Christmas and Advent Services inside

STORE GOD'S Love

Parish Magazine

WINTER 2023 What's going on in the lead-up to Christmas, and beyond fitful day walking to church my shadow appears, disappears

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

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

rIOHN's Living God's Love

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

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

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

EDITOR

Susan Kerr magazine@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk

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

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

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Vicar's Welcome

ello, welcome to our winter edition of the parish magazine for Southdown and West Common. Amongst many things it contains details of all our Christmas services – to which everyone is warmly invited.

Christmas is a time of family and friends, of generosity and hospitality. It's also a time to look back at where it all began - over 2,000 years ago in Bethlehem. I hope as you get involved



in our modern celebrations you'll give time to reflect on the significance of the small baby Jesus and what he means for our world, still, today.

Blessings,

Tim

Revd Tim Vickers Vicar of St John's Harpenden

www.stjohnsharpenden.org.uk

PS My photo for this edition is from one of the earliest Christian sites in England, that of Holy Island where I recently went on retreat. Lindisfarne: a place of pilgrimage since 635AD.



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St John's New Parish Centre a transformational project for our church and the community

Momentum is building for St John's new Parish Centre following the St Albans District Council decision in May to grant planning permission again for the project.

The future is bright, but first to look back for a moment: many people have contributed generously to the project since fund-raising began in 2020 through our Pledge Programme. Many others have put significant time and effort into organising events and activities to raise money and awareness. The project team voiced appreciation for all their hard work and generosity in a well-deserved formal acknowledgement over wine, cheese and biscuits at a Thank You event in July.

Project Ambassadors, too, were gratefully recognised for their role in speaking to people individually, bringing the project to life and encouraging new donors. We are now moving forward with fund-raising and have even recruited a couple of new Ambassadors!

The strategy ahead: based on professional fund-raisers' advice, the most effective way to fund-raise for the project is to invite people to make an individual pledge for a specific period of time. The new Ambassador team aim is to talk to all members of the congregation and those on the electoral roll face to face, by March of next year, when we will review our progress with the PCC.



We ask you all to think prayerfully about how you can support this fantastic project that will bring so much to our church and our local community.

For more about the project, visit https://www.stjohnsharpenden.org.uk/ about-us/parish-centre/updates

If you'd like to talk to one of our project ambassadors, please get in touch through the Parish Office 01582 712776 or email and we would be delighted to have a chat.









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Meet Amanda Knights St John's new Parish Administrator



Amanda started working at St John's Church at the end of August having previously worked at Beechwood Park School in Markyate, and as a Financial Adviser for over 20 years. She is enjoying her new role and enjoying getting to know the parish community. If you need to contact the office, then she will be the person you speak to. The office can take all incoming requests for hall bookings, baptisms, weddings, funerals or any other matters to do with the church and she looks forward to speaking with you.

Amanda's working hours are Monday-Thursday 9.30 am-2.30 pm, though occasionally subject to change. You can contact her or leave a message by phone or email: 01582 712776 parish.office@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk

New! Toddler Service

Sometimes when we come to church services with younger ones, we are more mindful of the noises our children make. This service is designed as worship with younger ones in mind, so no need to worry about noise or running around. Meeting weekly at 10.15am on Thursday during term time, this service is suitable for babies upwards to those about to go to preschool. Beginning with a warm drink, we gather around the altar, hear a story from the Bible and respond with a craft. There is time for prayer and learning about communion, with snacks as well.

Thursday 21st December is the last date this term, returning on 11th January 2024. All welcome or email <u>vicar@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk</u> if you'd like to join our WhatsApp group.

Susan Hammersley MRCPod HCPC Reg.

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Southdown Methodist Church closing

After nearly 160 years of worship, fellowship, outreach and mission within the Southdown community, Southdown Methodist Church has 'ceased to worship.' The remaining members have now joined other churches including St John's and High Street Methodist church and will continue to be active within those churches. In the closing service of thanksgiving in October, many came to give praise and thanks in a church which had nurtured them on their Christian journey.

