



st JOHN[†]s

Living God's Love

Parish Magazine

SPRING 2022

st JOHN'S

Living God's Love

*Spring 2022
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ADDRESS

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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.

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

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Introductory letter



I must admit I'm finding writing these ministry letters increasingly difficult. Not because there isn't much to say about Lent and Holy Week, that great season of preparation leading up to Easter. Of course, there is lots that can, and will, be said. But it's not knowing, as I write this in very early January, what will be happening when this magazine arrives through your letter box.

At the time of writing, there's much hope in the air for a new year that might be different from the last few. For many, our health will figure in there somewhere – we might decide to exercise more, eat less, or take up a new sport.

For Christians, Lent is that time of year when we look at our spiritual wellbeing. This year, Lent runs from 2 March (Ash Wednesday) until Easter on 17 April. During Lent we reflect on our whole life and try to do things that will help us in our relationship with God and our spiritual health.

This year, perhaps more than ever, the question of our wellbeing is at the top of our agenda, and I think spiritual wellbeing is intimately connected to our physical and mental health.

This Lent our focus will be on ways we can encourage good spiritual wellbeing, focusing on our body, our mind, and our soul. On Saturday mornings at 10am we will be using our bodies – from a dog walk to a litter pick. During the week there will be time for guided silent meditation (time for the soul), and a time to reflect on how we might receive Christ more fully in our lives (time for our minds).

We are pleased to be offering this in partnership with Reverend Stuart Dyer and the community of Southdown Methodists, so there will be the chance to get involved at different times and places throughout the week. Do read more about it in this issue of the magazine.

You'll always be welcome to join us. Whether you do or not, may I encourage

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you to look after your spiritual wellbeing by finding moments of quiet contemplation, doing things that make you feel fully alive and bring you joy, and by exploring topics that widen your horizon and your mind.

As we journey through the days of Lent, our constant hope is that when we arrive at Easter Day, we might grasp a little more fully the amazing love that God has for us and shows us in Jesus Christ. I hope that as you journey through this year, you will know this for yourself as well.

With blessings,

Reverend Tim Vickers

Parish registers

Baptisms

Welcome to the family of God

28 November 2021

Edward Thomas Percy Ellison

First Communion

on Sunday 30 January:

Harry Evans, Luella Buckle &
Sophia Neville

Marriages

Joined by God

There were no marriages in this period

Funerals in Church

May they rest in peace

There were no funerals in this period

Weddings at St John's

If you're considering a church wedding and live in the parish, or have a connection to the area, we invite you to consider St John's church for your marriage ceremony. Contact the church office by phone (01582 712776) or email (parish.office@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk) to arrange a time to discuss your plans. We would love to be a part of your special day.

To find out more about how to plan a wedding in a Church of England church, visit www.yourchurchwedding.org



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Churchwardens' report

A belated happy new year to all. Just as plants show signs of awakening from their winter's sleep and the days are lengthening, we too are looking forward to spring with more hope than in the last few years.

As we started a new church year, Advent and Christmas reminded us of the core of our faith – the first coming of Jesus Christ into the world and the light that dawned in dark times and cannot be extinguished. A lovely Christmas tree, decorations by our Junior Church, and the amazing floral displays of our flower guild combined to make the sacred space look festive. The artwork on the hedge, which began as poppies for Remembrance Day, morphed from 'hope' to 'joy' and was lit up nightly by the Christmas star.

This year our new vicar and the ministry team had planned a variety of services and events, with something for everyone, regardless of age and whether they were visitors or our regular congregation. We had to cancel a couple of events owing to the new COVID-19 variant and our wish to keep everyone as safe as possible. Particularly disappointing was the decision we took to cancel the annual Beer and Carols, but we will be back in 2022! Despite some last-minute rearranging, the majority of services and celebrations went ahead and were well attended.

We ran a Christmas holiday club in late December and our Junior Church performed a fabulous Nativity play on the Sunday before Christmas. Madeleine Venner and Anna Chambers

were literally herding sheep and the performance filled the church with clear narration, songs, and instruments.

