

*Christmas  
and Advent  
Services inside*

# st JOHN<sup>+</sup>s

*Living God's Love*

Parish Magazine

WINTER 2025

*What's going on in the  
lead-up to Christmas, and beyond*

marble  
in a marbled sky  
winter moon

Haiku by Susan Lee Kerr. First published in Blithe Spirit 33.2, May 2023. Haiku in English are based on a Japanese form of poetry, briefly conveying a moment of awareness of nature or human life.

Thoughtful, quietly spiritual, this page in the magazine is intended as a space for reflection. St John's Church and its Remembrance Garden is open every day from 10.00am to 5.00pm for anyone who wants a quiet place for personal reflection.

# st JOHN'S

Living God's Love

WINTER 2025

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### DESIGN

Hornpie

[hornpie.com](http://hornpie.com)

### PRINT

Paragon

[uk.paragon.world](http://uk.paragon.world)

Copy deadline for the Winter issue:  
Monday 5<sup>th</sup> January 2026



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# Vicar's Welcome

**W**elcome to our Winter Issue of the St John's Parish Magazine which covers the months of November, December and January. This means you'll find inside all our Christmas Services. Whether it is singing carols down the pub to something more traditional, we hope we have everything covered. We are also holding a special service for those who find Christmas difficult due to bereavement or any other reason. Please know everyone is especially welcome to join all our services at St John's, your parish church.



*Revd Tim with Dean Bliss, after preaching and presiding at Lima's Cathedral on Sunday 10th August 2025. See pXX for more Peruvian adventures.*

*Revd Tim Vickers*  
*Vicar of St John's Harpenden*

[www.stjohnsharpenden.org.uk](http://www.stjohnsharpenden.org.uk)

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## Christmas concerts at St John's

Festive and classic, contact the organisers for information on programmes, booking and refreshments.

**Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> December**  
7.00pm

**AT Society Christmas Concert**  
See p12

**Monday 15<sup>th</sup> December**  
8.00pm

**Hardynge Choir Celebrate Christmas!**  
See p19

## Wreath Making

**Saturday 6th December 2025**

**1.30 - 4.00pm**

**St John's Church Hall**



Wreath making lead by experienced florist Mary Hoare. Materials will be supplied but do bring your own scissors and secateurs.

£15 per person (adults only), including refreshments.

Please reserve your space via the sign-up sheet in church, or contact [Maryhoare57@gmail.com](mailto:Maryhoare57@gmail.com)

## Brownies Christmas Crafting



Were you a Brownie? Did you always want to be a Brownie? The 14<sup>th</sup> Harpenden Brownies would love to invite you to an evening of Christmas crafting and Christmas treats on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 6:15 - 7:15pm, in St John's Church Hall.

All ages are most welcome and it's free, do just come by, but it will help us with numbers if you'll say you're coming by emailing:

[14thharpendenbrownies@gmail.com](mailto:14thharpendenbrownies@gmail.com)





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# Thank you to Ritah

We give thanks for Ritah's ministry among us during her time at St John's. As part of her curacy training, Ritah will now be completing her curacy at St Leonard's in Sandridge, where she'll continue to grow and develop her ministry in a new setting.

We're deeply grateful for all that Ritah and her family have brought to our church family, and we wish them every blessing as they continue this next chapter of their journey.



## Christmas Concert at SPACe Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> December 7.30pm



Beati, a professional vocal ensemble, will hold a Christmas Concert on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> December at Southdown Performing Arts Centre (SPACe). The concert will be in two halves, the first half traditional SATB sacred anthems and carols; the second half upbeat fan-favourite modern Christmas songs. And there will be audience sing-along songs and carols.

Tickets £10 (£8 concessions) including refreshments from:  
[ticketsource.co.uk/southdownspace](https://ticketsource.co.uk/southdownspace)

Friday afternoon entertainment at 2.30pm continues on 9<sup>th</sup> January, 6<sup>th</sup> February and 6<sup>th</sup> March. Tickets, £5, from Southdown Hardware. Details from [www.southdownspace.org](https://www.southdownspace.org)

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# St John's Christmas Wordsearch



This puzzle is a Christmas gift to unwrap! Jump in and mark up the twelve Christmastide words. They may be spelled backward, forward, horizontally, vertically or diagonally!