The church was at the centre of the community through use of the halls above the Co-op. Monthly, weekly or annually they served a wide and lively range of age groups and interests. The halls were built and funded by the congregation through fundraising activities and will continue to be used by the Harpenden Trust for the benefit of the community.

There have been many families for whom this church has been their place of worship and growth for several generations. It is said 'that it takes a village to raise a child.' Southdown has raised many through its Sunday School — at one time there were so many children that there were 27 teachers! In the 1980's and 90's musical productions involved many participants, some even going on to use music in their careers.

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, urged his congregations to do 'as much as you can, for as many as you can, for as long as you can.' Southdown Methodist Church congregations have done this for 159 years. 'Well done you good and faithful servants.'

The Methodist Circuit will now begin a period of discernment to decide the future of the building.



Mary Hoare on behalf of Southdown Methodist Church



What can happen in a weekend?



A truly all-age gathering shared a residential weekend away at High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddeson, in September. Focussing on worship and the Psalms, the two days included woodland church, great food and good fun. Inspiration from one psalm* inspired the group's creation of an altar cloth. Special thanks to St John's Reader Lauryn Aubrey and Revd Ysmena Pentelow (Vicar of St Mary's Ware) for organising the weekend.

I signed up for St John's High Leigh weekend away because I'd only had one holiday this year. I have been living alone for more than 7 years in Walkers Court, in Southdown, and life there has been really difficult for me. Having a complete change of scene, plus spending time in the company of really friendly people, in comfortable surroundings and with good food, gave me the opportunity to just relax and unwind, and to embrace the religious themes of the weekend without any pressure. Being out in nature was good too. I knew some people there from Southdown Methodist Church and came away with new friends and the feeling of a new 'family' at St John's. In short, I felt safe and wanted, and not alone and overlooked. For me the experience was like an 'oasis ' in my spiritual desert. **Douglas Jones**

I enjoyed the church weekend away because we got to go away with the church community. I liked the food because it was really delicious and I got to sit on a table with my friends Jem, Laurie and Evie. The grounds were so large and we got lots of time to play after breakfast and after dinner. On the Sunday we planned and made our our own service in a small hall. **Sophie, age 10**



* Study the cloth - can you find out which psalm? There's a hint in the word creation.



Have a greener Christmas

The good cheer of Christmas is always welcome... but it leaves a trail: huge amounts of waste, from unwanted presents to excess packaging and wrapping to food waste. Maybe consider some of these steps to have a greener Christmas:

- Only buy cards and wrapping paper that can be recycled so no glitter, shiny paper, ribbons
- Buy cards and paper made from recycled paper
- Make your own gift tags and cards from last year's cards / save cards to make tags and cards next year
- Make home-made gifts or buy second hand
- Avoid plastic gifts with lots of packaging
- Agree with adult friends and family to give money to charity, instead of buying unwanted gifts
- Plan menus and freeze excess food to avoid food waste
- Make sure all food waste goes into the food recycling bin all food waste in our district is used to produce renewable energy and fertilizer

Happy Christmas from the Eco Church team. In the New Year, why not resolve to sort out your wardrobe, save the best and watch for our repeat clothes swap event. Do get in touch if you'd like to be an eco helper.

Margaret Charlston eco.church@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk



Waste Not Clothes Swap event: The fashion industry's environmental impact is huge: 1.92 million tonnes of textile waste every year. In response, the Harpenden Eco Church groups from St Johns, All Saints, St Mary's and St Nicholas held a special Waste Not Clothes Swap event in October. People donated good quality clothing, and on the evening some 50 adults and teenagers came to the event to try on clothes. Over drinks and nibbles they drew lots to choose favourite items. Many happy swappers went home delighted with their excellent 'new' clothes. As a bonus, the event raised £250 for the clothes waste charity Fashion Revolution. <u>https://www.fashionrevolution.org/</u>

Continuum Choir Christmas Concert Sunday 10th December 7.30pm

The Continuum choir return to St John's for a concert of Christmas music. The performance traces European carols and Christmas music by Palestrina, Rachmaninoff and Poulenc. The second half is devoted to British carols, such as 'In the bleak midwinter' and 'Tomorrow shall be my dancing day', alongside arrangements of lighter Christmas classics.

