



CHRIST CHURCH NEWS

December 2023



CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS

SUNDAY 17TH DECEMBER

6pm Service of Lessons & Carols

SUNDAY 24TH DECEMBER

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

8am Holy Communion

10am Parish Eucharist

CHRISTMAS EVE

3pm and 5pm Crib Service

11pm Midnight Mass

MONDAY 25TH DECEMBER

CHRISTMAS DAY

8am Holy Communion

10am Christmas Eucharist with Carols

**WE WISH YOU THE JOY AND PEACE
OF THE CHRIST-CHILD**

THE MONTH AHEAD

Sunday 3rd December

Advent Sunday

8am Holy Communion

10am Parish Eucharist (followed by refreshments)

Christingle – Children's Activities from 3.30pm

Tuesday 5th December

6.15pm Semiquavers Christmas Concert

Wednesday 6th December St Nicholas

10am Holy Communion

5pm Evening Prayer

Saturday 9th December

9.30am Church Working Party – come and help keep the church tidy clean and ready for Christmas

2.30pm Holy Matrimony

Sunday 10th December

Second Sunday of Advent

8am Holy Communion

10am Parish Eucharist (followed by refreshments)

Wednesday 13th December St Lucy

10am Holy Communion

2pm First Steps Christmas service. If you are a family with pre-school children, please come and join in the fun.

5pm Evening Prayer

Thursday 14th December

2.30pm Mustard Seed

Saturday 16th December

930-1130am Church open for gift for the Daily Hub/Foodbank

12noon at St George's Shopping Centre
Carol singing for Christian Aid

Sunday 17th December

Third Sunday of Advent

8am Holy Communion

10am Parish Eucharist (followed by refreshments)

With God's Gang

6pm Service of Lessons and Carols

Monday 18th December 7.45pm Advent Bible Study on ZOOM

Wednesday 20th December

10am Holy Communion

5pm Evening Prayer

Friday 22nd December

Carol singing at Nelson Court and Larchwood – meet at the church 6.15pm

Sunday 24th December

Fourth Sunday of Advent

8am Holy Communion

10am Parish Eucharist (followed by refreshments)

Christmas Eve

3pm & 5pm Crib Service

Come as a shepherd or an angel, or come as yourself!

11pm Midnight Mass

Monday 25th December

8am Holy Communion (BCP)

10am Christmas Eucharist with carols

Wednesday 27th December St John

10am Holy Communion

Sunday 31st December

First Sunday of Christmas

8am Holy Communion

10am Parish Eucharist (followed by refreshments)

New Year's Eve Party

Look out for details.

Wednesday 3rd January

10am Holy Communion

5pm Evening Prayer

Sunday 7th January

The Epiphany of our Lord

8am Holy Communion

10am Parish Eucharist

MORNING PRAYER Tuesday, Thursday and Friday in church and on ZOOM – check weekly sheet for any changes NOT BETWEEN CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82117921556>

GOSPEL GROUP BIBLE STUDY

Monday 18th December at 7.45pm on Zoom John 1.1-18 *In the beginning....*

ZOOM LINK <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87495884692>

We finish just before 9 with a service of night prayer. If you would like the Bible text or a copy of Night Prayer please email vicar@christchurchgravesend.com



FOLLOW THE STAR: *join the song* The Church of England has a set of Advent and Christmas reflections. These can be found on the CofE website or accessed using an app on your phone **Also an online ADVENT CALENDAR.**

<https://www.churchofengland.org/faith-calling/what-we-believe/advent-and-christmas/connect-years-call-join-song>

The Choir will be singing a new version of *The First Nowell* at our carol service

<https://www.churchofengland.org/media-and-news/press-releases/archbishops-invite-choirs-join-premiere-new-carol-advent-and>

The Mothers' Union Call to Rise Up Against Domestic and Gender Based Violence



Your PCC signed a Pledge at their meeting on 29th November to support this international campaign by prayer.

Church Pledge

The RISE UP pledge is a call to action, an invitation, a voluntary choice and opportunity to affirm your commitment to end domestic violence. Taking the pledge says that your Mothers' Union branch or church will help end domestic violence by pledging to support the Mothers' Union RISE UP Challenge by committing to pray regularly, for victims of domestic abuse

throughout the whole world.

