

st JOHN[†]s

Living God's Love

Parish Magazine

SUMMER 2020

st JOHN'S

Living God's Love

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ADDRESS

St John's Church
5 St John's Road, Harpenden
Herts AL5 1DJ
www.stjohnsharpenden.org.uk

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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.

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EDITOR

Anthony Armstrong
magazine@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk

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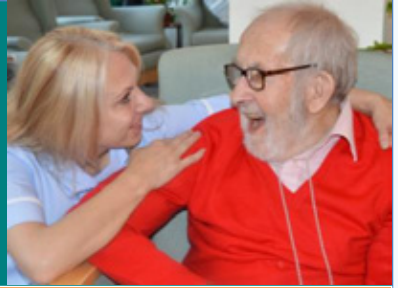
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Foreword

This is a rather unusual edition of the St John's Parish magazine, but then we are living in unusual times. You are probably already aware that due to coronavirus the Church of England has suspended all services, and for the time being church buildings are closed. Naturally, we cannot advertise the usual services and events that we do. However, lots is going on online (including church services) and you can find out details of these later in this online edition of the parish magazine.



We are, all of us, adapting to a different way of living life during the current challenge; this edition will reflect that. I hope that the following pages bring you some goodwill, hope and cheer, and some things to do to help fill the time.

It is obviously a time when community is more important than ever and I know lots of you are already engaged in supporting those who are elderly or vulnerable at this time. If you are in need of help or can give support, please see the details about Harpenden Cares, details for which can be found later in this edition. The repercussions of this coronavirus pandemic are huge, and will be with us for a goodly time. Many of us in Harpenden are in quite fortunate positions, but we must remember in the coming weeks and months, those others who are being adversely affected – those who don't have easy access to green space; those who are lonely or isolated of any age; those whose livelihoods and incomes are uncertain; those who are ill whose treatments have been delayed because of coronavirus; those who are working tirelessly in many sectors (often on low wages and putting themselves at risk) to support us and care for us to make sure life can continue as normally as possible.

If you need help, or you know anyone who needs help, please do be in contact (details at the back of the magazine).

In the meantime, I hope you enjoy this special edition of the parish magazine,

With prayers for you all,

Berkeley

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Berkeley". The script is cursive and elegant.

Vicar

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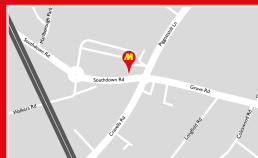
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Love in a COVID climate

I am not going to attempt to rewrite Nancy Mitford's classic, *Love in a Cold Climate*, for this present time; my skills of imaginative narration are not up to the task. Instead, I want to help us think about how it is that we express God's love for others at a time when we are isolated from each other and limited in our interactions.

I have read lots of news articles comparing the UK lockdown and social distancing measures to incarceration and I've read almost as many criticising such thought, because the conditions in our prisons at the moment are quite the opposite of those in our homes. We are able to isolate ourselves safely but social distancing is hard in the prison environment. There is also another level on which we need to take care with this analogy. Many of us in Harpenden are living in relatively large (if not actually large) houses, often with access to private green space (i.e. our gardens) as well as beautiful communal spaces like the Common. That is not true for everyone. It's not true for everyone in Harpenden, many of whom live in flats; it's certainly not true for people living in high-rise accommodation in some of our cities where local parks have been closed or have restricted access.

With those caveats in mind, I thought it would be interesting to reflect on the experience of a man who did share God's love with others whilst in prison. That man is Saint Paul. Paul was imprisoned whilst trying to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He spent time in prison in Ephesus and in Rome (where he was eventually martyred).

Whilst in prison Paul continued in his Christian ministry. We know this because at least three letters in the New Testament were written by Paul from prison: *Philippians*, *Philemon*, and *Colossians*. Indeed, Paul comes to realise his imprisonment actually helped him in spreading the Good News: 'I want you to know, beloved, that what has happened to me has actually helped to spread the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to everyone else that my imprisonment is for Christ.' (*Philippians* 1.12-13).

Paul's incarceration, though, was not that of a typical inmate today. Rembrandt depicts Paul as having the time to be deep in thought, provided with paper and pen with which to write his letters to the Church.



Figure 1 - Saint Paul in prison, Oil on panel, Rembrandt (1627), currently housed in Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart

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The sword is a fanciful nod towards Paul's martyrdom – I doubt he would have been allowed it in reality. In fact, Paul was probably constantly chained to a guard on rotation, allowing him no privacy whatsoever (Ephesians 6.20; Acts 28.20). Despite the lack of privacy, he was allowed a constant stream of visitors who would give him news of the Church and be allowed to take his letters back to the individual churches. Indeed, we are told that Paul, whilst in prison, was able to welcome 'all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.' (Acts 28.30–31).

We are not chained day and night to a single prison cell, though our movements are restricted and we are not always able to see those whom we love. Inevitably this makes us reevaluate what is most important to us in life. We are not able to have a constant string of visitors but we are able to communicate with others, whether it is by Zoom, What's App, telephone or letter. What is this present time teaching us about who we want to be? About what is important in life? What ways can we share that with others? How can we show those in our family, friends and community that we care for them and think them important? We can show love in myriad ways. For those of us who are having to be in complete isolation we can still communicate our thoughts and prayers for them. For those of us able to go out a little, we can be involved in supporting those in need in practical ways (as many of us already are).

Paul's imprisonment deepened his faith and trust in God. Our separation and present experience can help us deepen our faith in God, help us go deeper on our own spiritual journeys, wherever they may lead us.

Love in a COVID climate means letting others know we're thinking of them, means supporting our local foodbanks, being involved in our neighbourhood groups, offering to help through Harpenden Cares or NHS volunteering, or simply being a listening ear or practical hand to those we know of who are in need. The effect of Corona Virus will not be short-term and its ongoing impact on our lives will be complex, from the vulnerable, elderly and isolated in need now to those whose livelihoods will be affected as businesses struggle to survive, as well as everyone in between. Our loving response to each other as a community needs to be equally long term. ●

Berkeley



Vicar

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generosity, faithfulness,
gentleness, and self-control.
Galatians 5:22-23

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Midweek Meditations come out each
Wednesday for a moment of peace and wisdom

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 YouTube

Churchwardens' Report

In our last report we, and the whole of St. John's, were looking forward to a varied and interesting schedule of events and services leading from Lent to Easter and beyond, leading to our Annual Parochial Church Meeting.