Continuum aims to represent the very best traditions of choral singing, covering repertoire from the Renaissance to the present. Many of the singers have performed with leading professional ensembles including The Sixteen, Tenebrae, The Monteverdi Choir and Voces8.

Sunday 10th December 7.30pm Buy tickets on our website: <u>https://continuumchoir.co.uk/</u> or via Eventbrite: www.continuumchoir.co.uk/events/



DID YOU KNOW?

You can experience the controversial work of a famous 20th century architect in St John's Lady Chapel. Stephen Dykes-Bower (1903 – 1994), is renowned for his work in Westminster Abbey, St Paul's Cathedral, Bury St Edmunds Cathedral and the Chapel at Lancing College. For his whole career he stubbornly stood against modern styles, and championed the 'unfashionable' skills, craftmanship and bright colours of the Gothic Revival tradition. In the early 1960s he designed the Lady Chapel for St John's. Taste the difference as you step from the light-filled, airy main body of St John's into the jewel-like surround of the chapel.



Advent, Christmas and beyond St John's 2023

For up-to-date details on all church activities visit: <u>https://stjohnsharpenden.org.uk/</u>

St John's Church is open every day 10 am - 5pm. For regular services see page 30.

A family friendly Christmas

Sunday 3rd December 9.30am

Sunday 10th December 3pm

Saturday 16th December 10am – 3pm

Sunday 17th December 9.30am

Tuesday 19th December 10am – 11.30am

Sunday 24th December 11am

3pm

Monday 25th December 10am Advent Sunday Parish Eucharist Start of Mary and Joseph's travelling crib.

Christingle Learning about the light of the world and supporting The Children's Society.

Christmas Holiday Club Primary School aged children (reception to Y6) are invited to join us for a free day preparing the Nativity Presentation on 17th December. Preschool children need to be accompanied by an adult. Please book via the Parish Office.

All Age Nativity All invited as our young people re-tell the story of Jesus' birth.

Nativity Themed Toddler Group On the last day of term both Little Acorns and Fusion Pre-School join forces for a Nativity Themed Toddler Group. All welcome.

Carols Around the Crib Suitable for younger members of the family of pre-school age, a short service of carols with refreshments afterwards. Walking to Bethlehem Meet outside the Co-op as we walk the journey to Bethlehem.

Christmas Day All Age Parish Eucharist Suitable for all the family with interactive talk.

A classic Christmas

Sunday 3rd December 6pm

Sunday 17th December 5pm

Sunday 24th December 9.30am

11.30pm

Monday 25th December 8am 10am

A merry Christmas

Friday 1st December 5.30pm

Sunday 10th December 11.30am

Friday 15th December 3pm

Wednesday 20th December 8pm Advent Carols Service At Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church. A simple candle lit service as we prepare for Christmas.

Nine Lessons and Carols A traditional service of readings, music and singing. All invited.

Christmas Eve Day Parish Eucharist

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

Christmas Day Holy Communion Quiet service without carols.

Christmas Day All Age Parish Eucharist Suitable for all the family with interactive talk.

Southdown Lights & Lanterns Lantern parade 5.30pm, Lights switch on 7.30 pm. Stalls, fun fair, Santa's Grotto, carols.

Community Carol Singing outside the Co-op Raising funds for Crisis at Christmas. Join in!

Christmas Tea@3 To bring good cheer to the Southdown community elderly. At St John's Hall.

Beer and Carols at The Engineer pub Singing your favourite carols with a pint of beer.