Our choir, directed by Roger Carter, also provided beautiful accompaniment to the bible passages telling the Christmas story for our service of nine lessons and carols, and we enjoyed mulled wine and mince pies in the hall afterwards.

On Christmas Eve we joined our friends at Southdown Methodist Church for our annual "Walking to Bethlehem" carols and prayers. We are hugely grateful to Tony at The Carpenter's Arms for providing an inn stop, with refreshments, on the way up to the common.

Moving into Epiphany, we were delighted to welcome Helen Charlston and Amici Voices for a sung Eucharist and Byrd's four-part mass setting.

Our church looks different inside as we have made some temporary rearrangement of the furniture, including the altar, so the choir and music can be included more fully and safely into services. We continue to live stream the 9.30am Sunday Eucharist on YouTube to reach as many people as possible. A group of people deliver "church at home" materials weekly to those who prefer this.

Many people work quietly – and largely unseen – in a huge variety of roles that enable the church to be open and our hall to be used by the community. Cleaners go about their duties diligently; Matt Barter and the premises committee are active in

Susan Hammersley

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The Old Cock Inn	Tuesday 3-530pm
Inn on the Green	Wednesday 1030-1pm
The Cabin, Southdown	Friday 10-12pm & 4-6pm

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dealing with minor and major building issues; Julie Burkitt in the parish office has supported in lots of ways; Neil Middleton and a small team are key to the live streaming and all things technical; Michael Readman has overseen the much needed upgrading of our sound system; the team of wardens have facilitated and completed all kinds of odd jobs, as well as more formal duties; the readers and intercessors enhance our worship; coffee is provided after some services; Steve the gardener keeps our grounds in wonderful condition; and this magazine is delivered

by Steve Whiting's intrepid team. If we have forgotten anyone, we apologise and assure you that we appreciate everyone at St John's for everything they do to support and enhance our church. It demonstrates to us all that the church is not just a building, but people too.

Let us now look forward to the spring, to Lent and Easter. Keep reading the weekly newsletter for news on services and other activities.

James Hillman and Jane Donati
Churchwardens

Forthcoming events

February 2022

Sunday 20 February	4.00 pm	Family Service
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March 2022

Sunday 6 March	4.00 pm	Faith and Light
Tuesday 8 March	8.00 pm	Standing Committee
Sunday 20 March	11.00 am	APCM
Sunday 20 March	4.00 pm	Family service
Thursday 24 March	8.00 pm	PCC meeting

April 2022

Sunday 3 April	4.00 pm	Faith and Light
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Lent 2022 at St John's Harpenden

The season of Lent is a time to deepen our relationship with God through prayer, reflection and study as we prepare for Holy Week and our annual remembering of the suffering, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Read why this is such an important time for Christians and what's happening at St John's

An offer of spiritual support

Many of us are conscious of our physical health. After a health checkup at the GP or a fitness test at the gym we usually come away reassured and with some sensible advice about what we can do to improve our health and fitness. Alongside a programme of discussion and worship during this season of Lent, we want to extend a special opportunity for every adult at St John's to have a 45-minute conversation with a member of the ministry team. A spiritual checkup, if you will. We really recommend this to you. As people of faith, our spiritual health and wellbeing is something we should also take seriously, but often we don't have a chance to think about our faith and prayer life or talk it through with someone.

We'd like to offer you the chance to do just that, with a relaxed and confidential one-on-one conversation for every adult who wants it. This is an opportunity for you to talk about whatever aspect of faith you'd like to discuss, in total confidence. It's a wonderful way to be encouraged, listened to, and supported in your relationship with God, and without any judgement or sense of being tested in some way.

Please get in touch with the parish office by phone (01582 712776) or email (parish.office@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk) as soon as possible so we can arrange a session.

Spiritual wellbeing: body, mind and soul

In addition to a spiritual checkup, there will be several other ways to deepen your faith during Lent.

