

NATIVITY SERVICE



9.30am Sunday 17th December 2023

www.stjohnsharpenden.org.uk

Welcome to St John's, Harpenden

From earliest times, Christians gathered at regular hours during each day and night to respond to God's word with praise on behalf of creation and with intercession for the salvation of the world.

On this Sunday morning:

We have come together in the name of Christ,
to offer our praise and thanksgiving,
to hear and receive God's holy word,
to pray for the needs of the world,
and to seek the forgiveness of our sins,
to exchange the Peace,
pray the Eucharistic prayer,
break the bread,
receive communion and
depart with God's blessing
that by the power of the Holy Spirit
we may give ourselves to the service of God.

People of all ages are welcome at all of our services as a full part of God's family, and this service is especially aimed at being something we can all take part in together.



During this service we invite all, as they are able, to help contribute to the cost of running this church so that we might show God's love to those around us.



There is an Induction Loop in the church, for those using a hearing aid



Large print orders of service are available on request. Please ask a welcomer



Please join us for refreshments in the church hall immediately after the service

Opening Hymn: 41 Lo, he comes with clouds descending

1. Lo, he comes with clouds descending,
once for favoured sinners slain;
thousand thousand saints attending
swell the triumph of his train:
Alleluia!
God appears on earth to reign.

2. Every eye shall now behold him
robed in dreadful majesty;
those who set at naught and sold him,
pierced and nailed him to the Tree,
deeply wailing,
shall the true Messiah see.

3. Those dear tokens of his passion
still his dazzling body bears,
cause of endless exultation
to his ransomed worshippers:
with what rapture,
gaze we on those glorious scars!

4. Yea, Amen, let all adore thee,
high on thine eternal throne;
Saviour, take the power and glory,
claim the kingdom for thine own:
Alleluia!
Thou shalt reign, and thou alone.

We Welcome

Welcome in the name of Christ,
God's grace, mercy and peace be with you
All: and also with you

Advent 3

John the Baptist

We light a candle to remember John, who was the final prophet to speak of Jesus' coming before his ministry began.

God our Father, you gave to Zechariah and Elizabeth in their old age a son called John. He grew up strong in spirit, prepared the people for the coming of the Lord, and baptized them in the Jordan to wash away their sins. Help us, who have been baptized into Christ, to be ready to welcome him into our hearts,
and to grow strong in faith by the power of the Spirit. We ask this through Jesus Christ, the light who is coming into the world.

Amen.

Lord Jesus, light of the world, John told the people to prepare, for you were very near. As Christmas grows closer day by day, help us to be ready to welcome you now. Amen.

The Collect

We remain standing to say the special prayer for today

God for whom we watch and wait,
you sent John the Baptist to prepare the way of your Son:
give us courage to speak the truth,
to hunger for justice,
and to suffer for the cause of right,
with Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

We Listen: The Nativity Presentation
You are encouraged to join in with these songs

Song: A Starry Night

A Starry Night

It was on a starry night
When the hills were bright,
Earth lay sleeping, sleeping calm and still.
Then in a cattle shed
In a manger bed,
A boy was born king of all the world.

And all the angels sang for him,
The bells of heaven rang for him,
For a boy was born king of all the world.
And all the angels sang for him,
The bells of heaven rang for him,
For a boy was born king of all the world.

Soon the shepherds came that way
Where the baby lay
And were kneeling, kneeling by his side.
And their hearts believed again
For the peace of men,
For a boy was born king of all the world.

And all the angels sang for him,
The bells of heaven rang for him,
For a boy was born king of all the world.
And all the angels sang for him,
The bells of heaven rang for him,
For a boy was born king of all the world.

Song: The Angel Gabriel

The Angel Gabriel from heaven came,
His wings as drifted snow, his eyes as flame;
"All hail," said he, "thou lowly maiden Mary,
Most highly favoured lady," Gloria!

"For know a blessed mother thou shalt be,
All generations laud and honour thee,
Thy son shall be Emmanuel, by seers foretold.
Most highly favoured lady," Gloria!

Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head,
"To me be as it pleaseth God," she said,
"My soul shall laud and magnify his holy name."
Most highly favoured lady. Gloria!

Song: Calypso Carol

See him lying on a bed of straw;
A draughty stable with an open door,
Mary cradling the babe she bore;
The Prince of Glory is his name.

*O, now carry me to Bethlehem
To see the Lord appear to men:
Just as poor as was the stable then,
The Prince of Glory when he came.*

Star of silver sweep across the skies,
Show where Jesus in the manger lies.
Shepherds, swiftly from your stupor rise
To see the Saviour of the world!

*O, now carry me to Bethlehem
To see the Lord appear to men:
Just as poor as was the stable then,
The Prince of Glory when he came.*

Angels, sing again the song you sang,
Bring God's glory to the heart of man;
Sing that Bethlehem's little baby can
Be salvation to the soul.

*O, now carry me to Bethlehem
To see the Lord appear to men:
Just as poor as was the stable then,
The Prince of Glory when he came.*

We share God's Peace
We stand to share in the peace

May the God of peace make you completely holy,
ready for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ

The peace of the Lord be with you
All And also with you

We offer each other a sign of peace, either a wave or a hand shake.

Offertory Hymn: 108 When Jesus came to Jordan

1. When Jesus came to Jordan
To be baptized by John,
He did not come for pardon,
But as his Father's Son.
He came to share repentance
With all who mourn their sins,
To speak the vital sentence
With which good news begins.

2. He came to share temptation,
Our utmost woe and loss,
For us and our salvation
To die upon the cross.
So when the Dove descended
On him, the Son of Man,
The hidden years had ended,
The age of grace began.

3. Come, Holy Spirit, aid us
To keep the vows we make,
This very day invade us,
And every bondage break.
Come, give our lives direction,
The gift we covet most:
To share the resurrection
That leads to Pentecost.

The altar is prepared and bread and wine are placed upon it.

We Give Thanks

God makes the bread and wine holy for us

The Eucharistic Prayer

The Lord is here.

All His Spirit is with us.

Lift up your hearts.

All We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All It is right to give thanks and praise.

It is right to praise you, Father, Lord of all creation;
in your love you made us for yourself.

When we turned away you did not reject us,
but came to meet us in your Son.

**All You embraced us as your children
and welcomed us to sit and eat with you.**

In Christ you shared our life
that we might live in him and he in us.

**All He opened his arms of love upon the cross
and made for all the perfect sacrifice for sin.**

On the night he was betrayed, at supper with his friends
he took bread, and gave you thanks;
he broke it and gave it to them, saying:
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.

**All Father, we do this in remembrance of him:
his body is the bread of life.**

At the end of supper, taking the cup of wine,
he gave you thanks, and said:
Drink this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins;
do this in remembrance of me.

**All Father, we do this in remembrance of him:
his blood is shed for all.**

As we proclaim his death and celebrate his rising in glory,
send your Holy Spirit that this bread and this wine
may be to us the body and blood of your dear Son.

**All As we eat and drink these holy gifts
make us one in Christ, our risen Lord.**

With your whole Church throughout the world
we offer you this sacrifice of praise
and lift our voice to join the eternal song of heaven:

All Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.

The Lord's Prayer

Rejoicing in God's new creation, let us pray with confidence as our saviour has taught

us

Please remain kneeling or sitting.

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name;
your kingdom come; your will be done;
on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread.
And forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen.**

Breaking of the Bread

The president breaks the consecrated bread

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

All Though we are many, we are one body,
because we all share in one bread.

Giving of Communion

God's holy gifts for God's holy people.

All Jesus Christ is holy,
Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

*The president and people receive communion. All full members of Christian Churches are warmly invited to receive communion. If you would prefer a blessing, please come forward carrying this booklet with you. Authorised words of distribution are used and the communicant replies
'Amen'*

Communion Music

Communion Hymn: 38 Hark a thrilling voice is sounding

1. Hark, a thrilling voice is sounding;
'Christ is nigh,' it seems to say;
'cast away the dreams of darkness,
O ye children of the day.'

