

St Mary and St Cuthbert's Church
Chester-le-Street

**December 2020/
January 2021
NEWSLETTER**



This is the Church of England's theme and logo for Christmas this year

Dear Friends

On the 1st December our little people in the house fly to the places where the Advent Calendars shine with Christmas Joy. The early morning boring breakfast is then seasoned with a sweetness of a different kind. For those of us a little older, the morning seems longer and darker and though the appeal of early morning chocolates may have passed us by, the sweet warmth of the duvet envelopes us and speaks it's own message that we are living in the days of Christmas Joy. Then the winters sun, often orange and passionate, floods our eyes to give an energy that reminds us that God is with us – for Emmanuel has come, and he will return again to take us home. The 1st December is such a time when we journey with Mother Mary and Joseph and fix our thoughts on the biting cold roads that brought about the birth of the Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.



Curate's Letter

There are other mysteries in the birth of Jesus that are precious to us and sweet to our thoughts. In Luke 1.26 we read that God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth to the Virgin Mary. In that meeting he says to her, "Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you". However, his presence and his words are met with some alarm for which he says, 'do not be afraid'. I wonder, in our private and personal enjoyments of Christmas Joy, is there ever a moment when we also feel a mixture of emotions, of joy and fear through the excitement and energy of Advent days coupled to the will of God for us.

So, let us consider what this meant for Mary.

- **Mary was made aware of the loving attention of God.** In recent weeks of worship I have found joy in the reminder of this as I have sung the song 'Be my everything by Tim Hughes' It begins with the words, 'God in my living God there in my breathing, God in my waking God in my sleeping. God in my resting there in my working. God in my thinking, there in my speaking – be my everything'. Is that not what loving attention looks like and just as Mary was to be made aware of this in her Christmas journey, so to can we.

- **Mary was in the heart of God.** We can say this because there was no one else in the whole world who could take her place by being mother of Jesus who is 'Son of the Most High'. Luke's Gospel reminds us of her connection to the Royal House of David, and also to Nazareth her place of birth. Together they remind us of the heart of God, that he fashions our lives and reveals to us our days so that we might know him and love him for such grace and favour. Therefore, in our private space with God and in this season of Christmas, may we enjoy the heart of God and the way he is committed to fashioning our lives so that Jesus might be born in us.

Cont. on page 3

Cont. from page 2

• **Mary responds with an emotion, which was to be expected.** For as Gabriel stood in front of her delivering Gods message, she was a bride-in-waiting, a young woman preparing for the joys of being a newly-wed. These words from heaven troubled her, they appear to be a pull away from her personal plans for life. We can see that Gabriel does his best to console her in the moment. We might wonder what that was like, how does an angel console us when we are faced with the will of God that surfaces our deepest emotions and our simplest concerns. Does the messenger reveal a strong arm to lean on, for, in times of high emotion isn't that just what we all need? From time to time, we all need someone to be an Angel connected to the Invisible wonder of God. Then we read that Gabriel speaks in the moment to console, and he steps forward to declare a greater Joy, and he tells her 'You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus'. In our darkest moments in our days of worry and fear, we all need to speak up, to reveal the heart, so that the message of God can console us. In that place we become as Mary and accept the call of God's favour. Like her we begin to carry in ourselves the joy of the world in the person of Jesus. For he is our Light and Salvation the one who brings us hope and everlasting life.

May the attention of God, and the heart he has for you bring you to a loving relationship with him. May the Christmas journey fill you with hope and joy as you look beyond the emotive clouds to see His Light flooding into your world in the face of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Yours in the Light of Jesus

Mark

CHRISTMAS THIS YEAR

Christmas this year will be different – in all sorts of ways.

But we still celebrate that even in the challenges of our lives and in all the difficulties in our world that God is with us. The story and the meaning of Jesus' birth remains the same.

We will have a variety of services with very reduced capacity and no singing – many of which will be broadcast on our church Facebook page.

You can book at the Christmas services from **Monday December 7.**

Our most popular Christmas service – Christingle – will be run four times this year over three days!

Cont on page 4

Cont from page 3

Our Midnight Mass will be at 9.00 pm on Christmas Eve – Midnight in Bethlehem where they are three hours ahead of us.

We will have the usual lessons at our traditional carol service, on Sunday December 20 at 6.00 pm but there will be less carols than usual – those in the building will just have to listen, but as ever those following it at home can sing along freely.

We do encourage people to sing carols outside – Premier Christian Radio will broadcast 3 well known ones on Sunday December 20 at 5.30 pm to sing on your doorstep, perhaps with your neighbours.