And beyond Christmas

Sunday 31st December 9.30am

Sunday 7th January 9.30am

Sunday 28th January 9.30am

Wednesday 14th February 10.30am

8pm

New Year's Eve Day Parish Eucharist

All Age Parish Eucharist for Epiphany Suitable for all the family, with Blessing of Epiphany Chalk for house blessing.

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

Ash Wednesday, Lent begins Communion with imposition of ashes.

Sung Eucharist with imposition of ashes.



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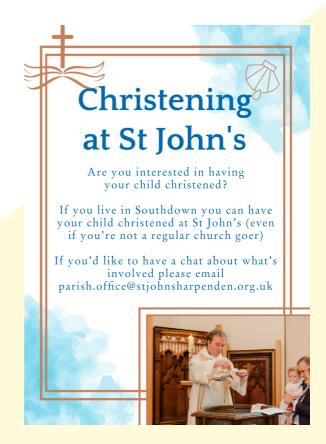
Little Acorns

Little Acorns is a friendly toddler group for babies, preschool children and their carers. We meet in St. John's Hall every Tuesday 10.00 – 11.30am. You are assured of a warm welcome, a cup of coffee and home-made cakes. The children get a healthy snack around 11.00 followed by a story and singing.



Last session 19th December 2023. New term starts 9th January 2023.

No booking necessary. A voluntary donation is all that is asked. For more information, please contact <u>parish.office@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk</u> Telephone 01582 712776



Would you like to join our choir?

We are looking for local people of all abilities and ages to join our church choir.





8pm Friday Choir practice variety of styles Sunday morning 9.30am Seasonal services

For more information email Craig Greene, our Director of Music, on music@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk



Christmas in Blue Hardynge Choir Concert Monday 28th December, 8pm



Come for festive jazz and Christmas close harmony, and festive readings too! At St John's Church, the Hardynge Choir presents carols for choir and audience. Seasonal refreshments follow at St John's Hall, included in the ticket price.

Unreserved £16; students £8; under 16 free. In support of St Francis Hospice. Book tickets on <u>https://hardynge.makingmusicplatform.com/</u>

The Gift of Giving

Demonstrating the imperative to love our neighbour and help those in need...

St John's Christmas collections this year will be given to Crisis at Christmas, the homelessness charity. Besides this, over the whole year St John's gives away part of our income to causes parishioners choose in a democratic process. Each autumn everyone in the church can suggest charities. Then a shortlist is put to parishioners to vote which local, national and international charities to support. Here are the results for 2023-24:

LOCAL: MIND in Mid-Herts

(the other nominees: St Albans & District Food Bank and Open Door, St Albans) NATIONAL: The Children's Society

(the other nominees: The National Brain Appeal and The Church Urban Fund) INTERNATIONAL: Missions Without Borders

(the other nominees: CURE International UK and Embrace the Middle East)

St John's Outside Giving Committee manages the selection process, and then during the year they engage with the successful charities and arrange for them to come talk about their work and how our donations will be used.

Meet Craig Greene St John's new Music Director

It is a great privilege to have been appointed Director of Music at St John's Church and I am incredibly excited to get to know the whole church community and to continue developing the thriving musical tradition of the church.

Since completing my studies in music at Oxford University and the Royal College of Music, I have spent the past 11 years working full-time in independent schools with stints at St Paul's School in London, St Catherine's



School in Guildford, and most recently as Director of Music at Stowe School in Buckingham. Outside of school I have pursued a busy performing career as a pianist and conductor and have recently been appointed as Artist in Residence with Alina Orchestra. I currently live in Silverstone with my wife Louise and our two daughters, Madeleine (3 years) and Talia (7 months).