ANGELS	CHRIST	GOD	JESUS
JOSEPH	LOGOS	MARY	MEEK
MESSIAH	MILD	SAVIOUR	WORD

E	G	B	I	C	B	M	J	M	E
I	S	M	E	E	K	I	E	Q	C
U	E	A	N	G	E	L	S	F	H
X	R	R	V	M	O	D	U	O	R
I	P	Y	O	I	H	D	S	C	I
D	O	E	W	P	O	O	W	N	S
M	Z	I	E	I	G	U	O	E	T
P	Y	S	W	O	V	R	R	E	N
I	O	F	L	X	E	E	D	D	O
J	M	E	S	S	I	A	H	O	R



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## Orange The World

A United Nations initiative to eliminate violence  
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and proudly supports the campaign.

This international campaign takes place each year,  
starting on November 25th

**"International Day for the Elimination  
of Violence against Women"**

and ends on December 10th

**"Human Rights Day"**

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[www.innerwheel.co.uk](http://www.innerwheel.co.uk)

Harpenden Village Inner Wheel Club supports Orange the World by collecting items needed for St Albans & Hertsmere Women's refuge, Friday morning 5<sup>th</sup> December from 10am outside Waitrose in Leyton Road. Further information [HVIWC@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:HVIWC@hotmail.co.uk)



## DID YOU KNOW? Holy Family?

Have you ever pondered at how the first Christmas is portrayed as 'perfect'? For a start Mary had a pregnancy of exactly nine months, and we don't hear any mention of crying baby Jesus or anything else about having a new baby. Mary and Joseph must have had just as much of a challenge as any new parents, with sleepless nights and nappies and a steep learning curve. If you are thinking you might not quite 'fit in' with what St John's does at Christmas, think again. 'Perfect' or imperfect, your presence matters and you are most welcome.



*Typical harassed new parent? Here's Joseph from the Holy Family group in St John's Lady Chapel. He had to help his partner give birth on a stable floor.*



**Sunday service play area.** Most Sundays St John's offers Junior and Mini Church (see dates p26). But when it isn't on we have books and colouring sheets for children in the newly refreshed play area at the back of church. You can keep your restless young ones occupied without missing the service.

# Thoughts on a Green Christmas

Our society places a high value on 'owning' and 'being up to date'. We can feel pressure to buy 'stuff' we don't really need. Almost everything we buy depletes the world's resources, and over-consumption is the biggest driver of climate change. If you'd like to learn more about our finite resources and the impact of our consumer culture I thoroughly recommend Annie Leonard's simple, entertaining cartoon 'The Story of Stuff' [www.storyofstuff.org](http://www.storyofstuff.org)



[www.storyofstuff.org](http://www.storyofstuff.org)

It's great to give presents. But is it possible to do this in a greener way, with less of an impact on the world's resources? To reduce waste, we need to tackle both ends of the cycle; buying less and recycling more. Here are a few ideas:

- Make your own. Home-made cakes, biscuits, preserves, cards...
- Go for a plastic-free Christmas. Avoid plastics in presents, wrapping paper, cards, crackers, etc. Plastics are made of oil, and hard to recycle.
- Buy presents made from recycled materials.
- Buy second-hand or recycle/upcycle yourself. Books, toys, games...
- Give cinema or concert tickets, memberships or subscriptions...
- Donate to charity instead of giving presents. Many charities supply gift cards and there is a huge range of projects to support.

With all best wishes for a happy and green Christmas.

*Margaret Charlston, St John's Eco Church.*



# Scam season!



The Christmas holidays are a great time of year. Many of us buy gifts online, some pack up and visit family or travel for skiing. It may surprise you that cyber criminals enjoy this season too – if you are getting deliveries, expecting the winter fuel allowance or booking a holiday be on the look-out for targeted scams.

Strong indicators that you are dealing with a cyber-criminal include:

- Suspicious communications such as an unexpected cancellation, a refund or a fine.
- Fake offers or discounts that sound too good to be true.
- Requests for credit card details over text, WhatsApp, email or other social media platforms.
- Unexpected phone calls.

If you are concerned about a suspicious message:

- do not use any of the contact details in the message itself.
- do not click any of the links.
- do not scan any QR codes (they are the same as links!).
- do not open attachments.