A Pancake Supper took place on Shrove Tuesday as is traditional. Lent began after the Ash Wednesday services, for which the Junior Church kindly prepared the ashes by burning (safely) the previous year's palm crosses.

There then came the official guidance and regulations connected to the lockdown in response to the spread of the coronavirus. The church and its hall were, and still are, closed, and planned events have been postponed or cancelled. However, as you will read from other contributions to this 'magazine', St John's has been very active in a variety of ways.

If you have not yet accessed the online services and contemplations, do have a look by searching for St John's Church, Harpenden on Youtube. The reflections have been spiritually uplifting and inspiring at the current time, following the season's readings, keeping us together as a worshipping community, and presenting our faith to the world. It is also possible to receive paper copies of reflections if you cannot access them online. Berkeley and the ministry team have done a fantastic job in planning and compiling these videos; they have been watched and appreciated by so many people. Thank you, too, to all those members of the congregation who have

recorded readings and intercessions to support our remote worship during this time.

The community of St John's has established valuable support networks to ensure vulnerable people are contacted and helped, if necessary. Thanks to all those who are active in this support, and especially Margaret Creighton, who has been coordinating this network. All of these types of activities are carried out in a safe way and in accordance with guidelines for dealing with coronavirus.

The Ministry Team, the Church Wardens, and the Parish Church Council, have met regularly online to ensure the administration of the church continues as much as possible during these strange times. The parish office is physically closed but is still in operation. Our Diocese of St Albans sends regular updates to keep us informed of any developments.

In line with the dispensation granted by the diocese, our APCM has been deferred and the previously elected members of the PCC will continue in post for the foreseeable future. The PCC has, though, elected Tim Coleman to the post of Treasurer and has co-opted him onto the PCC. We are enormously grateful to Tim for volunteering for the role, and for his time in taking on these tasks, and are equally grateful to Steve Creasy, who steps down from this role after giving so generously of his skills over many years.

The launch of Project Phoenix, our fund-raising campaign for the rebuild-

ing of the church hall as an up-to-date and sustainable parish centre, took place on the 29th February, with an inspiring address by Bishop Alan. You can read more about this in another contribution to this 'magazine'. It is a pity that, as with all activities, the continuation of this, too, is on hold. Like its namesake, the Phoenix will fly up again in time.

For all of our endeavours, we are full of hope and optimism for the future and look forward to the time when current circumstances ease. Stay safe and well everyone.

James Hillman
Jane Donati

Churchwardens

Parish registers

Baptisms

Welcome to the family of God

2 February 2020

Evie Grace Newell

2 February 2020

Jack Edward Newell

2 February 2020

Tomas James Prys Taylor

Marriages

Joined by God

There were no weddings in this period

Funerals in Church

May they rest in peace

28 February 2020

Michael Edward Coleby

24 March 2020

Malcolm Robin Lacey

26 March 2020

Paul Derrick Sampson

6 April 2020

Gordon Frederick Taylor

Good news in the community

All around us at the moment, there are good news stories as communities look out for each other during this period of lock down. Many of us will have lots of examples of how our neighbours have been good to us and how we have been able to support them in turn. Congregation member Brenda Cottle shares her experience.

I have good news!

We are so blessed to live in our little cul de sac in Thornbury. My lovely neighbour next door sent a note around each of the 30 houses, asking if we had smart phones and would we like to join the Thornbury WhatsApp group? Every time a younger neighbour goes out, a text message is sent out to the participants asking what they would like from the shops. Goods are left on the doorstep and payment made by BACS bank transfer or cash if that is not possible. Each night at 7.00 p.m. a twenty question quiz is put out on our phones, the answers come through at 8.00 p.m. The winner writes the quiz for the following night.

I sent out a text last Saturday offering David Brown's honey, which I usually sell for him through my MU visits to branches (alongside the greetings cards). The response was like the first day of the January sales, honey was left on the doorstep - £6 for 1lb jars, £3.50 for 1/2lb jars. money put through the letter box. I even had to ask David to come round with further supplies!

One of my Deanery Mothers' Union members in Redbourn was 90 on 8 April, and a party that had been planned was sadly cancelled. I had been pondering how to celebrate, when I saw on the Harpenden Facebook page that Michelle from Party Box in Southdown was delivering helium balloons. I contacted her, to my joy she lives in Redbourn, her mother lives next door to the birthday girl and so two beautiful '90' balloons were delivered on the birthday morning. God does move in mysterious ways!

Our cherry tree in the back garden is in full bloom; it is almost luminescent in its beauty. It is a Merton Glory white heart cherry. Sadly, we don't get any good fruit after 40 years but the joy the blossom gives at this time of year is wonderful. We have been digging for victory on our small vegetable plot, and I am sure that later in the year we will have a vegetable stall at the front of our drive.



Project Phoenix - a transformational project for the church and the local community

Fundraising Launch – first significant milestone achieved

We are delighted to report that we have reached our first significant milestone in our fundraising for the new Parish Centre. Following our launch event on Saturday 29th February and presentations and prayers in church in early March, we are pleased to announce that our pledge total (including Gift Aid) is currently standing at **£500,000**.

This is a fantastic start to our fundraising campaign. We are very grateful to the PCC and members of the congregation who have already made their pledges. The fundraising campaign will continue over five years, with a target of £1.6m. To have reached such a large portion of the target in the first year is a significant step, and we are very grateful to our team of ambassadors and our generous supporters. Particular thanks go to the project team whose energy and enthusiasm have enabled us to reach this milestone.

Clearly our attention is currently focussed on helping our community



manage the Covid-19 emergency and stay connected. The pandemic has made us all rethink our ways of being, working and relating to each other. It is hoped that our new Parish Centre, when built, will enable us to adapt to and support these new ways of living and working post-Covid-19.

Fundraising will resume when it is safe to meet together again in person. But in the meantime, if you have any ideas for a fund-raising event or activity which we might include in our five-year plan, or for a fun on-line activity, please do get in touch with us.

We are pleased to share this report about our launch event from the online version of the Herts Advertiser. <https://www.hertsad.co.uk/news/harpenden-church-ask-for-help-to-fund-parish-centre-1-6581920>

For details of the project and the planned facilities, please visit www.stjohnsharpenden.org.uk

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What do we find at the end of the rainbow?

faith, hope and promise in troubling times

No doubt you will have seen pictures of rainbows going up in windows and chalked onto pavements. They have become a wonderful symbol of hope and cheer, and fun to spot as people walk through the streets. Where does the use of this symbol come from and what can it teach us?