The theme for this year's program is spiritual wellbeing: body, mind and

Thoughts for the day

As well as the sessions listed here, if you have access to the internet, we encourage you to sign up for a "thought for the day" called #LiveLent – offered through the Church of England – which encourages you to deepen your faith and relationship with God this Lent. For full details and to sign up, visit <https://www.churchofengland.orgs/livelent>

Also check out the podcasts: Parenting For Faith and Pray As You Go

soul. We're going to be exploring how we might grow as followers of Christ in various ways, such as seeking Christ in prayer and in scripture; encountering Christ in nature; and by joyfully sharing this through the way we live in the world. We're delighted to be sharing in this journey with Southdown Methodists.

On the following pages we have suggestions to help you make the most of the coming six weeks. But they're only suggestions to consider alongside your own commitments and spiritual needs. With activities across various days and times, we hope you'll be able to come along to something. Whatever you decide to give up or take up, and however you choose to observe the season of Lent, we hope it will be a time of encouragement and blessing and brings you nearer to God.

Lent programme of events

**Beginning
Monday 7 March
and**

**Wednesday 9 March,
over five weeks**

Feeding the soul: guided silent meditation

Five weekly sessions, practicing the art of contemplative silence

**Mondays: 10.15am in the Lady Chapel at St John's, 30 minutes
Wednesdays: 6.00pm at Southdown Methodists, 30 minutes**

**Each Tuesday, 8
March to 5 April
2.00pm at St John's
Church Hall**

OR

**Each Wednesday
9 March to 6 April
7.45pm on Zoom**
(if you'd like to meet in-person, get in touch with parish.office@st-johnsharpenden.org.uk)

Engaging the mind: study group focus on receiving Christ

At Christmas we heard in John's gospel the words "To all who received him ... he gave power to become children of God." (John 1:12.) This raises big questions. Aren't we all children of God anyway? Just how can we receive Christ? And what does it mean to have a relationship with God? we'll explore these questions, and more, over five weekly sessions.

- **Session 1:** Receiving Christ: as children of God
- **Session 2:** Receiving Christ: in the stranger and the needy
- **Session 3:** Receiving Christ: in Holy Communion
- **Session 4:** Receiving Christ: through prayer and fellowship
- **Session 5:** "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27)

*There's a course booklet for this material, please contact the parish office if you'd like a copy.

**Saturdays, 5 March
to 2 April
10.00am**

Spirituality through our bodies

An opportunity to experience our faith using our bodies, with activities around Harpenden. Suitable for all ages, followed by simple refreshments.

- **Saturday 5 March:** litter pick – meet at St John's
- **Saturday 12 March:** prayer walk – start at Southdown Methodists
- **Saturday 19 March:** dog walk – start at St John's
- **Saturday 26 March:** guided nature walk – start at St John's
- **Saturday 2 April:** Lent and Easter trail – start at Southdown Methodists



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Sacrament of reconciliation

If you would like to receive this Sacrament as part of your Lenten discipline, please speak with Revd Tim to arrange a suitable time.

A final thought

We hope our programme of events has inspired you and that you can commit to come to one (or maybe more) of these series in Lent. Of course, what is most important of all is that we are fed spiritually, and that through faith, God is at work in each of us, making us who we are called to be.

Special services through Lent at St John's

Wednesday 2 March	10.30am	Ash Wednesday: Eucharist with imposition of ashes (marking ashes in the sign of the cross on the forehead), at St John's
	8.00pm	Sung Eucharist with imposition of ashes, at St John's
Sunday 13 March	5.00pm	Evensong at St John's
Sunday 27 March	9.30am	Mothering Sunday: parish eucharist at St John's

Contact details for Lent services

St John's Harpenden

Address: St John's Road, Harpenden, AL5 1DJ

Website: www.stjohnsharpenden.org.uk

Parish Office: Julie Birkett
Telephone: 01582 712776
parish.office@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk

Vicar: Revd Tim Vickers
Telephone: 01582 469343
vicar@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk

Southdown Methodists

Address: 130a Southdown Road, Harpenden, AL5 1PU

Website: www.southdownchurch.org.uk

Steward: Kevin Sharp
southdownchurch@btconnect.com

Minister: Revd Stuart Dyer
Telephone: 01582 769871
southdownchurch@btconnect.com



Let us pray

The St Luke's prayer group regularly prays for people in our local community. Read about how to receive prayer for you, or a loved one

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. At present, we are continuing to pray individually, rather than meeting in person, and our group includes members from St John's and Southdown Methodist churches.