If you are using a mobile phone to read emails, stop, and go view the message on an iPad, tablet, Mac or PC – the screen is bigger, so it's easier to spot the misspellings, logos or vagueness that indicate a scam. If you still have doubts contact the company or holiday booking agent directly through their customer service team. Do not use the email you received to find contact details!

If you have received a scam email forward it to [report@phishing.gov.uk](mailto:report@phishing.gov.uk) or forward scam texts to 7726. There have been over 40 million scams reported since the launch of this scheme back in 2020 so you're in good company.

If you realise you've been scammed:

- Stop all communications with the scammer, do not appeal to their good side - they simply want your money and don't care how it affects you.
- Contact your bank using the contact details on your bank card or dial 1-5-9 and ask to be put through to your bank.
- Finally report it to Action Fraud via their web site [www.actionfraud.police.uk](http://www.actionfraud.police.uk) who have lots of further advice for you.

Stay safe online and have a scam free season!

Jon Evans

[www.itsecuritylocksmith.co.uk](http://www.itsecuritylocksmith.co.uk)



*Cyber expert Jon Evans helps run the live streaming of St John's services.*



# *Advent, Christmas and*

## *Preparing for Christmas*

Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> November  
and 7<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> December  
11.00am

**Advent Bible Study**  
Four Sundays in Advent, after coffee in the church hall, 11.00am - 11.45am, considering the Bible in the approach to Christmas.

Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> November  
5.00pm

**Advent Carols Service**  
A simple candle lit service for the start of Advent as we prepare for Christmas.

Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> December  
1.30pm

**Wreath Making Event**  
A guided activity for adults in the church hall. See p7 for details.

Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> December  
5.00pm

**Blue Christmas**  
A service for those who find Christmas difficult. All invited.

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> December  
5.00pm

**Nine Lessons and Carols**  
A traditional service of music and readings. Our Parish Choir will be joined by our burgeoning Junior Choir. All invited.

## *Community Christmas*

Friday 28<sup>th</sup> November  
5.30pm

**Southdown Lights & Lanterns**  
Lantern parade 5.30pm. Lights switch on. Carols, market stalls, fun fair rides and free Santa's Grotto.

Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> December  
6.15pm

**Christmas Crafting and Treats**  
The 14<sup>th</sup> Harpenden Brownies invite all ages to an evening of Christmas crafting and treats in St John's Church Hall. See p14

Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> December  
8.00pm

**Beer and Carols @ The Engineer Pub**  
Singing your favourite carols with a pint of beer.

Friday 19<sup>th</sup> December  
3.00pm

**Christmas T@3**  
Christmas afternoon tea to bring good cheer to the elderly in our community in St John's Church Hall.

For up-to-date details on all church activities visit: [www.stjohnsharpenden.org.uk/](http://www.stjohnsharpenden.org.uk/)  
St John's Church is open every day 10.00am - 5.00pm. For regular services see page 30.



# *beyond... St John's 2025*

## *Family friendly Christmas*

Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> November  
9.30am

Advent Sunday Parish Eucharist  
Start of Mary and Joseph's travelling crib.

Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> December  
9.30am

All Age Eucharist

5.00pm

Christingle

Family friendly service learning about the light of the world and supporting The Children's Society.

Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> December  
2pm – 3.30pm

Christmas Messy Church

Story, craft, worship and food. Ideal for families with young children, this is something different replacing our usual Christmas Holiday Club. Free and no need to book but all children must be accompanied.

Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> December  
9.30am

Parish Eucharist

Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> December  
10.15am

Toddler Service

An interactive service for pre-schoolers and their adults.

Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> December  
11.00am

Crib Service

Suitable for younger members of the family of pre-school age. A short service of carols with refreshments afterwards.

3.00pm

Walking to Bethlehem

Meet outside the Co-op as we walk the journey to Bethlehem

## *Merry Christmas!*

Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> December  
11.30pm

Midnight Mass

Celebrate Christmas by Candlelight  
Incense will be used at this service.

Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> December  
8.00am

Christmas Day Holy Communion

Quiet service without carols.

10.00am

Christmas Day All Age Parish Eucharist

Suitable for all the family with interactive talk.

