



st JOHN'S

Living God's Love

Parish Magazine
CHRISTMAS 2021

st JOHN'S

Living God's Love

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ADDRESS

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www.stjohnsharpenden.org.uk

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.

EDITOR

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Introductory Letter



Finding God in unusual places

As we approach Christmas it's going to feel extra special, given that last year our plans for Christmas were dramatically reduced at the last minute. Even though we all know it was best for our own safety, it was still hard for many – especially those who live on their own or were relying on the generosity of others. I found myself unable to see my brother who had recently arrived from Peru.

So, for many reasons, this year Christmas will feel like the first 'proper' Christmas in 2 years, and I hope that you not only have plans, but also that you are going to take extra pleasure in the joy of seeing family and friends at Christmas.

When plans for Christmas were changed last year, many said that Christmas was cancelled. Of course, in one sense that was true – our cultural celebration of Christmas was put on hold for a year. But none the less Christmas was still celebrated, even if online, in churches up and down the country, and across the world. At the heart of the Christmas story is the arrival of God in the form of a small vulnerable baby, in the most unexpected of places, and that God is with us, and always will be with us whatever we are going through.

For Christians, Christmas will always be a time to celebrate, and we will be doing so this year at St John's with our traditional service of Nine Lessons and Carols, our Walking to Bethlehem crib service, a return of Beer and Carols at The Engineer, and new this year, 'Carols on the Common' – a chance to sing carols outside (see inside for more information). We hope that you find God at one of these services and events.

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To help us spiritually prepare, during the period of Advent (which we all know from the Advent Calendars – mine is chocolate!) we are encouraged to spend extra time in prayer and study. This year we are holding an exciting Advent Course, both in person and on zoom, exploring how we might find God in different areas of our lives – at work, at home, at church and in creation. We've got some exciting international speakers to inspire us, and each session will include some time to reflect on how we might find God more often in our daily lives. All are welcome, especially if these last 18 months has raised some big questions about how we might find God.

Whatever you are doing this Advent and Christmas, I really do hope that you'll find God in what you are doing and where you least expect it, and that you'll be able to join us here at St John's as we prepare for, and celebrate, the arrival of God's only Son.

With blessings,

Rev'd Tim

Vicar of St John's

Parish registers

Baptisms

Welcome to the family of God

31 October 2021
Grace Alison Crockford

Marriages

Joined by God

21 August 2021
Ian Maclure to Jade Rawling

Funerals in Church

May they rest in peace

11 August 2021
Claude Kenneth Bolt (known as Ken)

19 August 2021
Edith Brenda Guy

13 September 2021
Beatrice Marsh (known as Betty)

23 September
Enid Cynthia Giles

Moira Carrington would like to pass on her thanks to all those who have donated stamps to the collection at St John's. The used stamps help to raise money for Embrace, a Christian development charity tackling poverty and injustice in the Middle East. The charity accept all stamps, new, used, first and second class and the collection box is located inside the church porch if you wish to donate.





WASP GUYS

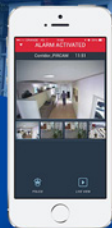
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Churchwardens' Report

As we write this, we are enjoying the late golden sun and the intense colours of autumn; the cold, clear, night skies reveal bright stars and planets, before the grey, bleak, darkness of the winter closes in. Yet, there is still reason to be cheerful as the season also has its own warmth and light, albeit in a different form.

Autumn began with the installation of our new vicar, Tim, which was a most joyful occasion and a new beginning for St. John's. Tim has planned an expansion of the provision and variety of services which have been curtailed by the vacancy and the coronavirus situation.

Young people have returned to schools, colleges, and universities, to take up and continue, their covid-interrupted studies. Prayers were held for their endeavours, the effectiveness of their essential equipment, the commitment of their teachers, and their academic success, but most of all for their supportive friendships and the hope of new beginnings at these important stages of life.

The significance of traditional Harvest was evident in the displays in the church during two special services: one for all ages, and our first choral evensong for nearly two years. However, it was acknowledged that Harvest, giving and sharing, also applied in many other aspects of our lives.

Our church is open every day, except Friday, for private prayer and for morning and evening prayer. We are blessed to have a talented team of florists who embellish it through their beautiful

displays. We also thank the dedicated cleaners who care for our sacred space. Furnishings that were banished for coronavirus reasons, such as the kneelers, both useful, colourful, and full of symbolism, have been cleaned and put back in place. Overall, the church looks less austere and more welcoming.

Our church will continue at present with the online Sunday morning service on YouTube at 9.30 am to offer opportunities for those who cannot come to the building or feel nervous about it. Enormous thanks to everyone who facilitate our services both in obvious ways, and in less apparent, yet essential ways, such as operating the sound system and the live recording.