For Craig's wider work visit https://www.alinaorchestra.com/

To contact Craig about music in church email music@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk



'Twas the Night Before Christmas -Festive Family Concert

Come and join Sonorité Music for a festive, fun and relaxed concert of Christmas music by this merry classical saxophone quartet. The programme features Christmas favourites such as 'Sleigh Ride', 'All I Want for Christmas is You', 'Santa Baby' and a bit of winter themed classical music. Plus a fantastic new commission, 'Twas The Night Before Christmas' in which the famous poem is set to music.

This concert is open to ALL. Children and families are welcomed! Please feel free to bring a teddy or cuddly toy!

Friday 22nd December, 3pm. Approx 1hr 15m in total including a short break for refreshments. Adults: £13, 18-25s: £6, under 18s go free. Event link to buy tickets: https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/sonorite-music/t-krqljjx

Curate's Corner

have been in Southdown for four months and during that time I have learned to appreciate the beauty of my surroundings. Beauty that is shown in the generous and welcoming people that I have met, but also in the natural beauty that surrounds us.

I have walked about through the town, the commons and my recently discovered 'Nomansland' and I have come to love and appreciate God's love for us. When I see the tall, majestic trees I am filled with awe and wonder at God's generosity. I have come across creatures like hedgehogs and squirrels enjoying the same nature that I enjoy. I hear the birds sing and I am reminded of the wildlife that we share the world with.

I have felt the presence of God not only in the people I have met, but in the many places I have walked. Walking has helped my prayer life immensely because it is during those solitary walks when I look around and appreciate the beauty of God's creation that I am most connected with God. On my walks I smile as I pray with gratitude for the width and depth of God's love for me.

I would encourage you to take time to stop and look around you with appreciation of the beauty that surrounds us, a beauty that is a gift to us from God to enjoy not because we have done anything to deserve it, but simply because he loves us.

Ritah

Revd Ritah Namakula Curate of St John's Harpenden

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The Harpenden Trust. See online <u>www.theharpendentrust.org.uk</u> Or ring 01582 460457, email <u>admin@theharpendentrust.org.uk</u> or come in person to the Trust's Centre, 90 Southdown Road, Harpenden AL5 1PS, 10am – 12noon Monday – Friday.

HertsHelp. Trained friendly advisors are on hand to offer confidential assistance and can put you in touch with helpful services and support locally. Call 0300 123 4044, email <u>info@hertshelp.net</u> or visit <u>www.hertshelp.net</u>

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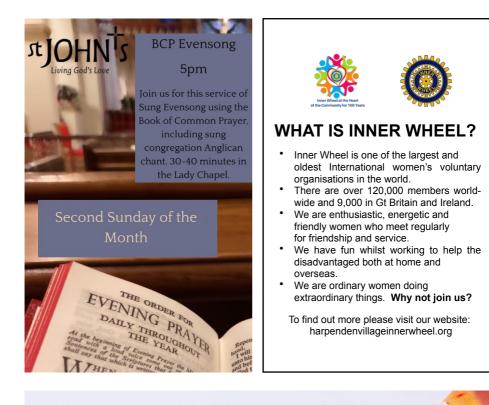


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Are you looking for a hall or meeting room to hire on either a regular or occasional basis?

St John's Parish Hall has availability for hire during weekdays and weekends and is ideal for a 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.



Need a prayer?

St Luke's Cell Prayer Group are always happy to pray for you (confidentially if needed). The group is named after the disciple and physician Luke, who is the patron saint of doctors. A request can be as simple as a name, if preferred. We don't need to know details in order to pray. Members pray individually and also meet monthly to pray for anyone in the parish who asks for prayers for themselves or for their loved ones.

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

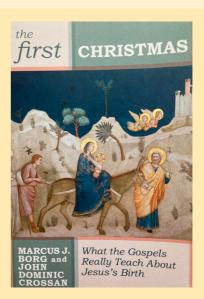
Book Review:

The First Christmas

by Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan

This is perhaps my favourite book about Christmas, and one way or another I'll draw on it every year. As Christians living in 2023, the context of that first Christmas has been lost to us, covered as it is in layers of cultural meaning.