May we know God's comfort and be surprised by God's joy.

Dates for your Diary

December 2020

Day	Time	
Thurs 3rd	10.45 am	Holy Communion (BCP)
Sun 6th - Advent 2	8.00 am	Holy Communion (BCP)
	10.00 am	Holy Communion *
	10.00 am	Worship in Parish Centre (North)
	6.00 pm	Evening Worship
Thurs 10th	10.45 am	Holy Communion (BCP)
Sun 13th - Advent 3	8.00 am	Holy Communion (BCP)
	10.00 am	Morning Worship *
	10.00 am	Worship in Parish Centre (South)
	4.00 pm	Messy Church*
	6.00 pm	Contemporary Community Christmas Service*
Wed 16th	7.00 pm	Blue Christmas * - see page
Thurs 17th	10.45 am	Holy Communion (BCP)
Sun 20th - Advent 4	8.00 am	Holy Communion (BCP)
	10.00 am	Holy Communion *
	10.00 am	Worship in Parish Centre (North)
	6.00 pm	Traditional 9 lessons & some carols*
Tues 22nd	4.00 pm	Christingle Service
Wed 23rd	4.00 pm	Christingle Service
Christmas Eve	10.45 am	Holy communion (BCP)
	4.00 pm	Christingle Service
	6.00 pm	Christingle Service *
	9.00 pm	Midnight Mass *

Cont on page 5

Christmas Day	8.00 am 10.00 am	Holy Communion (BCP) All Age Christmas Communion *
Sun 27th - Christmas 1	8.00 am 10.00 am	Holy Communion (BCP) Morning Worship * No evening service
Thurs 31st	10.45 am	Holy Communion (BCP)
January 2021		
Sun 3rd - Christmas 2	8.00 am 10.00 am 6.00 pm	Holy Communion (BCP) Confirmation and Communion * No Worship in Parish Centre Evening Worship
Thurs 7th	10.45 am	Holy Communion (BCP)
Sun 10th - Bap of Christ	8.00am 10.00 am 10.00 am 4.00 pm 6.00 pm	Holy Communion (BCP) Morning Worship * Worship in Parish Centre (South) Messy Church* Evening Worship
Thurs 14th	10.45 am	Holy Communion (BCP)
Sun 17th - Epiphany 2	8.00 am 10.00 am 10.00 am 6.00 pm	Holy Communion (BCP) Holy Communion * Worship in Parish Centre (North) Evening Worship
Thurs 21st	10.45 am	Holy communion (BCP)
Sun 24th - Epiphany 3	8.00 am 10.00 am 10.00 am 6.00 pm	Holy Communion (BCP) Holy Communion * Worship in Parish Centre (South) Evening Worship
Thurs 28th	10.45 am	Holy Communion (BCP)
Sun 31st - Epiphany 4	8.00 am 10.00 am 10.00 am 6.00 pm	Holy Communion (BCP) Holy Communion * Worship in Parish Centre (South) Evening Worship

*These services will be broadcast on our Facebook page.

Please remember places for Church and Parish Centre at all services need to be booked in advance via the Parish Office.

NEWS

As I explained back in May – I took on the responsibility of being the **Interim Area Dean** for Chester-le-Street and Houghton Deanery. I said that someone was lined up to take it on properly in December. However, that person has withdrawn so the Bishop is looking for someone else to take that on. I have agreed to keep on the role to the end of January, if necessary, but not beyond that date. With my retirement in May, there will be a lot for me to arrange and pass on.

David

Thank you for all the contribution for our **GIFT DAY** (Saturday 21 November). We are still happy to receive further one-off donations, which will help us to contribute more fully and responsibly to support the ministry of our parish and diocese and mission. We will announce the total given in services through December

Some children are being prepared by Sue to be **admitted to receive communion**. This is happening online via Zoom.

Our November **PCC meeting** was postponed from November 17 at the request of the Archdeacon Bob Cooper, who is to join us and talk about future appointments following Jon Wilkinson's departure and David's retirement in May. It has been moved to Tuesday December 1.



ALPHA ONLINE

**For 2021 - Why not
make Alpha a New
Year's Resolution**

Dear Church Family, the New Year will be with us in one month's time and our new diaries will open up to the 365 blank spaces. So, why not consider joining with me for an online Alpha Course starting in the third week of the New Year? What you will need for this is a WIFI connected computer, with an inbuilt camera, or, a tablet with the same. Each of the 10 sessions will last 1 hour with half the time given for discussion.