We Christ Church Milton - next - Gravesend, pledge to pray for victims of domestic abuse in the United Kingdom and throughout the world.

Mothers' Union News

Members from Christ Church joined with others from around the Deanery at Rochester Cathedral on 25th November in the Lady Chapel to join in a very meaningful service of Prayer in support of the Mothers' Union 'Rise Up - No More 1in3' campaign against gender based violence. After the service we gathered outside by the Catalpa Tree and tied purple ribbons to the railings with "No More 1in3" tags - one in three are victims of abuse. The PCC have taken a Church Pledge to pray for the victims of domestic abuse in the United Kingdom and around the world. For more information please do take a look at our board in Church. The Autumn Members meeting was held at St Marys, Kippington near Sevenoaks. Following a beautiful communion service in the church we met in the hall where we heard reports from Bromley & Bexley,





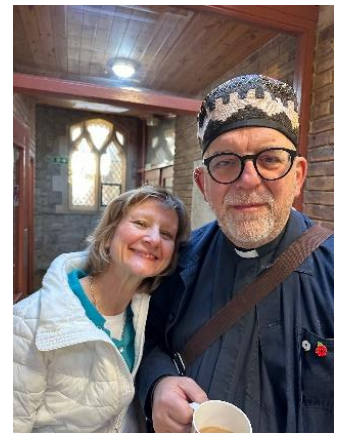
Rochester and Tonbridge and our Diocesan President Mary Margaret Yates. Short presentations were made about the AFIA, Anti-Slavery, Domestic Abuse and Prisons projects. We continue to support Jenny Beaney and her commendable work with the prisoners at Rochester. Our 2024 Programme will be published in the January edition of this newsletter. We look forward to welcoming you to our meetings and events. All are welcome. May the light of Christ shine in our lives and in our world To give hope, peace and joy this Christmas and always. Amen

‘The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him’. John 1:9-10

Maid a milking, lords a leaping and five gold rings – it must be the Christmas Bazaar

A magical Christmas Bazaar with the church and hall buzzing with customers and volunteers. Amazing cakes, fascinating bric-a-brac, fascination books, a bountiful bottle stall and so much more, not least an interesting array of children’s book characters appeared at different stalls. An amazing total of over £2600 was raised.

In a year when the appointment of peers has been in the news – new members of the House of Lords were very much in evidence.



Interfaith Week Walk

A day with rain threatening stayed dry for walking with friends from different faith communities, the council, the lieutenancy and Kent Police beginning at Christ Church visiting Gravesend Methodist Church, Gravesend Mosque on Albion Terrace and the Guru Nanak Darbar Gurdwara. Conversations and food were shared, with the opportunity to see different places of worship and see others praying in their own traditions.



SHOEBOXES



Our shoebox total this year was 85 which Blythwood were delighted to receive at their Gillingham sorting depot. The boxes are checked and calendars and storybooks added to the contents. They are then packed for transit but in such a way that they can be checked by customs. This year the gentleman was doubly happy to get our boxes early as all boxes from this area are going to Ukraine; a war zone and they have to leave the UK a week earlier than usual. Most of us take the basic items that go in the boxes for granted but reports from people distributing them tell how much those items mean to the recipients. Thank you Christ Church and friends for all the work you have put into making this years collection a success : It is never too early to start collecting for next year. Best wishes for a very Happy Christmas . Veronica

DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL SITE *The Vicar writes....*

Exploratory plans for the St Joseph's School site have been published online.

<http://www.stjosephsconventgravesend.co.uk/site-and-location>

These envisage demolishing everything except the old house and building an estate of 59 units plus a medical centre. These are provisional plans which have not gone to the council yet.



I have attending meeting organised for those affected, particularly with adjoining properties and have contributed to the debate. The site has been bought by Galliard, so development is inevitable – the question is how to we contribute to the shaping of the final plan.

The biggest concern is the provision of parking and ensuring the development does not contribute to congestion and parking outside the perimeter. The creation of a junction on Old Road East opposite the church is difficult where the sight lines are not good and the pavements are narrow. The proposed pedestrian access through Coombe Road raises a number of concerns. Other issues include the impact of the site during development, environment and wildlife, impact of local resources, noise and light pollution, impact on neighbours (including property prices). These now been raised in a letter and meeting with the developers. Ward councillors are involved and we are currently waiting to see how reactions affect the final proposals. The church will need to submit comments at that stage.