This book gives us the historical setting for that first Christmas, and gives an insight into why Jesus – an itinerant rabbi from the margins of the empire – became so politically dangerous to the Roman Empire.



If you lived in the first century, who was the Son of God, Lord, Saviour of the world and the one who brings peace? Who was the light of the world? (themes we sing about in so many carols). The Romans believed it to be the Emperor – Luke and Matthew claimed it to be Jesus Christ.

If you are interested in delving into the historical context behind 'the babe in a manager' and discover its meaning, then this is no bad place to start!

Revd Tim

ISBN 978-0281060047, SPCK Publishing (21 Aug. 2008), available in used and new paperback, and in audio and e-reader.



Mothers' Union

Mothers' Union has launched a new campaign: 'RISE UP against Domestic Abuse'.

Domestic abuse can happen to anyone from any walk of life. The Mothers' Union campaign ties in with the international campaign for activism against Gender-Based Violence supported by the United Nations which runs 25 November – 10 December 2023. That totals 16 days but within Mothers' Union this activism happens 365 days per year. Members in 83 countries act to empower women, tackle injustice and end poverty. The letters of RISE UP stand for Respond, Inform, Support, Empower, Unite and Pray.

What is domestic abuse? How to respond to a disclosure? Who to inform? In November here in Southdown, St John's Mothers' Union met and learned from Charmian Highsted about these issues and how to support and empower. Members will pray regularly over the winter months for victims, survivors, perpetrators and those who work in the field of domestic abuse. There are domestic abuse refuges in the St Albans area, Luton, Bedford and Royston.

On Thursday, January 4th David Nye will be our guest speaker and all are welcome to join us at 2.30pm in St John's Hall committee room. Mothers' Union works with people of all faiths and none to develop communities, strengthen families and advocate for change.

If you want further information about November's topic or about Mothers' Union, contact *parish.office@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk*

Carol Cooke, Branch Leader





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Parish registers

Baptisms Welcome to the family of God

16th July 2023 Frederick George Wright Sophie Alice Wright

30th July 2023 Arabella Rose Funnell

13th August 2023 Ravi Anthony Wickramasinghe

20th August 2023 George Childs

26th August 2023 Chloe Elizabeth Knight

10th September 2023 Josephine Elizabeth Dorothy Cross Daphne Florence Margaret Cross

Weddings at St John's

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

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

To find out about planning a wedding in a Church of England church, visit <u>www.churchofengland.org./life-events/</u> <u>your-church-wedding</u> Funerals in Church

May they rest in peace

4th July 2023 Mollie Holden

11th September 2023 Paul Linanne





Regular Services at St John's

Sundays

8.00am 9.30am	Holy Communion in the Lady Chapel Parish Eucharist (<i>also live streamed</i>) followed by coffee in the hall. All-Age Eucharist, <i>normally 1st Sunday of the month</i>
10.30 am	Wednesdays Holy Eucharist is celebrated in the Lady Chapel
10.30am	Monday - Friday inclusive
9.30am 5.00pm	Morning prayer is said Evening Prayer is said

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

Service times may change so please check the calendar on our website or sign up there to our weekly or monthly newsletter <u>www.stjohnsharpenden.org.uk</u>

Watch our Parish Eucharist and other special services on our YouTube channel search for "St John's Church, Harpenden" or visit: https://www.youtube.com/StJohnsChurchHarpenden

The Parish Office is open Monday - Thursday 9.30am - 2.30pm



PARISH OFFICE

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

Amanda Knights

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

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

Parish Directory

VICAR

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

READERS

Lauryn Awbrey Telephone: 01582 624823 lauryn.awbrey@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk

David Nye Telephone: 01582 762785 dandhnye@btinternet.com

Anne Edwards Telephone: 01582 767449

WARDENS

Heather Nye wardens@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk

DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

Craig Greene music@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk

TREASURER

Position vacant

Christmas and Advent Services inside



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

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





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