November is the time for remembrance: at the very beginning of the month are All Saints and All Souls Days when our prayers for those who have died are particularly focused upon individuals and all those who have passed on. Following on from this, comes the annual appreciation of all those who have died in conflicts in the service of our country, and whose tremendous efforts and sacrifices have enabled us to live in peace. The pandemic has meant that bereavement, loss, and remembrance of the dead are even more poignant, and has encouraged a deeper reflection upon life too.

We are looking forward to Christmas, the celebration of Jesus's birth. The senior members of our congregation may remember Christmases past when conflict and austerity impacted upon that season. However



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grim it may have seemed at the time, there were moments of happiness; the crises passed, and served to evoke a greater appreciation of the good things in our Christian lives. In time, younger people too will also look back on the last few years in the same positive, reflective, spirit.

Again, plans for services are being firmed up as we write this, and these will be communicated through our website and weekly email too. Have a

look at this for full details.

St John's has many marvellous voluntary helpers in all kinds of roles, and we heartily thank every one of you for your commitment and talents, as we could not fulfil our mission without your efforts.

James Hillman

Jane Donati

Churchwardens

Forthcoming events

December 2021

Wednesday 1 December	7.30 pm	Mothers' Union meeting in the Lady Chapel
Sunday 5 December	4.00 pm	Faith & Light: worship for adults with SEN
Thursday 9 December	7.00 pm	Roundwood Park School Concert in Church
Friday 10 December	3.00 pm	Tea at Three in the Parish Hall
Monday 13 December	8.00 pm	Hardyngre Choir Concert in Church

January 2022

Thursday 6 January	2.30 pm	Mothers' Union meeting in the Lady Chapel
Sunday 9 January	4.00 pm	Faith & Light: worship for adults with SEN
Monday 10 January	8.00 pm	Standing Committee
Tuesday 19 January	8.00 pm	PCC Meeting

February 2022

Thursday 3 February	2.30 pm	Mothers' Union meeting in the Lady Chapel
Sunday 6 February	4.00 pm	Faith & Light: worship for adults with SEN

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Mothers' UNION

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'This is the day to leave the dark behind you
Take the adventure, step beyond the hearth,
Shake off at last the shackles that confined you,
And find the courage for the forward path.'

These words by Malcolm Guite from his poem, 'First Steps', seem appropriate as members of Mothers' Union tentatively began to meet regularly at Branch meetings after a gap of eighteen months.

As the committee room is now the office, we had decided to meet in the Lady Chapel. On September 1st we held the delayed Annual General Meeting 2021.

At this meeting it was agreed that from January we would meet in the Lady Chapel at 2.30pm on the first Thursday of each month.

We were delighted to welcome Revd. Tim as our guest speaker at our second meeting on 6th October at 7.30pm. After Holy Communion and some Branch business Tim took centre stage and proceeded to describe the events in his life which had brought him to St John's. At the end of his talk we all felt we knew him better and we were privileged that he shared some amusing anecdotes from his interesting life.

On 3rd November at 7.30pm Sue Ashton will speak to us on her fascinating and inspiring visit to the Taize community. All are very welcome.

' You yearned for freedom through the long night watches,
The day has come and you are free to choose,
Now is your time and season.'

Malcolm Guite is not writing about freedom after Lockdown but the message could be a call to us all to face the future, after the recent difficult months, with hope and confidence.

Mothers' Union continues its good work in countries around the world, supporting women and children and developing prayer and spiritual growth in families. As a Branch we need to be active in prayer and action to support that work in any way we can. I know we are ready.

Carol Cooke, Branch Leader

Advent and Christmas at St John's 2021

For up to date details of all Christmas events, visit:
<https://stjohnsharpenden.org.uk/services/christmas/>

Daily Services

9.30 am Morning Prayer @ 5pm Evening Prayer Monday to Thursday (Morning Prayer on zoom and in church)

Sunday 28 November

9.30am

5.00pm

Advent Sunday

Parish Eucharist

Advent Carols and Readings, with festive refreshments

Monday 29 November

8.00pm

Advent Study Group – online or on zoom: 'Work'
see page 25 for more details

Thursday 2 December

10.30am

Advent Book Group – Comfortable Words
see page 25 for more details

Friday 3 December

5.30-7.30pm

Southdown Lights Switch on!