Rainbows have been used by many cultures and campaigns over the years, most notably in recent decades as a symbol of celebration and pride for LGBTQ+ communities. At St John's we affirm that all human beings bear the image of God and that all are loved by God. We see in God's action in human history, in sending Jesus Christ to us, that God accepts all people through Jesus Christ and so we are called to do the same.

There is other rich significance in the symbol of a rainbow for Jews and Christians remembering that ancient story of the flood (you can read it in [Genesis 6.5-9.17](#)). This story is one of many flood myths from this time and place (Gilgamesh is probably the best known of the others). Given the proliferation of flood stories in the literature of the Ancient Near East, it is likely that there was a great event that people of many cultures tried to understand. Another possible explanation proposed is that myth is an attempt to make sense of sea creature fossils found in mountainous areas. Whatever the historical reason for these stories, the thing they share is an attempt to make sense of the world as it is experienced.

A unique perspective of the story as found in the book Genesis is the way that God changes their mind and makes a promise. Now, no serious biblical scholar thinks that a couple of each of the earth's eight million land and air species got onto a boat. However, what is interesting is the thinking behind the story; the theological wisdom that informed the way it was told. God cared about how people lived and wanted them to live well. According to this understanding of God, those who were not living well were taken out. This is not how Christians understand God today, given the ways that God has continued to be revealed to humankind, particularly in the person of Jesus Christ. Violence is not directed from God to misbehaving humanity but by humanity onto God. Jesus is radically non-violent, and is even known as the Prince of Peace.

Back to the rainbow. In the story of Noah this was a symbol of promise. Even within the story, the understanding of God has developed. With the sign of a rainbow after the flood, God promised never to cause great disaster in order to punish the people of the world. With Jesus, we have good company and transformation *in* suffering rather than punishment *through* it.

And so as we face another huge extraordinary and destructive event, how do we make sense of it? Many cultures will form their own narratives, tell their own perspectives and we too will find some wisdom along the way. But may we never forget the hope of the rainbow; that God promises not to cause great disaster but be with us in it; that all are included in the love of the God that made them; and that there is great joy in sharing signs of hope and community in the shared experience of this time.

A selection of bloopers from across the broader Church

The Fasting & Prayer Conference includes meals.

Ladies, don't forget the rummage sale. It's a chance to get rid of those things not worth keeping around the house. Bring your husbands.

Miss Charlene Mason sang 'I will not pass this way again,' giving obvious pleasure to the congregation.

Next Thursday there will be tryouts for the choir. They need all the help they can get.

At the evening service tonight, the sermon topic will be 'What Is Hell?' Come early and listen to our choir practice.

Scouts are saving aluminum cans, bottles and other items to be recycled. Proceeds will be used to cripple children.

The sermon this morning: Jesus Walks on the Water.

The sermon tonight: Searching for Jesus.

Don't let worry kill you off - let the Church help.

For those of you who have children and don't know it, we have a nursery downstairs.

Irving Benson and Jessie Carter were married on October 24 in the church. So ends a friendship that began in their school days.

Eight new choir robes are currently needed due to the addition of several new members and to the deterioration of some older ones.

The church will host an evening of fine dining, super entertainment and gracious hostility..

Potluck supper Sunday at 5:00 PM - prayer and medication to follow.

This evening at 7 PM there will be a hymn singing in the park across from the Church. Bring a blanket and come prepared to sin.

The ladies of the Church have cast off clothing of every kind. They may be seen in the basement on Friday afternoon.

Ladies Bible Study will be held Thursday morning at 10 AM . All ladies are invited to lunch in the Fellowship Hall after the B. S. is done.

The pastor would appreciate it if the ladies of the Congregation would lend him their electric girdles for the pancake breakfast next Sunday.

Low Self Esteem Support Group will meet Thursday at 7 PM. Please use the back door.

The eighth-graders will be presenting Shakespeare's Hamlet in the Church basement Friday at 7 PM. The congregation is invited to attend this tragedy.

Weight Watchers will meet at 7 PM at the First Presbyterian Church. Please use large double door at the side entrance.

The Associate Minister unveiled the church's new campaign slogan last Sunday: "I Upped My Pledge - Up Yours ."

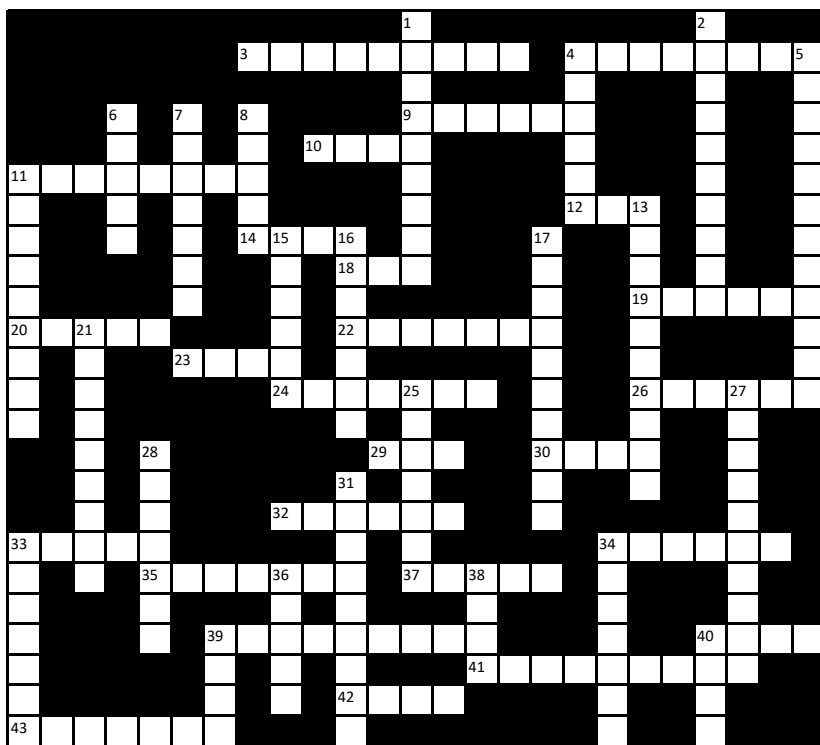
A most remarkable puzzle

The text is the puzzle. Can you spot all the books of the Bible contained within? One example is highlighted.