Turn the page to see beyond Christmas

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# Beyond Christmas

Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> December  
9.30am

Parish Eucharist

Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> January  
9.30am

All Age Parish Eucharist for Epiphany  
**Suitable for all the family, with Blessing of Epiphany Chalk for house blessing. Incense will be used at this service.**

Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> February  
9.30am

All Age Parish Eucharist for Candlemas  
**Suitable for all the family, celebrating the light of Christ. Bring candles or torches for blessing.**

Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> February

Ash Wednesday, Lent begins

## Celebrate Christmas!

A selection of Carols for Choir and Audience

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**St John's Church, Harpenden, Monday, 15 December 2025, 8:00pm**

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Programme notes included in ticket price

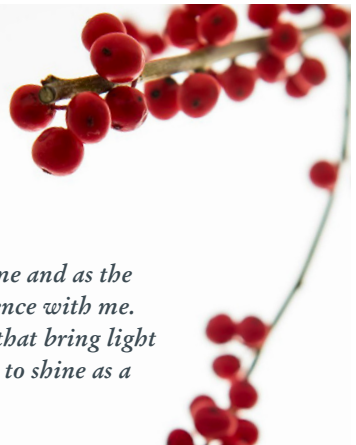
Book Online: [www.hardyngechoir.org](http://www.hardyngechoir.org) or call 0845 475 1664



## Need a prayer?

St John's is open for private prayer every day from 10am-5pm. If you would like someone to pray for you, please do get in touch with the vicar or with our St Luke's Cell Prayer group (01582 765576). If you are struggling on your own, you might wish to use this prayer:

*Dear God, as we approach Christmas time and as the nights get darker, may I know your presence with me. Help me to notice the people and places that bring light to my life. And might I have the courage to shine as a light for others who need it too. Amen.*



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# ¡Hola! St John's Peru connection

It started as a trip to Peru to see his sister-in-law and grew into an exciting new link across the Anglican Communion – all because Revd Tim went to church on a Sunday. Visiting Lima's Anglican Cathedral in 2024 Tim struck up a friendship with the Dean. Impressed by their ministry to some of Peru's poorest people, St John's fundraised for their mission as part of our Christmas Appeal in 2024, raising £2,200. In 2025 Revd Tim went to see how the money was being used, and took the opportunity to know more of the Anglican Church in Peru.



*A mural for the children's room at Lima Cathedral shows Noah's Ark (with some Peruvian animals) funded from St John's Christmas Appeal.*



*Lima's Anglican Cathedral of the Good Shepherd. Built in 1949 but there has been a Protestant Church in Lima since 1849.*



*Inside the cathedral. They have a weekly congregation of about 50 people, and worship in English.*



*Revd Tim preaching in Spanish at Santa Maria Virgen Anglican Church in Lima. His first sermon in Spanish!*



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## Glaze Time

Est 2014

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We run weekly sessions in Harpenden, please visit [www.glazetime.co.uk](http://www.glazetime.co.uk) for the latest list of venues.

We also offer private bookings, takeaway kits, clay impressions & commissions.

For more info please contact  
Michelle on **07958 324520**



# Little Acorns

Little Acorns is a friendly toddler group for babies, pre-school children and their carers.



Little Acorns

We meet in St. John's Hall on Tuesdays, 10.00 – 11.30am.

No need to book. Come along for a warm welcome, a cup of coffee, home-made cakes and chat. All are welcome. The children enjoy a healthy snack, activities, a story and singing.

The current term ends Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> December with a Christmas theme.

New term starts 6<sup>th</sup> January, with a Half Term break on 17<sup>th</sup> February.

We wish everyone a happy New Year.

No booking necessary. A voluntary donation is all that is asked.

For more information, please contact [parish.office@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk](mailto:parish.office@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk)  
Telephone 01582 712776



## Toddler Service

You and your toddler are invited to St John's inclusive, relaxed toddler service Thursdays at 10.15 in term time. We start in church with a beverage and cake, then tell a Bible story with an interactive craft. You don't need to be baptised or a member of St John's to come. It's a welcoming space, do join us! To find out more, why not email the Vicar at [vicar@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk](mailto:vicar@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk)