The council are currently considering a design code for the Borough (188 pages), planning principles and policy on developers' contributions to local communities.



HATS

Many thanks to all those who knitted items to be sent to The Mission to Seafarers. I have now sent two parcels containing gloves , scarves and the requested hats to their headquarters for distribution to their members. Being a riverside town it seems appropriate that we show support for those working to transport many of the items we use in our daily lives. If you know of someone who made some items for us please pass on Thanks from Christ Church. Veronica



When I needed a neighbour?

Some thoughts and images from the Feast of Christ the King

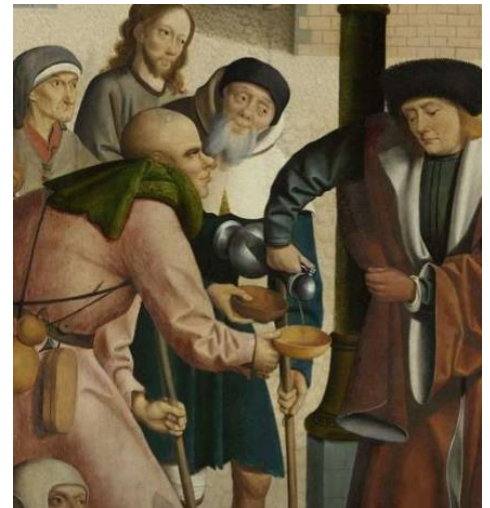
On the feast of Christ the King at the end of November we heard the parable of the last judgement from Matthew 25 Tales of recognition or the failure to recognize are part of our culture - stories of kings and leaders moving among their people incognito are a dramatic device to allow the elite to hear the voices of their subjects, often to quite chastening effect.

But...The last parable of Matthew's Gospel is like no other... Is this a parable or sermon? As a story it has the effect of a parable – in the words of CH Dodd- it operates by 'arresting the hearer by its vividness or strangeness, ...leaving the mind in sufficient doubt about its precise application to tease it into active thought.'

This is a moment when we realise we are dealing with a very different king – the exalted figure who comes in glory is described as the Son of man – the title Jesus uses when he talks of his path being that of the cross, the one who is handed over, the victim of human judgement. But there is another identity which is revealed. The exalted figure whom the Christian community anticipates and before whom the nations are gathered tells us he is to be found hungry, thirsty, naked, in prison, or a stranger, and from there judgement begins.....



The story grabs the attention of many artists, not least the 'Master of Alkmaar' who's seven panel altar piece can be found in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. Each panel represents one of the traditional works of mercy, and in each Christ is found in the queue, in the crowd or in the cell. He is a background figure as he waits with those queuing



for the bread dole or for water, he waits for clothes, as a traveller looking for lodging. He sits with the sick and the prisoner, and witnesses the burial of the dead. Those distributing food or water, or support do not notice him, but in some of the panels Christ look directly at us and challenges our complicity with a self-centred society obsessed with power and wealth.



A similar figure is seen in the engravings of the German artist Fritz Eichenburg standing in a breadline – Christ goes unrecognised but experiences the most degrading experience of hunger and homelessness.



For the judge in the parable compassion is the ultimate test – Be compassionate, Jesus told his followers, just as your father is compassionate. Where Go there is love and charity, God is there – we sing, often on Maundy Thursday, but that is not just compassion that is given but also compassion that is received. That hand of compassion you held out touched me. Unlike many judges this one has been there,

This is not a king who temporarily takes on the rags of poverty but one who is always present among those at the margins The Christ who reminds us that the poor are always with us is the one who promises at the end of Matthew's gospel – I am always with you – always. Emmanuel.

In the last decade a number of statues have appeared in major cities of a man wrapped in a blanket – some are of a man lying on a bench, others a man sitting by a paper cup begging. A strange subject for a bronze statue in a public place. Look closer and you'll see the man's hands and feet which protrude from the blanket are scarred-with the marks of crucifixion.



Many planning authorities refused to give permission for these statues saying they would encourage vagrancy or that statues in important public spaces should celebrate the achievers, the great or the good. I am always with you...Emmanuel.