This is a most remarkable puzzle. It was found by a gentleman in an airplane seat pocket, on a flight from Los Angeles to Honolulu, keeping him occupied for hours. He enjoyed it so much, he passed it on to some friends... One friend from Illinois worked on this while fishing from his john boat. Another friend studied it while playing his banjo. Elaine Taylor, a columnist friend, was so intrigued by it she mentioned it in her weekly newspaper column.

Another friend judges the job of solving this puzzle so involving, she brews a cup of tea to help her nerves. There will be some names that are really easy to spot. That's a fact. Some people, however, will soon find themselves in a jam, especially since the book names are not necessarily capitalized. Truthfully, from answers we get, we are forced to admit it usually takes a minister or a scholar to see some of them at the worst. Research has shown that something in our genes is responsible for the difficulty we have in seeing the books in this paragraph. During a recent fund raising event, which featured this puzzle, the Alpha Delta Phi lemonade booth set a new record. Perhaps almsgiving is a good thing to do with the profits, before recession starts to bite. Certainly that was the plan of Joshua and Philipp. Ian's plan was just to pocket the cash for himself, but what do you expect from someone who wears a fez.

Rarely does someone complete this puzzle without help, unless you are a pro. Verbs, nouns and adjectives, may all contain the key. The local paper, The Chronicle, surveyed over 200 patrons who reported that this puzzle was one of the most difficult they had ever seen. As Daniel Humana **humbly** puts it, "The books are all right here in plain view hidden from sight." Those able to find all of them will hear great lamentations from those who have to be shown. One revelation that may help is that books like Timothy and Samuel may occur without their numbers. Also, keep in mind, that punctuation and spaces in the middle are normal. A chipper attitude will help you compete really well against those who claim to know the answers. Remember, there is no need for a mad exodus, there really are 36 books of the Bible lurking somewhere in this prose waiting to be found.



Across

- 3. Lake poet (9)
- 4. Old name for Ireland (8)
- 9. Desert rat (6)
- 10. Opposite of far (4)
- 11. Son of encouragement (8)
- 12. Spider's home (3)
- 14. Not open (4)
- 18. Solid state H2O (3)
- 19. Opposite of rare (6)
- 20. Mount where Moses received 10 commandments (5)
- 22. Carpark king (7)
- 23. Gospel writer (4)
- 24. Eighth plague of Egypt (7)
- 26. Biblical life span, if you're lucky (6)
- 29. Beverage (3)
- 30. Oxidise (4)
- 32. Czech composer (6)
- 33. Mount where Moses received 10 commandments (5)
- 34. Sea between Greece & Turkey (6)
- 35. Morning star (7)
- 37. Britain's first saint (5)
- 39. Comedian, lived in Harpenden (9)
- 40. Gospel writer (4)
- 41. Biblically good person (9)
- 42. St Paul's final destination (4)
- 43. Fish (7)

Down

- 1. Colorado river (3,6)
- 2. Old-fashioned expression (10)
- 4. Bless (6)
- 5. First day of the Church year (6,6)
- 6. Morning star (5)
- 7. Filmmaker lived in Childwickbury Manor (7)
- 8. Morning star (5)
- 11. King David's downfall (9)
- 13. 14th Century illness (5,5)
- 15. British, Baroque composer, born in Germany (6)
- 16. Lion King lyricist, attended Aldwickbury School (3,4)
- 17. Lake poet (10)
- 21. e.g. Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Sikism (9)
- 25. Czech composer (7)
- 27. Just a minute failure (10)
- 28. Samson's downfall; Tom Jones song (7)
- 31. Biblical life span, if you're lucky (9)
- 33. Religious day of rest (7)
- 34. Fleet commander; butterfly (7)
- 36. Days Jesus spent in the wilderness (5)
- 38. An apiarist keeps them (4)
- 39. Gospel writer (4)
- 40. Indonesian Island (4)

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St Luke's Cell prayer group

Would you like us to pray for you?

St Luke's Cell prayer group prays for anyone in the parish who has asked for our prayers for themselves or for their loved ones. The group is made up of members from St John's and Southdown Methodist churches

If you would like us to pray for you or someone else then please be in contact with Michael Hughes 01582 765576



We are all experiencing loss in the present time – of contact with family and friends, of work, of upheaval of almost everything in our daily routine. The Psalms speak to us and for us:

**Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord,
Lord, hear my voice** *(Psalm 130)*

Yet we walk in the steps of generations who have known very real adversity and uncertainty, but who have also known that we are accompanied at all times and in all circumstances by Christ himself, risen from the dead and now alive in our world for all time. He is both our companion in the present and source of hope for the future. We meet Him in all those who selflessly care for others in their time of need, and as well in those who suffer. We pray for ourselves to know this and those on the St Luke's Cell list facing additional adversity to know his presence. An ancient Celtic hymn is a prayer that has words in which each phrase gives us something to ponder:

**Christ be with me, Christ within me,
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me,
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all that love me,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger**

(part of the hymn known as St Patrick's Breastplate, Hymns Ancient and Modern no.277)



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Harpenden Cares is a community-led initiative, supported by the Town Council, created to help support our community in these unprecedented times.

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www.harpendencares.org



Thank You to Our Volunteers

We'd like to give a huge thank you to all of our wonderful volunteers who are offering befriending support, acting as street coordinators, helping deliver essential supplies, and relaying general advice & guidance through the Harpenden Cares Call Centre.



Donations

If you would like to support Harpenden Cares, **we are now taking individual donations.** All donations received will go directly to supporting vulnerable people locally. Donations are managed through the Harpenden Trust. Please reference 'Harpenden Cares' when you donate. To donate directly, please go to:

www.bit.ly/HarpCaresDonation



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Did you know... We run an assisted shopping service for anyone that can afford to pay for food supplies but who is or should be self-isolating?

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2. Your request is passed to our assisted shopping team who will call you back to take a shopping list of essential items
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4. Once payment has been taken, the shopping list is passed to one of our volunteers, who will go shopping and purchase as many of the items as possible
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Once it is deemed safe to do so, St John's Parish Hall will once again be available to hire during weekdays and is ideal for a playgroup or other group needing a large space. Our meeting room is perfect for smaller numbers.

Please contact: parish.office@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk
or phone (01582) 712776 for further details or to arrange a viewing.

Getting to know the congregation

An interview with Alexandra Dales

How long have you lived in the area?

We moved to Harpenden in the summer of 2018. Before that we were living in Putney.

What do you do with your time?