If you would like us to pray for you, or someone else, please contact Michael Hughes 01582 765576



**O God our helper and defender,
Who raised our Lord Jesus from the dead at Easter,
Deliver us in our weakness,
Answer our longings
And vindicate our faith,
That we may see your glory
In Jesus Christ our Lord**

(From *Reflections on the Psalms*, Church House Publishing, 2015, page 95, adapted)

Project Phoenix update

After a few years hiatus due to the pandemic, we are pleased and excited to announce that, after reflection, we believe our new Parish Centre Project is needed more than ever. Our Parochial Church Council has voted to continue with this project so we can serve our local community more effectively.

Thank you to all our supporters and donors who have helped us through these last few years.

Watch out for next steps and in the meantime, if you would like to find out more information about the project, visit www.stjohnsharpenden.org.uk/about-us/parish-centre/



If you're from the church or local community and interested in getting involved, please let us know. We are specifically looking for:

- anyone with fundraising skills
- donors - current or potential
- event organisers
- local businesses
- local charities or groups who we can support through the project

Seeking: a new editor

Are you great at organising? Do you have an eagle-eye for grammar and spelling? Have you been looking for ways to contribute to St John's and the local community?

If this sounds like you, we're seeking a new editor for the parish magazine and invite you to express your interest in this voluntary position.

A talent for proof-reading, fact-checking, and organising will be advantageous, along with familiarity with Word, Excel and email. The editing of each quarterly issue of the magazine requires approximately one

to two days every three months.

This could be an ideal, long-term project if you're retired, work part-time, or you're a journalism student.

Please email: magazine@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk



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Forming new (good) habits

Taking steps towards becoming a more eco-conscious community

As I sit down to write this article on 31 December 2021, I can't help thinking about the year that's ended; full of hope for the year to come.

The year 2021 was lots of things to different people, with a lack of holidays, missing family and perhaps feeling like the year was slipping past us, which can make it hard to remember anything good! But for some of us, having a bit more time on our hands was just what we need to make a positive change. When life is going at break-neck speed we tend to cut corners, thinking we have to do the quickest and the easiest. Maybe your life was just as busy, if not more hectic in 2021? Even if that were so, it might still be the ideal time to make positive changes that will have a beneficial impact in the long run.

As I look back at 2021, I realise it was the year I did something about plastic in our house. I made a decision in January that we would throw as little into our brown landfill rubbish bin as possible. This made me consider what each potential piece of rubbish was. Most of it was flexible plastic. I can hardly believe that a year ago there was nowhere for this rubbish to go but into landfill.

I took the bold move of sorting it according to its manufacturer and posting it back to them! I also Googled to see if there were any suitable recycling programmes and was introduced to the world of TerraCycle (www.terracycle.com). It informed me I could recycle some of the flexible plastics, so I set about keeping those to one side. I also set up

a recycling collection for certain items at St John's. But then, in the summer, we heard that a few supermarkets were providing flexible plastic recycling points. I'd like to think that my deliveries to them earlier in the year helped to push towards this. If they did, that was a real positive!

“Recycling is a great and important thing, but to use less plastic is even better!”

Twenty years ago, as a household, we chucked everything in a round dustbin! The council refuse collectors walked around the back of our house and removed the bags from the bin, we didn't even need to put the bin out! My point is, things change and we have to learn new habits. This year I have learned to put all my household's flexible plastic into a new (well upcycled from our Cravell's Road repurpose event) bin. I don't have to think about it; it's become habit.

Recycling is a great and important thing, but to use less plastic is even better! My second big positive from 2021 was exploring the world of refilling at the Refill Pantry in St Albans (www.therefillpantry.co.uk). Again, it's about changing habits. First you might want to start gathering useful vessels once they're empty. For example, toilet cleaner is best when it's in one of those angled-neck bottles, and cleaners are best in spray bottles.