In the parable those who have served Christ have not been intimidated or overawed by the work they have got on with, or those who might oppose or belittle what they are doing, and certainly there is no expectation of a reward. They even express surprise that what they have been doing, what they thought to be normal for a Christian disciple, is considered noteworthy. They have grasped the essence of what it means to be a Christian – and as Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount they are following the contours of the path of righteousness. You will find me where you do not expect me – doing what you consider inappropriate, demeaning because the kingdom does not confer status or honour – you will find me among those who we build walls to protect ourselves from, those who long for the resources that we squander, those we would deport or imprison.

When did we see you Lord?
When I needed a neighbour were you there?

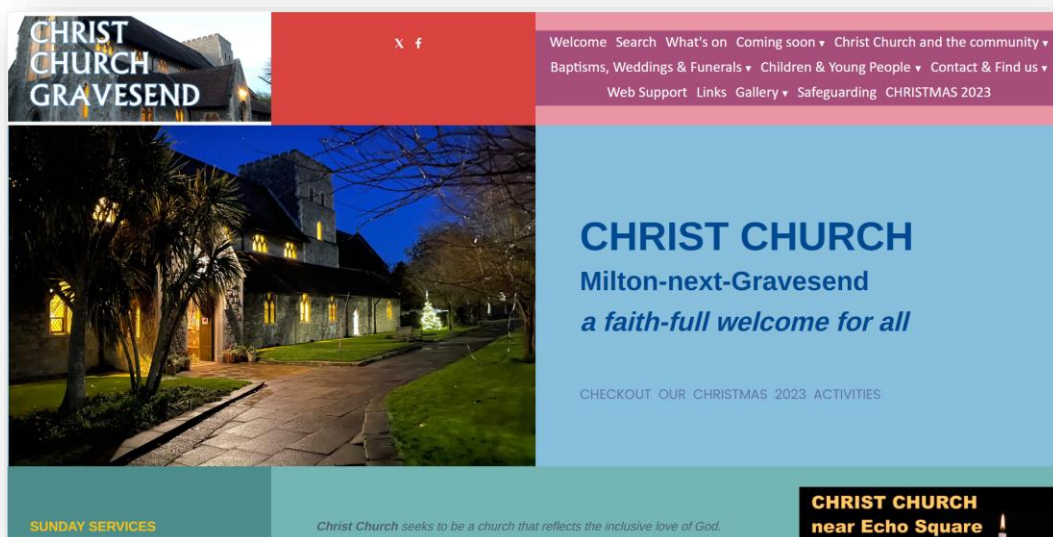
Advent is not just four weeks in which to prepare for Christmas. Advent is the Church's life. Advent is Christ's presence and will bring about God's true reign, telling us, humanity, that Isaiah's prophecy is fulfilled – Emmanuel- God is with us.

St Oscar Romero



CHECK OUT OUR NEW DESIGN WEBSITE

Our website has been transformed with a new template as editing software is updated. We will be reviewing the site in the coming months as we make changes and delete old material.



Saturday 16th December

10-1130am Church open for gift for the Daily Hub/Foodbank

Please bring new warm hats, gloves, underwear and socks. Toiletries, toothbrushes, toothpaste. Seasonal items. Tinned and dried. food.

A 2024 date!

Saturday 28th January at 7.00 pm we will be having the ever popular **Fish, Chips and Beetle** event.



Together magazine latest edition

A reminder that the latest edition of *Together* magazine is now in church - [it's also available online](#)

