

The Myths of Christmas

"So this is Christmas
And what have you done?
Another year over
And a new one just begun"

John Lennon "So this is Christmas"

Every year this is always one of the first Christmas songs that comes into my head. This year the lyrics feel like a good way to sum up this year that none of us foresaw going this way.

For many of us this year has been a struggle, out of work, unable to provide for ourselves or our families. For others, the mental anguish of the restrictions and the loneliness. While for us all, not being able to see family and friends has taken its toll. 2020 wasn't what we planned; it wasn't what we hoped for.

The world feels so far away from that beautiful

nativity scene of Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus. Surrounded by shepherds and wise men, under a star, in a stable on December 25th in the simple year 0. It feels so far away from our traditions and full calendars of events, work parties and carol services.

But Christmas isn't really about tradition or things being how we expect. It never has been, not even from the very first one which didn't even happen how we think it did!

In fact, the whole point of Christmas isn't the lovely Nativity story it is much more relevant and meaningful for us, because it is a story of change in a world that was feeling dark and the moment hope truly came to Earth.

What do I mean it didn't happen how we think, come on we all know the story right? Yeah we do but...not quite.

Let's start Jesus was born on December 25th right? Well probably

not, the shepherds were out tending their flocks so he was probably born in the springtime.

Ok but it was at least Spring of year 0? Well no one is really sure, between dates of Herod's rule and another Roman census dates could be anywhere up to around 7 or 8 AD, but even then some of the details are hard to match up.

Right ok, 2000 year old dates are hard to be precise on but at least we know three Kings followed a star to give baby Jesus gifts?

Ok so they did bring the three gifts of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh but it never says there were three Kings, just three gifts and they were Magi or Wise Men rather than Kings.

Gosh, next you will be telling me they didn't even stay in a stable after not having any room at the inn?! Sorry again! The Bible doesn't mention an inn just that there was no

guest room. It is likely they stayed in the house of a family member but they had to stay in an inner room/yard style area where animals would be kept. But they did then lay him in the animals' food manger, that bit is in there!

So we have two choices we can read the story, skim the details for our old Christmas card version and try to cling to the familiar and hope that somehow the world will be back to how we think it was. Or we can read this story as people also going through disruptive, plan altering times and see that in spite of it all a miracle happened and hope came to Earth.

God is not far away on a cloud but he journeys with us all. He will be with us in the hard bits and the hope of better yet to come.

Craig Aldridge



13

Christingle Service

4.30 pm

A wondrous service for children and adults based around the Christingle candle. Please bring your own orange.

20

Carols by Candlelight

6.00 pm

Carols interspersed with seven readings telling the true Christmas Story.



24

Crib Service

4.00 pm

An hour for all the family to sing a few carols.

24

Midnight Communion

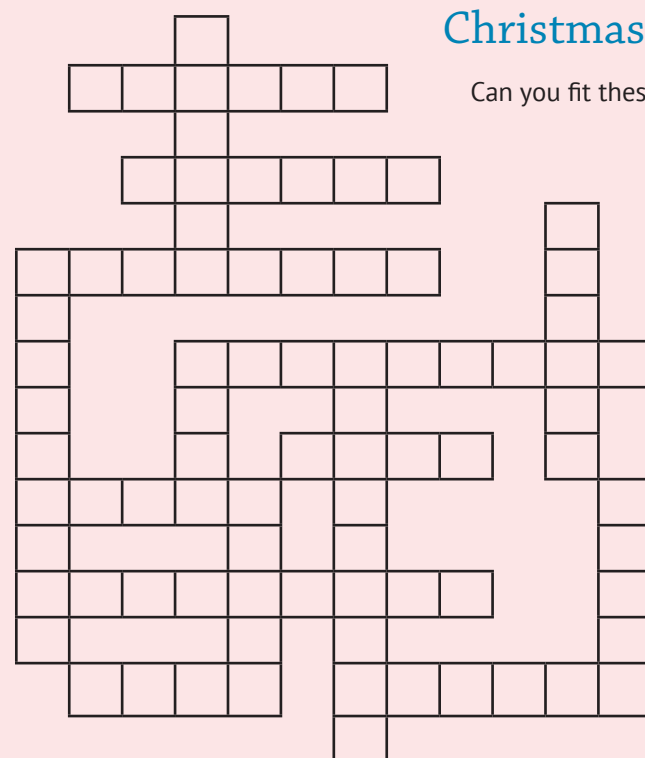
11.00 pm

We welcome Christmas Day with Holy Communion and carols.

