham**

Virtual Church News

19th December 2021

**4th Sunday of Advent
3rd Sunday**

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 0778 6886 710 or email her at stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com

Our Normal Sunday Services

1st Sunday of the month

- 8.00am Book of Common Prayer Holy Communion at All Saints
9.30am Joint All Age Service (followed by said Holy Communion) at St James's

2nd Sunday of the month

- 9.30am Morning Worship at St James's
10.00am Holy Communion Service at All Saints
6.00pm Service of Evening Prayer at St James's

3rd Sunday of the month

- 8.00am **Book of Common Prayer Holy Communion at All Saints***
9.30am **Holy Communion Service at St James's**
7.00pm **Revive: Coffee/Bible/Fellowship***

4th Sunday of the month

- 9.30am Morning Worship at St James's
10.00am Holy Communion **Service at All Saints**

5th Sunday of the month (when there is one)

- 9.30am Service at St James's
6.30pm Sung Evensong at St James's

We also hold online services during the week via Zoom at 9.00am on Monday and 6.00pm on Wednesday. To join these Zoom services, simply go to Zoom and enter meeting ID 998 074 6039.

We hope you will join us at our services as we explore a mixture of both traditional and new ways of worship.

Please note that there will be no 8am Service or 7pm Revive this Sunday. There will also be no service at All Saints on Sunday 26 December.



Christmas

with **St James and All Saints** Churches

Saturday 18 December

9.00am Breakfast and Play Christingle (All Saints Hall)

Sunday 19 December

- 9.30am Christingle Service (St James)
4.00pm Nine Lessons and Carols (All Saints)
6.00pm Nine Lessons and Carols (St James)

Christmas Eve

- 4.00pm Carols in the Churchyard (St James)
11.30pm Midnight Communion (both churches)

Christmas Day

- 10.00am Joint All Age Service followed by Communion (St James)

Important Notes for this Sunday:

Face Coverings: Please note that, in line with new Government guidance, it is once again a legal requirement to wear a face covering when in a church building unless you are exempt. There is an exception which allows choirs to remove their face coverings when singing but we will be taking other precautions to help keep each other safe!

Photographs: This Sunday morning at our Christingle service we will be taking photos for use on our new website. If you do not consent to your photo being taken, please let us know as you arrive in church. Thank you.

Photos of St James's Church

We are currently in the process of updating the St James's website and would like to include photographs of both the church and its people! If you have any suitable photographs, please email them to stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com

Please note that written consents will need to be obtained from anyone who is identifiable in the photos (we can obtain these where needed) and you must own the copyright (i.e. you must have taken them, not e.g. a professional photographer).

Thank you.

Message from Rev Eric Lomax

Probably one of the most beautiful passages of the Bible. In an ancient, patriarchal society, where women were seen as the subservient possessions of men, Luke the Gospel writer puts two young women at centre stage, as agents of grace; Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, both of them were little more than children themselves.

We present one of these girls, Mary, as if we have the impression that she had read the story of her unborn child in advance. Aside from God's uncharacteristic use of angelic voices and heavenly choirs to notify the women, I still find it unconvincing that Mary did not face the same uncertainty of any woman of her time; 'Will either of us survive the pregnancy? What Gender will it be? Will my pregnancy go well? What if there are any problems, or if he struggles to get on with other children?' It is disingenuous to suggest that with the assault on Mary's hormones, that she would not struggle with emotions.

What we have to see is that Mary spoke out with a remarkable and uncompromising faith; 'My soul magnifies the Lord, and my Spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his handmaid.'

Wow, the word 'lowliness' says it all. The word 'virgin' is just a device to remind us that this birth was the work of God and not of 'man.' The fact is that Mary's sexual status is irrelevant to the fact that God called her. Yes, I have used 'man,' not as a means of gender exclusion, but rather to state what every woman who suffers through the agony of birth, would gladly scream with more colourful language than that recorded of Mary. Man had no part in this, but God still used a woman to go through the agony of childbirth (don't shoot me, as I, as a male, have no knowledge of this. I am simply the messenger!). If Christ is really, as we Christians say, God made flesh, imagine how God, in his infinite love feels, being compressed into the fragility of a human heart. Avoiding a kind of affinity with Roman Catholic Mary-ology, We still have to come to the conclusion that Mary was in solidarity with God in Christ's birth, as she was in Christ's death. Both God and Mary experienced the suffering and death of their beloved son, Jesus. Mary was chosen, according to this great hymn of praise, not because of her virginity, but because of her lowliness.