PRAYER CALENDAR

	THE COMMUNITY	CHURCH
1	The Elderly People living with AIDS	Those who use our hall
2	Those with poor mental health	Our preschool
3	The armed services Merchant Navy	Our clergy
4	GPs and community health workers	Our Parochial Church Council
5	Schools	The children in our church Tots Group, God's Gang and First Steps
6	Young people at university & college, or in work or apprenticeships	For vocations in the church, and those in training for ordained and lay ministry
7	The unemployed	Street Pastors
8	Our parliament and MP	Churches Together in Gravesend
9	Our emergency services	Our companion dioceses in Estonia, Zimbabwe and Tanzania
10	Social workers	Neighbouring Parishes
11	Children	Our lay ministers
12	Prisoners and prison staff	Prison chaplains
13	The victims of racism and discrimination	Christian Aid
14	Those who support people in the workplace	Our Bishops and Archdeacon
15	Our neighbours of other faiths	Those who are new in our church
16	Our local hospitals and hospices	Hospital chaplains
17	All who work with young people School pastors, youth workers	Inclusive Church and all who work for inclusion and equality
18	Those living with dementia	Our safeguarding team
19	Musicians and artists	Our organist, choir & Semiquavers
20	Those who live and work in our local Care & Nursing Homes	Give thanks for our diversity
21	Our councillors and council	Those who are persecuted for their faith
22	All involved in the production and distribution of food	Mustard Seed
23	All who work on the river & sea RNLI	Those preparing for marriage
24	Victims of domestic abuse	Those who care for our buildings
25	Those who care for green spaces	That we may be more aware of our impact on our planet
26	Those who are affected by modern day slavery	Baptism families
27	Foodbanks and those who use them The homeless Sanctuary Daytime Hub	Those who prepare our notice sheet and communications
28	Local businesses	The bereaved
29	Those fighting addictions	Uniformed organisations
30	Refugees and asylum seekers	Those who are housebound or isolated
31	The victims of war and violence	Our charities

RESOURCE PAGE ON ISRAEL/GAZA WAR -

There is now a page on the Church of England website containing information for parishes and individuals seeking to better understand the Church's response to the war, and guidance on how they can help, whether through prayer, giving, or action. [Visit the page](#)

**If the only prayer you ever say is
'thank you' – that is enough.**

Meister Eckhardt 15th Century

Some dates for 2024

This is the provisional calendar we are currently working on – keep an eye on weekly and monthly newsletters for any changes or more information.

JANUARY

13th Church Working Party
27th Baptism Preparation.
27th Fish, Chips and Beetle
28th 6pm Evensong for Candlemas
31st 7.45pm PCC

FEBRUARY

3rd Marriage preparation
10th Church Working Party
14th Ash Wednesday 10am & 8pm
Week beginning 18th February
Lent Study Groups begin

MARCH

2nd Baptism Preparation
9th Church Spring Cleaning
10th Mothering Sunday
17th Passion Sunday 6pm Evensong for Lent
20th 7.45pm PCC

Holy Week

24th Palm Sunday
28th Maundy Thursday 8pm
29th Good Friday 10am & 12noon
30th/31st Clocks go forward
31st Easter Day 6am Dawn Service, 8am & 10am, 6pm Evensong

APRIL

13th Church Working Party
20th Baptism Preparation
27th MU Spring Members Meeting

MAY

9th Ascension Day
10th/11th GEMS Concert
11th Church Working Party
15th 7.45pm PCC
18th Wedding 12.00 and 2.30
18th Christian Aid Quiz
19th Pentecost
19th APCM

JUNE

1st Baptism Preparation.
Wedding 2.30pm
6th DDAY 80th anniversary
8th Church Working Party
11th MU Day at Aylesford
15th Summer Fete

21st Friday Wedding 1.00
22nd St Albans Pilgrimage
29th Baptism Preparation
29th Wedding 2.30

JULY

13th Church Working Party
14th Sea Sunday 6pm Evensong
17th 7.45pm PCC
26th Friday Wedding 1.00

AUGUST

2nd Friday Wedding 2.30
4th Barbecue
Week beginning 5th Hall Spring Cleaning
10th Church working party
14th Teddy Bears' Picnic
21st MU T@3

SEPTEMBER

7th (or 31st Aug) Baptism Preparation
7th or 21st Church Working Party
7th wedding 2.30
11th-18th Holy Land Pilgrimage
24th 7.30pm Safeguarding Training (basic)
28th Table Top Sale

OCTOBER

2nd 7.45pm PCC
12th and 13th Harvest
12th Church Working Party
26th Baptism Preparation.
27th Christian Aid Breakfast

NOVEMBER

2nd All Souls' Day
2nd Church Working Party
9th Christmas Bazaar
10th Remembrance and service for the Bereaved
24th Christ the King
30th prep. for Christingle

DECEMBER

1st Advent Sunday Christingle
4th 7.45pm PCC
6th/7th GEMS
7th Baptism Preparation.
14th Church Working Party
15th or 22nd Lessons and Carols 6.30 p.m.
24th Crib Service
25th Christmas Day
31st New Year's Eve Party