Thursdays, 10.15am

Current term ends 18<sup>th</sup> December

Winter term 8<sup>th</sup> January – 26<sup>th</sup> March

Half-term holiday 19<sup>th</sup> Feb



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# Mothers' Union

**Mothers' UNION**  
Christian care for families  
Diocese of St. Albans

**'Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.'**

*Matthew 5:16.*

St John's Mothers' Union branch is a friendly group that meets monthly and has local and global connections. Two autumn topics included a vibrant illuminated talk on the Fauvist art movement by local artist Liz Sergeant, and a revelation by The Ven Andrew Ballard of the story of Mary Sumner (1828-1921), founder of Mothers' Union. Coming up:

**December 10<sup>th</sup>** Corporate Communion at 10.30am.

**December 11<sup>th</sup>** Advent Service in the Lady Chapel followed by a festive tea in the Committee room.

**January 8<sup>th</sup>** 'A book I love and why I have chosen it' -- all members will have a chance to speak and share their love of reading.

We meet in St John's Church Hall Committee room at 2.30pm on first Thursdays and we welcome visitors, so do come and join us.

*Carol Cooke, Branch Leader. Contact [parish.office@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk](mailto:parish.office@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk)*



*Enjoying the gift of fine weather at Mothers' Union summer garden party. In the autumn, members brought donations of Christmas presents for children in local domestic refuges and wrote Christmas cards for prisoners in The Mount.*



## St John's Junior and Mini Church

St John's expanded provision for children is tailored around school term dates. Junior and Mini Church meet at 9.25am in the church hall and rejoin their families half-way through the service so we share in Communion together.

**Junior Church** - For primary school ages, reception and up. Children learn about God in a fun and inclusive way, exploring arts and crafts and playing games for greater understanding.

**Mini Church** - For preschool children under 5 years old with their adult. A chance to explore, play and hear the story that Junior Church is learning.

**All Age Eucharist** - At 9.30am we are all in church together, in a Communion service with the sermon and hymns geared for younger members.

### Winter Term Dates 2025 - 2026

23<sup>rd</sup> November Junior and Mini Church  
30<sup>th</sup> November Junior and Mini Church  
7<sup>th</sup> December All Age Eucharist  
14<sup>th</sup> December Junior and Mini Church  
25<sup>th</sup> December 10.00am All Age Eucharist – Christmas Day  
4<sup>th</sup> January All Age Eucharist – Epiphany  
11<sup>th</sup> January Junior and Mini Church  
18<sup>th</sup> January Junior and Mini Church  
25<sup>th</sup> January Junior and Mini Church  
1<sup>st</sup> February All Age Eucharist – Candlemas

There is generally no special children's provision on Sundays either side of half-term and Sundays in school holidays but we always have children's books and colouring sheets at the back of church.

For more information contact  
[parish.office@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk](mailto:parish.office@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk)  
Telephone 01582 712776

## Local Treasures: The Conroy Family

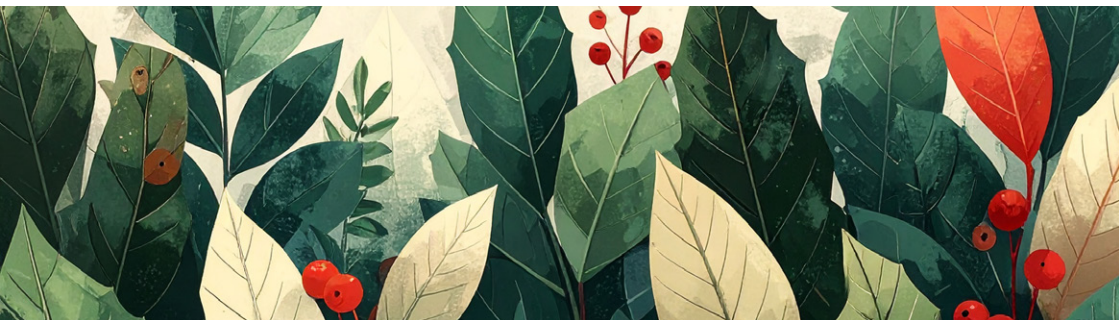
'Max is the brains of the business,' the Conroy family laugh fondly as they pet their brindle dachshund. The business is Party Box and its heart is the family who have been a presence in Southdown since the 1970s. Their shop location, on Piggotshill Lane, has over the years been a hairdresser, a toy shop, and finally a party supplies shop. But it was only when the Covid pandemic threatened to shut down Party Box that the Conroys took over running the operation themselves. 'I didn't even know how to blow up helium balloons!' says Alessandra. 'There was local demand,' explains Lawson, 'and we wanted to keep it going. There's community involvement, it's a service.'