Sunday 5 December

8.00am

9.30am

Advent 2

Communion Service (in the Lady Chapel)

Parish Eucharist

Monday 6 December

8.00pm

Advent Study Group – online or on zoom: 'Home'
see page 25 for more details

Friday 10 December

Tea @ 3 with Grove Junior School Choir

Sunday 12 December

9.30am

5.00pm

Advent 3

Parish Eucharist

Carols on the Common

Monday 13 December

8.00pm

Advent Study Group – online or on zoom: 'Creation'
see page 25 for more details

Wednesday 15 December

8.00pm

Beer and Carols at the Engineer

Thursday 16 December

8.00pm

Advent Book Group – Comfortable Words
see page 25 for more details

Saturday 18 December

10 – 3pm

Christmas holiday club. Fun, games to prepare for church nativity at 9.30am service on 19 December. Location: Parish Hall. Cost: Free. To book a place email the parish office.

Sunday 19 December

9.30am

11.15am - 12.30pm

5.00pm

Advent 4

**Parish Eucharist with Nativity Presentation
Choir rehearsal (for choir members only)
Nine Lessons and Carols**

Monday 20 December

8.00pm

Advent Study Group—online or on zoom: 'Church'
see page 25 for more details

Friday 24 December

3.00pm

11.30pm

Christmas Eve

**Walking to Bethlehem (meet at the Southdown Christmas Tree opposite Co-op)
Midnight Mass (incense is used)**

Saturday 25 December

8.00am

9.30am

Christmas Day

**Christmas Day Holy Communion
Christmas Day All Age Eucharist**

Sunday 26 December

9.30am

First Sunday of Christmas

Parish Eucharist

Sunday 2 January 2022

9.30am

Second Sunday of Christmas

Parish Eucharist

Wednesday 6 January

8.00pm

Epiphany

**Sung Eucharist with Guest preacher
former curate Revd Charles Burch
with music from the Amici Voices**

Sunday 9 January

9.30am

Baptism of Christ

All Age Parish Eucharist



What is Little Acorns?

Little Acorns is a group for preschool children and their parents, grandparents and carers which started in 2017. We have restarted after the pandemic, with a new time and day.

What is our aim?

We aim to provide a safe and friendly environment where children can play while the adults chat and have the opportunity to drink a hot cup of coffee or tea undisturbed!

Where do we meet?

We meet on a Tuesday Morning from 10 - 11.30 during term time in St. John's church Hall. Walk down the right side of the church and the hall is ahead of you.



What happens during a session?

You will be met by one of the three helpers who will have on their name badge. You will be asked to sign in. Donations are voluntary. We don't turn anyone away! You will be offered tea, coffee and a biscuit. Then we play until about 11.15am. We have a wide variety of toys and the children have a fun time.

At around 11.15, we clear up and then sit around a table to have a healthy snack - a piece of fruit plus rice cakes, carrot sticks, raisins or bread sticks -and water or milk to drink.

We always finish with a story or some singing before going home.

So, if you have a child of pre-school age do come along and give us a try. You will be given a warm welcome.

When: Every Tuesday in term time.

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or phone (01582) 712776 for further details or to arrange a viewing.

St Luke's Cell prayer group

Would you like us to pray for you?

We pray for anyone in the parish who has asked for our prayers for themselves or for their loved ones. St Luke's Cell prayer group is named after the disciple and physician Luke, who is the patron saint of doctors. We are continuing to pray individually as a group during the current situation and include 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



Healing God, hear our prayer for the sick – all who are in pain, waiting for or recovering from surgery, undergoing long-term treatment, battling against disease, anxious about the future. Support them through family and friends, through the skill and dedication of medical staff, and, above all, through the knowledge of your everlasting love. Minister your healing touch, and grant them the peace and strength they need to find wholeness in you.

(by Nick Fawcett, in *Prayers for Healing*, published by Kevin Mayhew Ltd, 2013)

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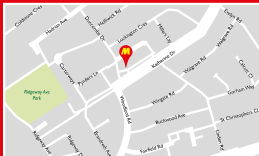
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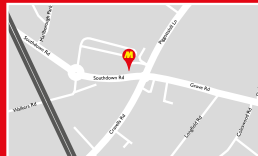
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A surprise from Strathdon

When I was a little boy, growing up in Redbourn, I had a Granny who lived in a small hamlet in Aberdeenshire near the Cairngorm mountains. There was just one shop near by, the general store in a village 4 miles down the road and that was the only shop she ever went to. On my birthday I looked forward to the parcel with her writing on it as I knew it would contain an interesting, unique present that no one at my school would already have – and that made it very special.



It strikes me that the current ability to shop via the internet or drive to a big shopping centre provides a great deal of choice but the intimacy of a relationship with your local shopkeeper, the community and local economy is lost – as well of course as the damage done to our environment. Clothing or other gifts made in far-off countries and transported by container ships which consume tons of low-grade bunker fuel



by the hour and affects the health of those living in coastal regions around the world, adding to greenhouse gas emissions and therefore increase global warming.