I especially like the Iron and Velvet

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cleaning products that come in dissolvable sachets, available from the Refill Pantry, because you don't even need a container as the packaging dissolves in water. You can also buy containers at the Refill Pantry, but really that does defeat the whole purpose, so it's best avoided! There are also lots of plastic-free alternatives for some items, particularly toiletries. Such as deodorant in cardboard tubes and toothpaste in tablet form or powder in glass jars. Even some of the mainstream brands are bringing out solid bar versions of shampoos and conditioners, but for environmental consciousness it may still be better to go for a brand that has always had that ethos in mind.

I estimate I avoided bringing more than 100 plastic bottles into our house in 2021. If each of the 2,000 households in St John's parish did the same, that could mean a reduction of around 200,000 plastic bottles a year! And if all the households in the UK saved just one bottle from being needed, that would be 27 million bottles! Every little thing we

do CAN make a difference.

So, if you're still looking for some new-year resolutions (or the ones you made have already fallen by the wayside) how about a couple of these:

Make 2022 the year you:

- ✓ recycled all your flexible plastic (take it to Co-op right here in Southdown; it couldn't be easier)
- ✓ change some of your toiletries to plastic-free
- ✓ use the recycling point in the St John's porch (we accept pill blister packs, 'good' refill packets, candles, birthday cards and used stamps)
- ✓ organise your recyclable waste using special bins, bags or dedicate a cupboard to it, so it's easier to sort and store
- ✓ Find and begin to use your local refill shops

Check out these local options:

- Healthy and Wise, 84 High Street, Harpenden AL5 2SP
- The Refill pantry at 26 London Road, St Albans AL1 1NG and Carpenter's Farm Shop, 106 St Albans Road, Sandridge AL49LJ

Happy recycling and plastic reducing!
Make a new habit today!

Debbie Knight

(St John's EcoChurch team)

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eco.church@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk

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St John's Hall Hire

Are you looking for a hall or meeting room to hire on either a regular or occasional basis?

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.

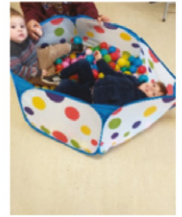
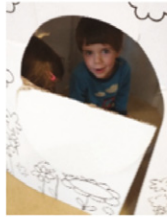
Please contact: parish.office@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk
or phone (01582) 712776 for further details or to arrange a viewing.

Little Acorns update

Find out what's been happening with the children's play group Little Acorns and how to get involved



We restarted our group in November 2021 with a change of day and time. This is proving very successful and we have welcomed between 12 and 27 children each week. We have welcomed back some old friends and made many new ones. The children have enjoyed socialising with each other after the lockdowns and it has been a privilege to watch them develop over the past 6 weeks.



Our parents, carers and grandparents welcome the opportunity to have a hot drink made for them and to chat with others. We continue to offer healthy snacks for the children following our playtime and spend the last 30 minutes doing parachute games, listening to a story and singing.

During our last session before Christmas, we followed some stars which took us into church to look at the crib scene. Reverend Tim showed us the crib figures and told us the Christmas story. We finished by singing some carols with percussion accompaniment.



We meet every Tuesday morning from 10.00am to 11.30am in the St John's church hall. Do come and join us. You can be assured of a warm welcome.

Next term we hope to celebrate the beginning of Lent with pancake races on Tuesday 1st March and Easter on Tuesday 29th March.

I would like to thank all the volunteers who make this group happen on a Tuesday and give up their time so willingly. Also, a huge thank you to reverend Tim and his wife Sophy for their support and ideas.

We're always grateful for volunteers, so if you feel you could spare a couple of hours once or twice a month, please speak to Tim or Christine Kenyon.



Holy Week and Easter 2022

We encourage you to immerse yourselves in these powerful services during Holy Week – the most important in the church year – as we enter a kind of ‘real time’, reliving and being drawn into the dramatic events of the final days in Jesus’s life that lead to our salvation.