Life is full for Alessandra. When not helping people at the counter, she does the Grove School run for the youngest of their three children, walks Max and manages all the busyness of family life – 'I hope people are forgiving if now and then they find the 'Shop Closed' sign in the door.'

Besides cards and decorations for birthdays from age 1 to 100, Party Box covers engagements, weddings, anniversaries and births as well as occasions like Christmas and Valentines Day. Among special items are pinatas, personalised balloons, recyclable latex balloons, even Christmas cards you can plant, plus sparklers for New Years Eve. An extra bonus leading up to Christmas – now and then Santa visits in person!



*Max celebrates his 7<sup>th</sup> birthday with Conroy cuddles.*



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## Parish registers

### Baptisms

*Welcome to the family of God*

13<sup>th</sup> July 2025

Emilia Rose Tootell

Thea Grace Tootell

20<sup>th</sup> July 2025

Robin Gracie Whelan

27<sup>th</sup> July 2025

Flynn Ferguson-Gould

17<sup>th</sup> August 2025

Dominic Charles McKay

31<sup>st</sup> August 2025

Cecelia Taylor

14<sup>th</sup> September 2025

Louis David Jack Taqvi

Bonnie Charlotte Louise Taqvi

28<sup>th</sup> September 2025

Reuben Frederick Fitzsimmons

### Marriages

*Joined by God*

25<sup>th</sup> July 2025

Rowan Akers and Rebecca Wilkins

## Weddings at St John's

Thinking of proposing this Christmas?  
Why not get married at St John's?  
If you live in the parish, or have a connection to the area, we invite you to consider St John's church for your marriage ceremony. Contact the church office to arrange a time to discuss your plans. We would love to be a part of your special day.

[parish.office@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk](mailto:parish.office@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk)  
Telephone 01582 712776

For information about planning a wedding in a Church of England church, visit: [www.churchofengland.org/life-events/your-church-wedding](http://www.churchofengland.org/life-events/your-church-wedding)





## Regular Services at St John's

### Sundays

- 8.00am Holy Communion in the Lady Chapel  
9.30am Parish Eucharist (*also live streamed*) followed by coffee in the hall.  
All Age Eucharist, *normally first Sundays of the month*  
5.00pm Evening service, *see website for details*

### Wednesdays

- 10.30am Holy Eucharist is celebrated in the Lady Chapel

### Monday - Friday inclusive

- 9.30am Morning prayer is said

Church is open every day from 10.00am to 5.00pm.

Service times may change so please check the calendar on our website or sign up there to our weekly or monthly newsletter [www.stjohnsharpenden.org.uk](http://www.stjohnsharpenden.org.uk)

Watch our Parish Eucharist and other special services on our YouTube channel - search for "St John's Church, Harpenden" or visit:

<https://www.youtube.com/StJohnsChurchHarpenden>

The Parish Office is open Monday – Thursday 10.00am - 2.00pm



## PARISH OFFICE

*For enquiries, including marriages, baptisms, funerals and hall bookings, please contact the parish office.*

## OPEN

MONDAY - THURSDAY

10.00am - 2.00pm

## Amanda Knights

Telephone: 01582 712776  
parish.office@  
stjohnsharpenden.org.uk

*If you are in need of help or know anyone in need of support, please contact support@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk*

## Parish Directory

## VICAR

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Telephone: 01582 469343  
vicar@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk

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Our magazine is published four times a year and is delivered free to all homes and businesses in the parish.

We are very grateful to those who write contributions and the many volunteers who distribute and deliver the magazines, come rain or shine, to everyone in the parish.

We welcome advertisements and are delighted to be able to provide full colour.

St John's PCC takes no responsibility for statements made in advertisements or other content in this magazine nor linked websites, nor for any matter arising therefrom.

To protect privacy, personal email addresses do not appear in the web edition, unless requested.

*Christmas  
and Advent  
Services inside*



*What's going on in the lead-up to Christmas, and beyond*

[www.stjohnsharpenden.org.uk](http://www.stjohnsharpenden.org.uk)

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