2. Wakened by the solemn warning,
let the earth-bound soul arise;
Christ, her Sun, all ill dispelling,
shines upon the morning skies.

3. Lo, the Lamb, so long expected,
comes with pardon down from heaven;
let us haste, with tears of sorrow,
one and all to be forgiven;

4. That when next he comes with glory,
and the world is wrapped in fear,
with his mercy he may shield us,
and with words of love draw near.

5. Honour, glory, might, and blessing
to the Father and the Son,
with the everlasting Spirit,
while eternal ages run.

Communion Hymn: 51 The Lord will come and not be slow

1. The Lord will come and not be slow,
his footsteps cannot err;
before him righteousness shall go,
his royal harbinger.

2. Truth from the earth, like to a flower,
shall bud and blossom then;
and justice, from her heavenly bower,
look down on mortal men.

3. Rise, God, judge thou the earth in might,
this wicked earth redress;
for thou art he who shalt by right
the nations all possess.

4. The nations all whom thou hast made
shall come, and all shall frame
to bow them low before thee, Lord,
and glorify thy name.

5. For great thou art, and wonders great
by thy strong hand are done:
thou in thy everlasting seat
remainest God alone.

Prayer after Communion

We give you thanks, O Lord, for these heavenly gifts;
kindle in us the fire of your Spirit
that when your Christ comes again
we may shine as lights before his face;
who is alive and reigns now and for ever.
Amen.

We are blessed and sent out

We receive God's blessing and are sent out to serve him in the world

Blessing

The Lord open our eyes to his coming,
open our ears to his voice,
open our hearts to his love;
and the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be among you, and remain with you always.

Amen

Final Hymn: 75 Long ago, prophets knew.

1. Long ago, prophets knew
Christ would come, born a Jew,
come to make all things new;
bear his people's burden,
freely love and pardon.

Refrain:

Ring, bells, ring, ring, ring!
sing, choirs, sing, sing, sing!
When he comes,
when he comes,
who will make him welcome?

2. God in time, God in man,
this is God's timeless plan:
he will come, as a man,
born himself of woman,
God divinely human. [Refrain]

3. Mary, hail! Though afraid,
she believed, she obeyed.
In her womb, God is laid:
till the time expected,
nurtured and protected, [Refrain]

4. Journey ends! Where afar
Bethlem shines, like a star,
stable door stands ajar.
Unborn Son of Mary,
Saviour, do not tarry!

Refrain:
Ring, bells, ring, ring, ring!
sing, choirs, sing, sing, sing!
Jesus comes!
Jesus comes!
We will make him welcome!

Dismissal

Go in the peace of Christ.

All Thanks be to God.

The ministers and people depart.

**Thank you for joining us today, and thank you to all our
Nativity performers!**

**You are invited to join us in the Church Hall for
refreshments after the service**

Christmas Services at St John's 2023

You are invited and welcome to join us for one, or all, of our Christmas celebrations.

Christmas Eve

11am. Carols around the Crib. A short service of Carols.

3pm. Walking to Bethlehem.

Join us outside Southdown Christmas tree opposite the co-op as we walk to Bethlehem and hear the Christmas story. Suitable for Children.

11.30pm. Midnight Mass

A traditional service to start our Christmas celebration, including incense and the blessing of the Christmas Crib.

Christmas Day

8am. Holy Communion.

A quiet reflective service of Holy Communion.

10am. All Age Parish Eucharist.

Join us as we celebrate with music and song the birth of Jesus. Suitable for all Ages.

The Epiphany 9.30am 7th January 2024

Eucharist of the Epiphany. All Age Parish Eucharist. All Welcome.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Advent Word Search



Peace	Advent	Decorate	
Hope	Savior	Worship	
Candles	Angel	Love	
Jesus	Messiah	Holy	
Mary	Bethlehem	Immanuel	
Joseph	Wreath	Rejoice	



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