Sunday 10 April

8.00am

9.00am

9.30am

Palm Sunday

Holy Communion in the Lady Chapel at St John’s

Procession of palms, starting outside Southdown Methodists

Parish Eucharist with reading of *The Passion* at St John’s

Monday 11 April

8.00pm

Taizé-style worship at St John’s

Tuesday 12 April

8.00pm

A shared evening service at Southdown Methodists

Wednesday 13 April

10.30am

8.00pm

Holy Communion in the Lady Chapel at St John’s

Stations of the cross at St John’s

Thursday 14 April

8.00pm

Maundy Thursday

The liturgy of the Lord’s supper (a service of commemoration) with foot washing at St John’s

The vigil of Gethsemane (a service of readings and prayer) until 10pm, at St John’s, *concluding with compline*

Night prayer, also known as *compline*, at St John’s

Friday 15 April

10.00am

Good Friday

All-age walking service, begins at St John’s, ends at Southdown Methodists with hot cross buns.

Ideal for children.

Midday

1.00pm

2.00pm

Good Friday service at Southdown Methodists

St John’s open for private prayer

We journey with Jesus for the last hour at the cross, includes a reading of the *Passion* and *Veneration of the cross*, and *Communion* at St John’s

Saturday 16 April

8.00pm

Easter Eve

Easter vigil with first Eucharist of Easter at St John’s, ending with champagne!

Sunday 17 April

6.30am

8.00am

10.00am

Easter Day

Dawn service with Southdown Methodists.

Meet outside Southdown Methodists

Holy Communion in the Lady Chapel at St John’s

All-age Eucharist at St John’s followed by an Easter-egg hunt

Mothers' Union news



Early in November St John's opened its doors to the community and visitors enjoyed displays, activities, good conversation and afternoon tea. Several of us formed a team and served tea and homemade cake while other Mothers' Union members were involved in the activities. It was an afternoon enjoyed by all.

It was also lovely to gather in the Lady Chapel one evening in December for an Advent meditation with candlelight. Choral music and Michael Bublé songs interspersed with poems, prayer and reflective silence was a wonderful way to prepare for the coming of the Christ child. We ended the evening with mulled wine and mince pies and wished each other a happy Christmas. We gathered again for corporate Communion on a Wednesday morning later that month.

On Thursday 6 January we held our first daytime meeting. We gathered in the Lady Chapel at 2.30pm. After prayers and some branch business we were delighted to listen to branch member and beekeeper David Brown talk about the history of bees. David used slides to enhance his interesting talk, which was followed by a lively question and discussion session. I was delighted to return home with a jar of David's delicious honey.

Looking ahead

In March we start the new programme of guest speakers and events set out for us by branch members Sue Ashton and Di Borthwick. Having been so disappointed by the cancellation of many events last year, we pray that meetings and activities will go ahead as planned.

I am writing this during Epiphany, looking back on Advent and Christmas and looking forward to lighter evenings and milder days and hopefully an easing of COVID-19 restrictions. The wise men travelled with trust and were rewarded with joy. May we all continue on our own spiritual journeys with confidence, knowing that God walks beside us.

I'd like to finish with the last lines of *Epiphany* by poet-priest and author Malcolm Guite:

“They did not know his name but still they sought him.
They came from elsewhere but still they found;
In temple they found those who sold and bought him
But in the filthy stable, hallowed ground.
Their courage gives our questing hearts a voice
To seek, to find, to worship, to rejoice.”

Carol Cooke, branch leader

Mothers' Union meets in the Lady Chapel of St John's Church on the first Thursday of each month at 2.30pm. Non-members are very welcome at any of our meetings.



Regular Services at St John's

Why not come to an extra service each week as part of your Lent commitment?

Sundays

- 8.00 am Holy Communion in the Lady Chapel
- 9.30 am Parish Eucharist (*also live streamed*) followed by coffee in the hall.
All age Eucharist, *normally 1st Sunday of the month*

Wednesday

- 10.30 am Holy Eucharist is celebrated in the Lady Chapel

Monday to Thursday

- 9.30 am Morning prayer is said
- 5.00 pm Evening Prayer is said

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.

Watch our Parish Eucharist and other special services on our YouTube channel - search for "St John's Church, Harpenden" or visit <https://tinyurl.com/yc38zd78>



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

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