Well, when I'm not looking after two young children, I work in the treasury team for an international fertiliser and chemicals producer based in London. Outside of that, I like to spend my free time going on family walks and reading. I particularly like reading fiction and crime novels and recently finished *The Goldfinch* by Donna Tartt, which was excellent.

How have you connected with life at St John's?

We try to attend church every Sunday. It's great that St John's is so welcoming to families with young children. It's especially nice that so many parishioners normally gather afterwards for coffee which has helped us get to know the church community.

What does your faith mean to you?

I am a baptised Catholic and have been brought up going to church every Sunday. I feel this is an important tradition to practice with my own family and to ensure the church survives for future generations. It's a shame the church hasn't been open for private prayer but we've been watching the online services and look forward to the church reopening soon. ●





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And now it is spreading across the world's poorest countries, putting people living in poverty at great risk.

These people are already facing a lack of water, food and healthcare. Some are homeless. Some are living with underlying health issues such as HIV.

As coronavirus infection rates speed up, they will feel the impacts of the virus deeply. We must respond now.

Coronavirus impacts all of us. But love unites us all.

Please donate today

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Mothers' UNION

Christian care for families

Diocese of St. Albans

Mothers' Union is a global Christian organisation. Its four million members around the world are reacting to the pandemic in different ways. Here at St John's our members are being asked to self-isolate in an effort to prevent the spread of the virus.

We can no longer meet once a month and being active in our work is difficult, but prayer has always been central to everything we do and we now have more time to pray. In our prayers we remember the work of Mothers' Union around the world. Our prayers have power and are needed more than ever as we fight to control this terrible virus.



While praying for God's guidance, help, comfort and love we also give thanks for His many blessings. Those of us who have enjoyed a daily walk in the countryside or on the Common have rejoiced in the abundant spring blossom, the gradual greening of the trees, the masses of colourful wild flowers, the delicate butterflies and the glorious birdsong.

Some of us, I know, discovered the carpet of cowslips on the Common and as I took a photograph these words from 'Desespoir' by Oscar Wilde came to mind:

' wherefore yon leafless trees will bloom again
And the grey land grow green with summer rain.
And send up cowslips for some boy to mow.'





The countryside, our parks, the Common and our gardens are bursting with new life and we give thanks to the Lord for the sunshine, the blue sky, the shower of rain and the promise of summer to come.

It's worth remembering that although self-isolating, Brenda is still selling MU cards and will willingly post them and other items to MU members. If you make arrangements beforehand, a jar of David's honey can be left on her doorstep and the money popped through the letterbox in an envelope.

Recently, Mothers' Union sent out an urgent appeal to all members asking for financial help during this pandemic. We know what vital practical help and support is given to families and vulnerable people in this country and around the world and I'm sure the response will be generous and heartwarming.

We will continue to stay in contact through emails and the telephone and to share news of new grandchildren, ducklings, Warden's Honey, successful downsizing and any stories which cheer us up and make us smile. Stay in touch with each other and stay safe.

' I remain confident of this
 I will see the goodness of the Lord
 In the land of the living
 Wait for the Lord,
 Be strong and take heart
 And wait for the Lord, '

Psalm 27:13-14

Carol Cooke, Branch Leader

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Fund-raising Launch event – Saturday 29th February 2020

The Bishop of St Albans and the Town Mayor of Harpenden joined members of St John's church and the local community for the launch of a five-year fundraising campaign to build a new parish centre.

Plans and images for the new centre were unveiled, as the project team described this transformative opportunity for the church and the local community. Bishop Alan endorsed the vision as 'exciting and relevant'. He stated that the new parish centre would enable St John's to expand the support and services provided to the local community.

'The current church hall is holding us back,' said project team lead, Matt Barter. 'Our new parish centre will be flexible, sustainable and accessible, and offer affordable facilities for everyone to use.' The Harpenden Town Mayor,

Councillor Brian Ellis, believes the new parish centre will be a valuable local resource for Harpenden residents.

'It's a courageous step forward for the congregation of St John's,' said vicar, Berkeley Zych. 'It continues the bold and generous legacy shown by the congregation and community at the beginning of the last century. They funded the rebuilding of the church on its current site, after the original 'paper church' on Crabtree Lane was destroyed by fire on New Year's Day 1906. The new parish centre will provide enhanced facilities we can be proud of, for future generations to use and enjoy.'

For details of the project and the planned facilities, please visit www.stjohnsharpenden.org.uk



Photographs by Michael Readman

Morning, Noon and Night

'Seven times a day I praise you' – Psalm 119:164

Whatever your precise view may be on the story of creation, as disciples of Christ we all believe that God is the sole creator, '... the maker of heaven and earth'. We also acknowledge that we are but a part of that created order and that from the very outset our world had a purpose, a structure, a rhythm. All of nature operates best and fulfils its potential when that structure and rhythm is maintained. Just think how many natural rhythms there are: the sun rises in the morning and sets at night when the moon takes over; the phases of the moon control the tides that ebb and flow on a daily basis; in temperate climates spring and summer follow autumn and winter; there are regular cycles of fertility in all animals and plants; we sleep at night and wake in the morning; our hearts beat an individual pulse of life as we breathe in and out.

There is a fundamental need for rhythm and routine. New life, be it human or otherwise, thrives once a feeding and sleeping pattern becomes established. For all of us eating meals at regular times enables our bodies to function most efficiently and effectively. Disruptions to our normal sleep patterns, perhaps caused by jet lag or a young baby, mean that we struggle to cope with the normal demands of everyday life.

Less obvious, but equally important, are the patterns of behaviour which we establish to ensure that our minds are kept

healthy too. As a rule, we spend some time alone and some time talking with others. We stimulate our brains in different ways according to our unique personalities, by problem solving, being creative, or by immersing ourselves in academic studies. As Christians, many of us try to establish a personal rhythm of practising our faith, often a mixture of public worship and private prayer. Physically, mentally and spiritually we thrive best on a regular structure that fits in with the other demands on our time: the work, the chores, the unavoidable necessities of life.

With very little warning or time to get our heads around it, we now find ourselves living in a completely different way from how we used to. Our current lockdown has had an unimaginable effect on the established structure of our daily and weekly lives. For all of us, nothing happens quite the same way as it did before: working, shopping, seeing friends, going to church, all have been affected. Our normal routines have gone completely out the window. We are being required to dance to a new rhythm and frankly most of us are struggling to learn the steps and find our feet.