An 18-month study undertaken by six PhD students in Environmental Science at Radboud University in the Netherlands reported in July 2020 that one of the main issues with online shopping is people only buy a few items per purchase. When they shop in a store, they combine their choices into a single bulk purchase. Frequent online purchases produce more packaging waste, and online items tend to come from different distribution centres adding to the number of road journeys made. Both factors result in higher greenhouse gas emissions per item; ordering from online-only retailers produces the most emissions. This is as a result of failed deliveries, high rates of returns on items bought online, and longer distances from warehouses to individual homes. And with the advent of free two-day or even one-day shipping,

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We are very lucky with our shops here in Southdown and Harpenden generally. We also have access to the farmers' market, craft fairs and the art fair. Shopping here is about interacting with real people, providing them with a living and gaining an enjoyable experience as well as the goods we purchase. Walking to your local shops helps to reduce your carbon footprint as emissions from cars account for 15% of the

UK's overall carbon emissions.

So, in the run up to this Christmas, please try to shop locally where you can, with the knowledge that you are supporting the community as well as reducing your impact on the environment.

Andrew Harbord



CLIMATE PLEDGE

At our PCC meeting on Wednesday 29th September we as a PCC of St John's made the following pledge. Our next step is to see what this might mean for us as a parish. Watch this space, and if you are interested to know more, why not join our Eco Church.



'We as the PCC of St John's Harpenden believe that humanity is facing extinction because of climate change, and we pledge this church to reach net-zero by 2030, and to do all we can to live in harmony with God's creation to ensure its flourishing for future generations to enjoy.'



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Advent Study Course 2021

Mondays at 8pm, either in-person (in someone's home) or join us on zoom.

Finding God in all things.

As we prepare to welcome Jesus at Christmas, an opportunity to explore how we might find God more often at work, at home, at church and in creation.

Each session features input from some local, national and international speakers, followed by a chance to reflect on our own experience of God in the last year and time to share how we might be find God more often.

Confirmed Speakers

Rev Dr Rachel Mash is the environmental Coordinator of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa.

Jack Wakefield, Tearfund

Christian Cole, Youth Missioner

Archdeacon of St Albans

This course is free and open to everyone. To sign up, please contact Julie in the Parish Office.

Advent Book Club: Comfortable Words

This Advent, we're encouraging you to hear the comfortable (and hopeful) words of scripture and join us in reading a series of reflections on lockdown by the Bishop of Oxford, Rt Revd Steven Croft.

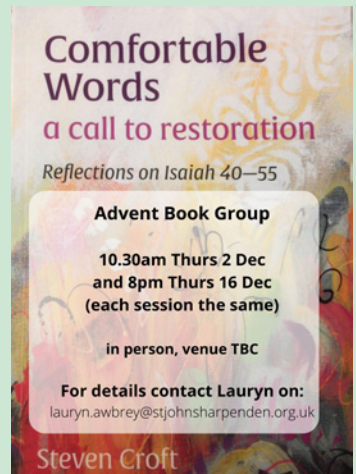
Through nine reflections, Steven Croft examines what these 'comfortable words' have to say to us. Each reflection begins from a passage of scripture taken from Isaiah 40—55: the song of an unnamed prophet who sings at the end of the exile to call God's people home.

The prophet sings of love and forgiveness, of new hope and strength in God, to rekindle courage in the hearts of God's people. The prophet sings of a new kind of leadership, based on humility and gentleness. The prophet sings to tell us not to be afraid even in the face of death. These are comfortable words the whole world needs to hear afresh in this season.

Do pick up a copy of the book, read it and join us to discuss the themes and questions raised by the book for those exploring faith today.

There will be two opportunities to join us for discussion, each lasting about 1hr: 10.30am Thursday 2nd December and 8pm Thursday 16th December.

For further details contact Lauryn on lauryn.awbrey@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk or call the Parish Office.





Services at St John's

Sunday

- 8.00 am Said Eucharist
- 9.30 am Parish Eucharist (*also live streamed*) followed by coffee in the hall.
All Age Eucharist, *normally first Sunday of the month*
- 11.30 am Holy Baptism, *last Sunday of the month*
- 5.00 pm Evening Worship (refer to website)

Mondays - Fridays

- 9.30 am Morning Prayer
- 5.00 pm Evening Prayer

Wednesday

- 11.00 am Said Eucharist (in Lady Chapel)
- 5.00 pm Evening Prayer

Church is open every day apart from Friday 10am - 5pm.

Service times may change so please check our website or sign up to our weekly newsletter.



PARISH OFFICE

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

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

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st JOHN'S
Living God's Love

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