I would love to see members of the church signing up for this along with family or friends who are itching to know more about our faith in Jesus.

For more information call Revd Mark Harrison on 07975782891.

QUIET CORNER

One of the benefits of being in “lockdown” is it gives me more time to do things that I would either not ordinarily do, or to have more time to do what I really enjoy doing. Listening to music or reading to name but two, both of which help my thinking and reflections in my quiet corner. Some may say that too much of either or both is not good, as they do not stimulate physical activity which we all need for a healthy and balanced life. That may be, but I must admit to being tempted to try a full day of each without interruption.

Recently, I read an article on the age old question of “**How then shall we live**”. It wasn’t specifically related to being in “lockdown”, but there were related issues and guidelines. For some, Government restrictions are there to be ignored, but for the majority, they are followed if somewhat reluctantly at times. As Christians, I suppose we are used to following instructions on how we conduct ourselves in public and in private. After all, the 10 Commandments have been around for an awful long time and they are very specific on this topic of “how then shall we live”. Jesus of course simplified matters by condensing them from the Old Testament laws to “**Love God and love our neighbour**” (Deuteronomy 6 v5 and Leviticus 19 v18). Well that’s it then, or is it; surely not more things to do.

Even with all the changes that lockdown has brought into our daily lives, each day can spring surprises or shocks that we never expected or anticipated. It therefore raises the question, what do we expect from each day, week, month or indeed for the rest of our lives. The question of “How then shall we live”, raises this issue of “**expectation**”.

It is this sense of expectation that for me, is at the heart of the season of Advent and a reminder of that great Advent hymn by Charles Wesley:

**Come thou long expected Jesus
Born to set thy people free;
From our fears and sins release us;
Let us find our rest in Thee.**

In the 4th and final verse, Charles Wesley answers the question we started with, “How then shall we live”:

**By Thine own eternal Spirit,
Rule in all our hearts alone:
By Thy all-sufficient merit,
Raise us to Thy glorious throne.**

So, we are to live in the continual expectation of the second coming of Jesus, with the Holy Spirit ruling our hearts (and minds), until that glorious day when we and all Christian believers, are taken into the Heavenly realms to eternal life.

John Hopper

Lay Reader

PHONE A FRIEND



One of the greatest inventions of the modern era has been the telephone. It has changed from being two magnets on a stick to being something that is more like a mini computer, and if truth be known, has more applications on it than the 1960's Space flights to the moon. For the last twenty years we have increased our daily communications through simply picking up the telephone and calling out to our vast circle of contacts. However, there remains a group of people who have very few contacts. Therefore, every day is filled with an aching desire to speak to someone, but who is there to speak to?

When the Covid-19 pandemic forced all into isolation I took on the task of keeping in touch with Parish North members and the Sunday 8.00 am congregation. I sat and enjoyed speaking with so many of our Church together we learnt what it is to share in the love and peace of Christ. I am sure that we all agree that befriending over the phone is a helpful way for us to care for friends. So, with this in mind I want to invite people to volunteer and become part of a team that ministers friendship over the telephone.

If you are interested and can give a little of your time please contact me on 0191 3890603 or talk to our Church Warden Dorothy Hall.

Revd Mark

Parish Centre Coffee Lounge

Sadly the Coffee Lounge will remain closed because our Area is in Tier 3.

We don't know when it can reopen.

Blue Christmas

This year we will again be holding a church service which recognizes that Christmas can, for many people, be "blue," filled with difficult feelings around painful life events such as death, illness, or poverty. This worship service is traditionally held on or around the longest night of the year, which falls on or about December 21, the Winter Solstice. Our Blue Christmas service this year is on Wednesday 16th December at 7.00 pm.



Come just how you are this Christmas season.

Bring the reality of life as it is for you, with whatever grief, pain, anxiety, pressures or any other burdens that you carry.

Come, be welcomed, find acceptance, light and hope. Book a space by contacting Jan in the Parish Office on 0191 388 3295 or email jrowland@clsparish1.plus.com



MOTHERS' UNION

We held a short, socially distanced meeting in Church on 7th November. We are hoping to hold a second one on December 14th. This will be a Christmas service with Carols, reading and poems. Music but no singing.

Members as last time will be notified with final arrangements.

FROM THE NOVEMBER REGISTERS

Funerals

November

- 9 Maureen Underhill (79)
- 10 Jean Winn (79)
- 26 Audrey Sisterton (84)
 Robert John Bell (80)
- 27 Dorothy Harold (77)

Baptisms

- 1st November
- Aimee Lee Dodds
Lucie Dodds