Despite the difficulties and constraints of the times we find ourselves in, it's very important that we endeavour to maintain some structure in our lives, and that includes our prayer lives. Our church buildings may be locked and worship within

them suspended, but that does not mean that our prayer lives go into remission too. Maintaining a spiritual routine at the moment will help us to walk closer to Christ and feel the comfort of his presence. It's not about being pious but it will enable us, isolated as we are in the separateness of our individual homes, to experience a sense of the wider community of which we are still a part. We can connect to others through prayer as the body of Christ, even though we are physically apart.

The Bible tells us quite a lot about prayer, the what, the when and the why. The Gospels make frequent references to Jesus praying, both in the synagogue and alone - he 'would withdraw to deserted places and pray' (Lk 5:16); unfortunately, we have no information of exactly how or what he prayed. Jesus is clear that the greatest commandment is to 'love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind' (Matt 22:37) and to that end we are required to offer worship and prayer, but it is not something that comes that easily to most of us. Luckily, the disciples asked the very question that we ourselves need the answer to as much as they did, 'How should we pray?' Of course, the answer that Jesus gave them was that great prayer, the Lord's Prayer, which gives honour to God, submits us to his will, places reliance on him for sustenance and requests forgiveness and deliverance. We are required to pray to God our Father 'without ceasing' (1 Thess 5:17) and 'in the Spirit at all times' (Eph 6:18), but what should we say and what in reality does it look like to have a structure or rhythm of prayer?

From ancient times, millions of people around the world have worshipped God

on a daily basis. Muslims recite parts of the Qur'an seven times a day. Devout Jews pray the Shema twice a day, based on the command to offer prayers 'when you lie down and when you get up' (Deut. 6:4). As monastic communities developed, they formed their entire lives upon the rhythm of what is called the Divine Office, praying seven times throughout the day and night. When Thomas Cranmer revised the Prayer Book, during the English Reformation, he simplified matters considerably and reduced the Anglican office to Morning and Evening Prayer with optional Midday and Night-time services. The specific intention was to make these services easily available to everyone, not just the clergy. Churches throughout the world say Morning and Evening Prayer every day, they are said at St John's at 8.30am and 5.00pm and are open to everyone. These brief, services of the word last about half an hour and consist of reading psalms, lessons from Scripture and offering set prayers. (Under our current lockdown Morning Prayer is offered online, via a video link, see below for details.)

'The idea of some set form of Office... is based on a realistic assessment of human beings and of our prayer potential. We do not always pray with spontaneity and ease, nor should our prayer depend on the way we feel. Prayer which is so based on feelings is unstable and lacks depth. The Office is a form of prayer which is independent of our feelings, though, of course it is often accompanied by, and arouses, deep feelings and emotion.'

Kenneth Leech, True Prayer

So, let's think about what it means to

have a structured prayer life. How do we go about establishing a rhythm of prayer? The key is to remember that there are no rules or imperatives. There is no right way. There is no minimum requirement. There are no set words, this is a matter entirely between you and God. There can always be flexibility too. There is no failing or succeeding, though there will be times when prayer is harder and it seems difficult to engage properly in the process. There are many resources for prayers available on line (see below) but it's important to remember that 'your Father knows what you need before you ask him' (Matt 6:8), therefore no words need be said at all. Prayer can simply consist of sitting in stillness and recognising God's presence, recognising that it is the most important thing that there is, that it fills the stillness entirely and gives our hearts all that they yearn for.

'Be still and know that I am God, exalted over nations, exalted over earth!' Psalm 46:10

During lockdown it is probably quite easy to establish a framework of prayer as there are less distractions, the options are endless, but here are some suggestions

- Informal prayer can be offered to God when out walking;
- The Lord's Prayer can be said whilst handwashing;
- Try using the Jesus prayer as a form of meditation – see the link below for Berkeley's video explaining this prayer;
- A set prayer time can be established, perhaps on waking or when going to bed, and either the Lord's Prayer or a short psalm can be read (try Ps1, 23, 93, 96, 99 or 100). Read the words slowly and

allow them to sink in. Our Lord prayed the psalms, making them a link to him and his pilgrimage;

- Join Morning Prayer online with other members of the congregation or just read the Daily Office alone, knowing that you will be part of a long-established tradition continued by a global community;
- Download a prayer app and use it daily;
- Telephone 'Daily Hope' to hear a hymn and short reflection on it;
- Spend a few minutes reading the Bible each day.

Consider also how to make prayer time special, here are some more suggestions:

- If you are alone, think about praying aloud as this can transform worship;
- Body posture can make a difference to prayer too, open wide your arms to praise God, try kneeling if you can or bow your head, open your hands in supplication as you recite the Lord's prayer. It can make a positive difference to vary your posture appropriately during a time of prayer;
- Think about lighting a candle to focus on, or maybe use a crucifix or a bunch of flowers;
- Still yourself before prayer, don't rush into it, listen to the steady rhythm of your heartbeat; let the Holy Spirit guide you;
- Allow yourself to be silent, to listen and wait.

Remember that prayer at this difficult time should also be a cause for joy. Our lives may be making us anxious, lonely, sad and dismayed but there are always blessings to count. Prayer offers us the

opportunity to give praise to our Lord, the giver of life, through Christ Jesus our Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit. My personal experience is that regular prayer provides a sense of peace and purpose. It doesn't offer a magic cure for all worries

and problems but it will give the strength to face them and the opportunity to thank God for all that life offers us. ●

Emma Bresslaw

Internet and Telephone Prayer Resources

- Divine Office/Daily Prayer – for contemporary or traditional wording for each day's Morning or Evening Prayer :
<https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-service-daily-prayer>
- For details of the link to join St John's Morning Prayer at 8.30 a.m. on weekdays via Zoom, please contact Berkeley, James or the church office directly
- Berkeley's introduction to praying the Jesus Prayer -
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b4J6BOoaiV4&t=63s>
- Church of England - Daily Hope Phone Line – 0800 804 8044
- Pray as you Go/Pray as you Stay – inspirational daily reflections and prayers to offer support at this time
<https://pray-as-you-go.org/retreat/pray-as-you-stay>



Southdown Methodists

Informal Worship gatherings on Zoom:
Wednesday 4pm, Sunday 4pm.

Bible Bites - Thursdays 7pm.

Contact stuart.dyer@methodist.org.uk for login details.

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What will we be like when we emerge?

There are things that we can all learn in these strange days that we never could have just two months ago.