* All services are subject to covid regulations
Please check our website for up to date information.

Christmas Word Puzzle

Can you fit these words in the grid?



BABY
STAR
TREE
HOLLY
KINGS
MYRRH
ANGELS
CAROLS
DONKEY
MANGER
STABLE
PRESENTS
CHRISTMAS
MISTLETOE
PANTOMIME
STOCKINGS



25

Christmas Day

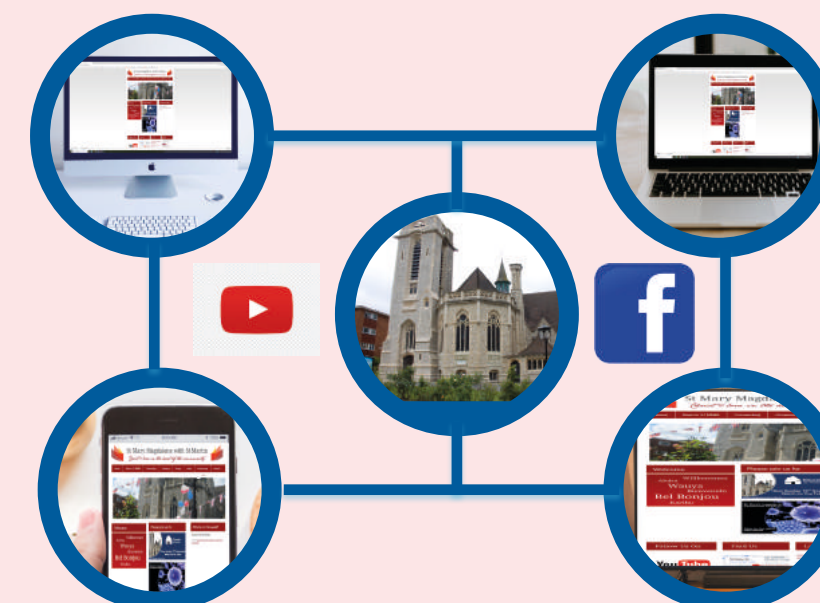
Family Celebration

at 10.00 am

A service lasting an hour with carols, a focus for children and a short sermon for adults.

Are we reaching you

Our services are now streamed on YouTube and can be viewed on a media of your choice.



Get Crafting Cafe Creative!

Now that we're all stuck indoors a bit more, what better way of spending that extra time than to make something useful or pretty (or both!) to brighten up your home or bring a smile to someone's face.

Even better why not learn to craft alongside your children or grandchildren! Although the Café Creative group have not been able to meet since Covid, we have not been idle, and we are meeting up on zoom to show off our creativity. So do join us for Zoom Meetings, to discuss ideas, patterns, resources etc. Contact Pat Chetwyn Reed: patchetwyn@yahoo.co.uk

Floating Shelter

The Floating Shelter is operating differently this year, due to the pandemic. So on the Saturdays in March 2021 St. Mary's will be providing sandwiches for the homeless, distributed by Nightwatch, which is when we would have hosted the Shelter at the Church.

In addition Croydon Council will have 5 rough sleepers going into the Second Night Out Hub which is in the grounds of Croydon University hospital. The hub just has a microwave and a fridge, but they are worried about their guests not being able to get a cooked meal. Croydon Council have asked if the Floating Shelter could provide a cooked meal for 5 each day. So St. Mary's will be doing this each Saturday in March.

If you'd like to help with this please let the church office know by phoning 020 8656 3457 or emailing stmmmoffice@btinternet.com



Contact or Contactless ?