But Mary's words summarise justice, God's justice. That in a deeply patriarchal society, where women were of little value, God had lifted up the lowly woman, and in the process, brought down the mighty from their seats.

Bedford Foodbank

Please continue to support this valuable charity and help them prevent hunger in our community.

For further details of current requirements go to www.bedford.foodbank.org.uk

By doing this, he had broken every possible convention of our society, our culture, and even our religions; The poor are fed, and the wealthy go hungry, the blind can see, the powerful are diminished, and while broken are mended, the self satisfied will be diminished.

It is good, just prior to Christmas, to take a glance at Mary and her powerful song, as it strips us of the rather damp 'peace and good will to all people,' message of the Christmas media. It gives us something deeper by reminding us that the Christmas message really does turn our perceptions, our judgements, our prejudices, and indeed, all our existing values upside down. The Christ-child of Christmas undermines the very foundations of our society.

God bless
Eric

Reading for the Week

Luke 1.39-55

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leapt for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.'

And Mary said,
'My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants
for ever.'

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Scenes of Biddenham Christmas Cards



Raising funds for St James's Church
Mixed packs of 5 cards,
£3 per pack or £5 for two packs

Call Sue (342373) or Jacqui (356993)
for further details

Limited stock so buy early!

At the Heart of Christmas

The Church of England's theme for this Christmas is 'At the Heart of Christmas'. An app is available to download for free which includes reflections, Bible readings, prayers and family Advent activities and details of events and services taking place locally. For more details and to download the app go to <https://www.churchofengland.org/our-faith/what-we-believe/advent-and-christmas/heart-christmas-our-2021-advent-and-christmas>

The At the Heart of Christmas reflections are also available on the free Daily Hope phone line - 0800 804 8044.

Revive - 3rd Sundays

A short act of worship over a coffee, then unfolding the scriptures together. 7.00pm in St James's Church Barn. Everyone invited.

Please note that there will be no Revive in December due to the Services of Nine Lessons & Carols.



Suggested Music for this week

A great and mighty wonder
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MToXUy0nChA>

The angel Gabriel
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fzC9dxwRddc>

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

Let us pray...

Dear God,
Give us the courage,
the certainty,
the lowliness,
and the faith,
of Mary.
In Jesus name,
Amen.



Christmas Gifts

In addition to the Scenes of Biddenham Christmas cards, we also have various Biddenham Village gifts which would make great Christmas presents. Call Jane George on 359014 for details.

The All Age Bit

This week's reading is on page 2, or you may wish to read it from a Children's Bible if you have one.

This passage shows the incredibly joyful meeting between Elizabeth (who never thought she would have a baby in her old age) and Mary (who is also pregnant, with God's own Son). People in Nazareth were suspicious of Mary's pregnancy, but Elizabeth encourages Mary that she is blessed and not cursed. Both women rejoice in what God has done. Mary then sings a song of praise which is known as the Magnificat. Elizabeth's baby leaped for joy at Mary's greeting and the presence of Jesus. He knew that the Messiah was there with him!

Activities

Paper chains: lots of people put up paper chains for Christmas. Can you make a paper chain out of strips of paper but before you link the chains together, write a line from the Magnificat on each one. Hang the paper chain up somewhere in your house and think of the joy that Mary and Elizabeth shared each time you see it.

Good news aeroplanes: God has promised to be with us always, just as he was with Mary and Elizabeth. We have so much to give Him thanks for. Write or draw what you are thankful for on pieces of paper and then make the pieces of paper into paper aeroplanes. Fly your aeroplanes and then look at each others to share the good news.

Song

Come on and celebrate
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kog4QkDT4Ho>

Prayer

Lord Jesus, born for us in a borrowed stable, a long way from your home, we pray for: those a long way from their homes, those with nowhere to lay their heads, those with nothing to keep them warm, those with nobody to care for them, those with nobody to share Christmas with. Send us into our bit of the world to explode joyfully like a cracker and spread the story of Jesus our king. Amen.

Resources taken from Roots