In the rush to return to normal, which parts of normal are worth rushing back to?

We hope this is an opportunity for our society to grow in depth, in kindness, and in compassion.

Each of us have a chance to grow personally too. You might find these questions a helpful start.

Who do you feel more compassion for?

What have realised about yourself?

What do you miss?

What are you glad not to have to do?

What are you more grateful for than you had previously realised?





WASP GUYS

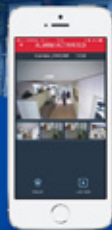
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Recipes...

T@3 Teacake

Oven: 150C Fan 130C Gas mark 2

Cooking time: 1 hour 25 minutes

Ingredients:

50ml sunflower oil	1/4 tsp salt
120g pecans	100ml milk
2 large ripe mashed bananas	190g plain flour
190g light soft brown sugar	1/2 tsp bicarbonate of soda
2 beaten eggs	1 tsp baking powder

Preheat the oven. Grease and line a 2lb loaf tin. Roast pecans in oven for 8-10 minutes, chop roughly and set aside. Put bananas, sugar and eggs in bowl and mix together. Add salt, milk and oil. Combine all the dry ingredients and add to the bowl. Lastly add the pecans and pour into the tin. Once cooked, remove from the tin, cool completely and tuck in! *Heather*

Czech Potato Salad

This is a traditional Czech recipe, which in my experience is served at almost every Czech gathering. All those family events just wouldn't have been the same without this recipe making an appearance! I believe that it is very similar to potato salad recipes found across Eastern Europe. I know one family where this salad is made to almost surgical precision and the husband mixes the ingredients by hands, wearing rubber kitchen gloves. I recommend the more traditional method of a spoon, unless you like the comedy value. The recipe is not vegetarian. A vegetarian version can be made if the ham and Worcester sauce are omitted.

Cooking time: 35 minutes

Serves: 10-12

1kg potatoes, finely chopped
 200g ham, finely chopped (omit for vegetarians)
 1 onion, finely chopped (I prefer red)
 4 (3, if very large) eggs, hard boiled and finely chopped
 100g peas
 2 carrots, finely chopped
 1 tbsp Worcester sauce (omit for vegetarians)
 3 tbsp pickle juice
 or 1 tbsp vinegar (red wine/cider) & lemon juice
 250g mayonnaise (alternatively 1/2 natural yogurt)
 Fresh parsley, chopped, to taste
 Salt & pepper, to taste

- 1) Cook potatoes, peas, eggs and carrots.
- 2) Finely chop all ingredients and mix, then serve.

Berkeley

Flourless chocolate cloud cake

Lots of eggs, but NO FLOUR! I made this for our lockdown Easter... it was wonderful! We had plenty to share with neighbours. *Lauryn*

Cooking time: 35 minutes

Serves: 10-12

Ingredients

- 250g salted butter, plus extra for greasing
- 250g dark chocolate, chopped
- 1 tbsp espresso coffee powder (I used regular coffee)
- 6 large eggs, separated
- 250g caster sugar
- 60g cocoa powder, sifted, plus extra for dusting
- 300g pack frozen summer fruits
- 200ml crème fraîche (or whipped cream! Or none, if you don't have any)
- mint leaves, to serve



Method

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C, gas mark 4. Grease and line a 23cm springform cake tin. Put the chocolate and butter in a heatproof bowl over a pan of just-boiled water. Once nearly all melted, stir until smooth. Mix the coffee powder with 50ml boiled water. Set both aside to cool a little.

2. Using electric beaters, whisk the egg yolks with the sugar in a large bowl for 3 minutes, until pale and thick. Stir in the chocolate mixture, coffee and the cocoa powder. Whisk the egg whites with clean electric beaters in a separate bowl until they form stiff peaks. Stir a dollop of the egg white into the chocolate mixture to loosen it, then carefully fold in the rest. Pour into the cake tin, level out, then bake for 35-40 minutes until risen, cracked and with a very slight wobble in the centre. Leave the cake to cool in the tin on a wire rack. It will sink in the middle.

3. While the cake is cooling, put the summer fruits in a small pan over a low heat and cook for 7-8 minutes until warmed through but still holding their shape. Leave to cool. When ready to serve, dollop the crème fraîche onto the centre of the cake. Top with the berries and scatter a few mint leaves over the top.

This recipe first appeared in Waitrose & Partners Food, April 2019 issue.

Mum's Lentil Curry

This is a recipe my mother whipped up after much experimenting with different spices and having been influenced by conversations with many of her Indian colleagues when she worked as a nurse in operating theatres.

It is a vegan recipe, unless you choose to use chicken stock in place of vegetable stock.

- 8oz lentils, rinsed (non-soaking, split orange)
- 1 tin tomatoes (or 6 fresh tomatoes)
- 1/4 tube tomato puree (or 1/2 tube tomato puree if using fresh tomatoes)
- 1 bell pepper, finely chopped (I prefer red)
- 1 onion, finely chopped (I prefer red)
- 10 medium mushrooms (about 1 250g packet from the supermarket)
- 1 1/4 pints vegetable stock (as an alternative substitute chicken stock)
- 1/2 tsp turmeric
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 1 tsp ground coriander seed
- 1 tsp chili powder (I prefer 'hot' chili powder, but you can use mild or a mixture to make a less spicy curry)
- 1 clove garlic (omit if cooking for Berkeley, since he's allergic to garlic)

- 1) Sauté onions for 5 mins in a large frying pan or wok, then add the pepper, mushrooms and garlic. Cook until mushrooms release juice and pepper starts to soften.
- 2) Add the spices and stir into the mixture, allowing the flavours to combine for a few minutes
- 3) Add the lentils, tomatoes and puree and stir in.
- 4) Add the stock, bring to the boil and then simmer for about 40 minutes, until the mixture has reduced and is no longer too watery. (If serving with rice, cook that at this stage)

Serve whilst still hot. I recommend serving with Basmati rice. For variation, try adding 1/2 tsp tumeric to four cups of rice whilst cooking.

Serves 4-6

Berkeley

Almond Stars

I developed this recipe as part of my course work for GCSE Food Technology. The stars are, once cooked, very similar to some Czech Christmas cookies in taste and texture, though the recipe was not inspired by these. The mixture is quite sticky and can be difficult sometimes to cut; try chilling the pastry, or using extra flour if this is the case.