For 9 months we have lived with Covid 19. Having as little contact as possible has been key to our survival.

Do not touch! Don't even come near.

Yet throughout this time I have seen, in Addiscombe, the rise of a genuine warmth and kindness. Following a call to help from our councillors Sean, Jeremy and Patricia, local people have been working together to ensure food can be readily available to those in need by giving generously to the community foodbank.

Clapping at 8 pm for those ten Thursdays gave me quite an awesome perspective on the 900 people who live in Canning Road. Fireworks, banging pans, clapping hands made me realise we are not alone.

Useful Contacts

Vicar
Rev Amanda Johnson
020 8654 3459
amanda@stmmm.org.uk

Parish Office
020 8656 3457

Email:
stmmmoffice@btinternet.com



Contact 2020

St Mary Magdalene with St Martin,
Canning Road

www.stmmm.org.uk



The Alpha Course

Alpha is a nationwide course that has been running in churches of all denominations since the early 1990s. It was started at Holy Trinity Brompton in London by Rev. Nicky Gumbel and is now used all over the world. The whole course usually lasts for about 10 weeks, with a day away in the middle.

Find out more about God - we will be running Alpha in 2021. You are invited to come for something to eat after work early evening and we spend time discussing our views and answering questions. Keep an eye on the website for details as to when it will start.



We welcome all children at St Mary's

Although many of our activities are suspended at the moment, why not join in with our children's slots in the 10am services?

Check out our website for the rest of the activities that happen throughout the year.



Or you could join in our Brownie group that is meeting on Zoom. Girls from 7 - 10 years old love these virtual meetings where they have quizzes, play games, do crafts, cook and work for badges.

Brownies meet on Fridays in term time at 6.15pm. Email childrenswork@stmmm.org.uk for more details.

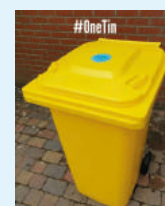


Food Bank

Croydon Covid-19 Mutual Aid (CCMA) have launched the OneTin initiative and are asking every household to donate one tin or food item per week to a local foodbank.

To support this they have provided a series of yellow food bins around the borough and a network of drivers to help with weekly pickups.

At the moment there are 30 bins with many more planned. So look out for your local bin or better still contact CCMA through their Facebook page and volunteer to host one or help with collecting and delivering the food.



And in the heat of the summer the London Air Ambulance landed in the garden next to St Mary's. It felt as if the whole road came out to see what had happened. Some to see the helicopter while others stood, saddened and shocked by the road accident. I don't suppose I was the only one who prayed for the people and medics involved. That connection between the NHS and emergency services that has never been as vital as during these Covid times.

We were made to be connected with each other. Jesus, God's son, came to be with us as a baby. That is what Christmas is about. It's about contact and connecting with God himself.

How close are you to God? Born as a human, with parents who worked hard for their living, Jesus' birth is

about God coming close to us. His friends and followers later wrote that he would reach out to those who were sick, diseased, rejected, outcasts and brought healing into their lives.

Jesus came to connect us directly to God. We don't need apps, downloads or zoom. All that we need to do is to open up to Him.

During the two lockdowns the usual ways of connecting with each other have been taken from us. For St Mary's it means our services and activities have moved online. But whatever we do

nothing compares with God being near and connecting with you and me. God always draws near to us.

Jesus has opened the way for us to be with God. The Holy Spirit has been given to us.

Why don't you just say to God today "Here I am, help me to know that you are here with me"

One of Jesus' names is Emmanuel - it means 'God with us'

With love and blessing
Rev Amanda Johnson
Vicar of St MMM



Sunday Services

1st Service at 9.30 am Morning Worship

2nd Service at 11.00 am Informal Worship

3rd Sunday of the month: Messy Church at 4.00 pm

1st Sunday of the month: Service of Healing and Wholeness at 6.30 pm

4th Sunday of the month: Service of Prayer and Reflection at 6.30 pm