

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

Virtual Church News

**5th December 2021
2nd Sunday of Advent
1st 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.

See page 2 for details of our special Christmas services in December.

Rev Eric Lomax Contact Details

Tel: 01234 328452
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Joint Nativity - Sunday at 9.30am

Our joint Nativity service will take place at St James's this Sunday at 9.30am.

Do come along to this. All children are welcome to dress up in their favourite nativity costume even if you haven't already let us know you will be coming.



St James's Church Christmas Sale

**St James's Church Barn
Church End, Biddenham**

5 December

10.30am – 12.00pm

Free entry



Christmas Cards

**Biddenham Village Gifts
Cakes & Produce
Decorations & Bulbs
Coffee & Mince Pies**

Raffle

Message from Rev Eric Lomax

It is strange how so many memories from our childhood disappear, yet others stick in our minds like we have never been able to shed them. These memories, the vivid and the forgotten, form us and shape us. We are what our past has made us. Be it nature (our genetic makeup), or nurture (our upbringing, education, life experiences), we are formed and shaped by the world around us, and how we interpret that world around us. There is no such thing as a truly self made individual. We are, in many ways, a reflection of the paths that we have walked.

When I worked as a teacher, I would often get challenged by the students about my faith. Sometimes they would ask me how, with the world being the way it is, I could possibly believe in God. Many had been from very challenging backgrounds, and for them, believing in a divine consciousness that engaged in any way with people was really difficult.

'There is no God,' they would say, and I would reply, 'It depends on what sort of God you believe does not exist.'

It is such a shame that one narrative eludes us. It is the almost forgotten narrative of Adam and Eve at home in Eden.

The God we don't believe in is always the God whom the people around us had no relationship with. They did not understand who God is, so they passed their simple grasp of untruth on to us.

Continued on next page...

Christmas Tree Festival



St Paul's Church, Bedford MK40 1SQ

Wednesday 1st to
Saturday 4th December

10.00am - 5.00pm

Sunday 5th December

12noon - 4.00pm



Sponsored by



Admission: £3
Children under 16 free entry

Daily Concerts by
Community Groups

More information ... 01234 340163

Tag us on ... Bedford Christmas Tree Festival

A Reading for the Week

Luke 3.1-6

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

'The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

"Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.

Every valley shall be filled,
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,
and the crooked shall be made straight,
and the rough ways made smooth;
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.' "



Christmas

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

Sunday 5 December

9.30am Joint All Age Service with Nativity (St James)

Sunday 12 December

4.00pm Christingle Service (Church of the Transfiguration, Kempston – Joint with All Saints)

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)

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.



Message from Rev Eric Lomax continued

He was the God of our past, the God who was not there, the God who never spoke when we needed a voice, the God who did not care. The God who we do not believe in does not exist, because this useless, waste of space, angry, judgemental, cold and distant God is exactly the sort of God of which the universe, and our world and our desolate, graffitied, derelict hearts have no need.

Today in our reading, we meet John the Baptist, who the Gospels refer to as a 'voice crying in the wilderness.' He is painted as the forerunner of Jesus, and he is a man who appears very much like an Old Testament prophet, austere, traditional, and believing in a wrathful, vengeful, and distant God who rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked. This is also the kind of God that the religious people believed in at that time.

John talked about the coming of a victorious Messiah (Christ, or announced one), whose sandals he was not worthy to untie.

Imagine his surprise when he encountered Jesus. Yes, he recognised who Jesus was ('behold the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.'). but he expected a deliverer and a king, rather than a healer, a lover and a friend. That is why we struggle so much with allowing the Lord of the universe into our lives at Christmas, and we much prefer to talk about a man with a beard who puts presents at the foot of a tree. Associating the Lord of the Universe with a baby, born from a single mum, in a cattle shed, down a back street in Bethlehem is too difficult for us.

Imagine, instead somebody in desperate need, sitting on a bench looking out to sea. There is really no solution to her needs, but in desperation she looks up at the sky hoping for an answer or a solution. Instead, she can just hear the sound of the sea, and feel the bitter, cold wind sweeping across the ocean. Then, somebody; a man, a woman, or even a child, comes and sits beside her. It is then she realises that this person understands and knows. More than that, this person loves her in a way she never knew it was possible to be loved. She had been looking out to sea expecting one kind of God, but instead he came and sat beside her in a way she never knew was possible. That is the God of Christmas who meets us in his son Jesus. That is the most surprising kind of God that John the Baptist never expected.

God bless
Eric

Prayer/Bible Study Groups

Join our prayer group at 8pm on the 1st/3rd Thursdays of the month via Zoom. Everyone welcome. We also have Bible study groups which are open to everyone.

Contact John Lambert for further details, or with any prayer requests. john.c.lambert@gmail.com

Let us pray...

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.
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 Sunday is the second Sunday of Advent and we are reading the same Bible passage as the adults, which you can find on page 2. In this passage Luke defines the exact time when the Word of God came to John. Everything is about to change, as John prepares the way for the long-awaited Messiah to bring the salvation of God. We can very often get lost in the moment and in the difficulties that lie ahead of us, but this passage reminds us to see our place and path in God's bigger picture, and the special role that we have to play.

Activities

Map prayers: Have a look at a map of the world. Can you find England, or even Bedford? Can you find other places where you have perhaps been on holiday, or places that you have perhaps heard about in the news/on TV? Say a short prayer for each of those places, and at the end ask God to lead you through your life, no matter where in the world His path for you leads.

Hidden paths: For this activity you will need a white wax crayon or candle, some paper, a paint brush and some water colour or poster paints. Draw some lines (paths) on the paper with the crayon/candle. Can you see where the paths are? Think about how hard it sometimes is to find the way God wants us to go! Then paint over the paths with your paint. Watch as the paths emerge.

Song

Our God is a great big God

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eaXPXWBcE3I>

Prayer

Help us to go on our Advent journey; to look beyond the lights and tinsel for the light of Jesus. To look beyond the parcels for the gift of Jesus. Be with us on our journey to Christmas. Amen.

Resources taken from Roots

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!

Bedford Foodbank

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

They are again asking people to consider a Reverse Advent Calendar this Christmas. Contribute something each day of December and deliver your contributions from 4-7 January to replenish their stocks following Christmas.

For further details of current requirements and the Reverse Advent Calendar go to www.bedford.foodbank.org.uk

Suggested Music for this week

Long ago, prophets knew

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S63rjDtYRYg>

Purify my heart

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fMTcyl2kqmw>

The Thrill of Hope - Advent Hymn

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gNuY6I4OtoE>

Come to us

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n81mEcvFt1c>

At the Heart of Christmas

The Church of England's theme for this Christmas is 'At the Heart of Christmas'. A special 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.