125g hard margarine or butter
100g light brown soft sugar
175g plain flour, sifted
50g ground almonds
1 large egg, beaten
1 tsp almond essence
icing sugar to dust

PREHEAT AN OVEN TO 180C/350F/GM4

- 1) Cream together the margarine and sugar until light and fluffy.
- 2) Beat in the egg and almond essence.
- 3) Work in the flour and ground almonds until you have a smooth pastry mixture (chill at this stage if you are finding the pastry too unworkable).
- 4) Roll out mixture to about 0.5cm thick, cut out biscuits and place on grease-proof-paper-lined (or greased) baking sheets. (I usually use a star-shaped cutter, hence 'Almond Stars'!)
- 5) Place into a preheated oven at 180C/350F/GM4 for about 15 mins (or until golden brown).
- 6) Using a palette knife, place the biscuits onto a cooling rack and dust with icing sugar. Leave to cool.

Makes about 36 biscuits.

Berkeley



Pea and Tomato Risotto Stuffed Mushrooms

I came up with this recipe whilst I was a vegetarian for a period. I was bored with always and only being offered vegetable skewers and veggie burgers at summer barbecues, so thought I'd come up with something simple, yet exciting.

This recipe can be cooked on the barbecue, or in an oven if preferred.

12 large field mushrooms

300g Risotto rice (I recommend Arborio if you can get it)

1L vegetable stock

1 large onion (red)

Peas, to taste

2 large packets of baby tomatoes on the vine, quartered

vegetarian 'parmesan' equivalent, shaved (substitute for roasted pine nuts as a vegan alternative)

1/2 tsp cumin seeds

1/2 tsp coriander seeds, crushed (else use ground)

1 tsp turmeric

1 tsp dried basil

Salt & pepper, to taste

PREHEAT OVEN TO 180C/350F/GM4, OR PREPARE BBQ GRILL

- 1) Fry onions in a large pan, add risotto rice, turmeric, cumin and coriander. Cook until starches are well developed (about 5 minutes).
- 2) Slowly add vegetable stock, constantly stirring until Risotto is cooked.
- 3) MEANWHILE, cook peas. Scatter dried basil over the tomatoes and grill until cooked.
- 4) Mix tomatoes and peas with the Risotto and spoon mixture onto upturned field mushrooms. Cover with shaved Parmesan (or pine nut alternative). Bake for about 20 minutes at 180C/350F/GM4 or on BBQ until mushroom is succulent and cheese has melted.

I individually wrap the mushrooms in foil when cooking on the BBQ to maintain moisture. Try the vegan alternative by substituting pine nuts for the vegetarian 'parmesan'. Note if you use real parmesan, the dish won't be vegetarian!

Berkeley

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HOW YOU CAN HELP YOUR LOCAL FOODBANK

The current Coronavirus outbreak is causing understandable concern for Foodbank clients, volunteers and supporters alike.

In recent weeks the St Albans & District Foodbank has, unsurprisingly, experienced the greatest surge in demand for help in their 6 years of existence.

This increase will mean that the stocks held will deplete rapidly, unless they can match that with more donations; and without food to distribute, they will be unable to help. It is therefore crucial that people continue to support us as generously as possible please, in this time of crisis.

They're still accepting donations, including online donations.

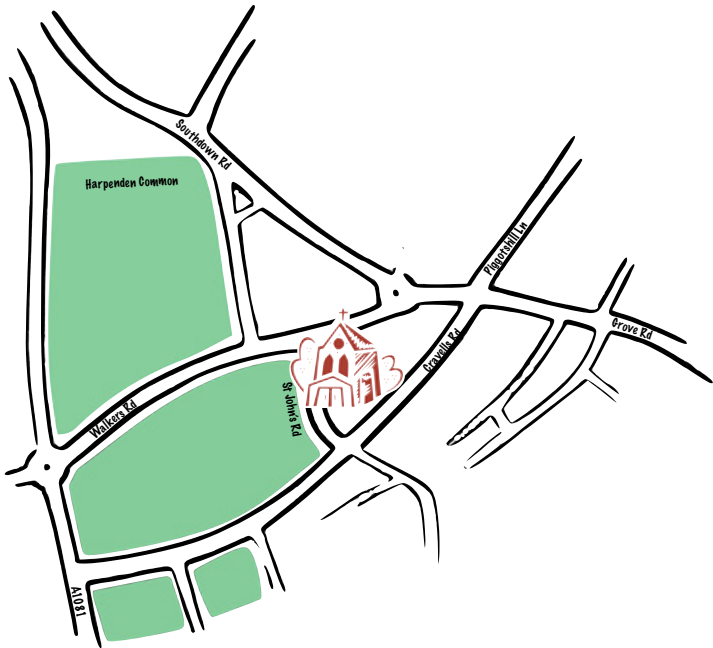
The major online retailers will all deliver donations at your request to the warehouse: Foodbank Warehouse, 28-30 Coldharbour Lane, Harpenden AL5 4UN.
Tue 12:00-15:00, Thu 11:00-13:00, Fri 12:00-15:00.

If you plan to deliver on Thursday please check in advance that the warehouse will be open when you come, by calling 07752 107221. If there is no response (and on the other days) please call 01727 613019 Option 3

Foodbank donation points are available behind the checkouts in all the main supermarkets in Harpenden and St Albans.

The most needed items list can be found on the website at <https://bit.ly/3aHgEgg>





PARISH OFFICE

For enquiries, including marriages, baptisms, funerals and hall bookings, please contact the parish office open from Monday 9am to 5:30pm and Wednesday to Friday 9:30am to 1:30pm.

Julie Birkett

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

Revd Dr Berkeley Zych

Telephone: 01582 469343
vicar@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk

CURATE

Revd James Brown

Telephone: 07813 464643
james@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk

ASSISTANT PRIEST

Revd Julia White

READERS

Lauryn Awbrey

Telephone: 01582 624823
awbreymaclure@ntlworld.com

David Nye

Telephone: 01582 762785
dandhnye@btinternet.com

Anne Edwards

Telephone: 01582 767449

LOCAL LAY LEADER OF WORSHIP

Emma Bresslaw

WARDENS

James Hillman

Telephone: 07788 567826
wardens@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk

Jane Donati

Telephone: 01582 765662
wardens@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk

DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

Roger Carter

music@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk

TREASURER

Tim Coleman

Telephone: 07894 396061
treasurer@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk

st JOHN'S
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www.stjohnsharpenden.org.uk
St John's Church, 5 St John's Road, Harpenden, Herts AL5 1DJ
Parish Office 01582 712776

