



Parish of St Peter & St Paul, Abington
- the Church in the Park -
Welcome to our December Newsletter



Photo by Sarah May

Rector's Pastoral Letter

Dear friends

The year of 2021 is coming to an end. Every year is an eventful year but the year 2021 was certainly one of the most eventful years. We saw the lockdown, the incredible rolling out of the vaccines. We saw many new friends coming to worship with us from all corners of the world through our upgraded online worship. We held our breath as we watch our friends at St. Christopher's going into another lockdown. We rejoiced with our friends at Abington Park View Care home and with children at

our local schools as we were able to visit them and worship together with them again face to face. We welcomed families from Afghanistan into the community. We saw those ribbons of prayer growing amazingly and there are more than 2,000 prayers lifted up through those ribbons now. We welcomed new families and children into the life of the church. We said farewell to our old friends whom we have known and loved for many years. As we reflect on all the things that have happened in the last 12 months and watch this year coming to an end, I would like to invite you to join me in giving thanks to God and to each other in your personal prayers.

Every time I pass the churchyard, I am struck by the ribbons of prayers tied to our railings. What strikes me even more strongly is the fact that the largest number of ribbons are dedicated to the prayer of gratitude. While so many things were going around that could have made us feel discouraged, resentful and concerned, so many people in our community chose to give thanks to God and to others. This gives me hope. Although things may not be the way I want them to be, my relationships with God and with others have been deepened through challenges as I appreciate and give thanks for the goodness and faithfulness of God shown through you. So thank you.

As we give thanks for the year that is passing us now, we look forward to the new year that is coming. Ever since we came out of the lockdown in March this year, we seem to have been learning how to live with this virus. For some, this is now the new normal. They believe that we should accept it and learn how to live our life normally with the virus sooner than later. For some, there is still a significant threat and risk, given that the virus is still taking lives away. They believe that we should act as cautiously as possible and do our best to protect each other.

You may not be surprised when I tell you that this is a matter where we have a full spectrum of views from one end to the other in our community. I have been listening to all of them carefully. Both sides have valid points and both sides have been patient and understanding to each other.

As I pray and discern where God wants us to be in the next year, I am planning to convene a special joint meeting between the Standing Committee and Ministry team which will be followed by a debate session in the PCC over our practices in regards with Covid Restrictions in January 2022. The subjects of this debate may include the following.

Do we continue to ask people to wear masks inside the church?

Do we continue to maintain the restriction on numbers?

Do we continue to use the nave altar or use the high altar?

Do the choir continue to be unrobed?

Do we reintroduce the parts of the liturgy that have been omitted to reduce the length of service?

More questions can be added to this.

You may or may not have a particular view on those questions. If you do, I would like to encourage you to share your views with me as to how you see our response, as a parish church, should be. I hope to incorporate all of them in the debate process.

We, at Abington Church, have been staying in the middle of the road, recognising that we have a wide range of views. I realise that for those who wanted to see further relaxation of restrictions, it may have felt that we have been leaning towards a more cautious side. When I observed other churches, there were churches that were certainly more relaxed than us. But also there were churches that were more restricted than us. For example, one of the neighbouring parish churches didn't allow the choir to sing up until recently.

The virus may have been kept more under control now than at the beginning of the year. However, in many ways, challenges of life will continue. There are and will be other issues on which we will have different views and sometimes struggle to see the common ground. The biggest and more important challenge for us all therefore is not about how long we will have to wear masks but about how we learn through these experiences about what it means to live together in and as one body of Christ, the Church; How do we listen to each other; How do we pray for each other and work together to build God's Kingdom even when we are in disagreement, even when the other's view seems to clash against mine?

I remain confident and optimistic. Whenever I come to our church and pass by those prayer ribbons of gratitude, I am reminded that there are so many things that we should be thankful for. Amongst all the things that I am thankful for, I am thankful the most for you: The people of God in Abington. I am thankful for your faith, your patience, your kindness and for Christ in you.

Let us conclude this year with gratitude and let us meet the new year with hope in the faithfulness and goodness of God who always keeps his promises. I would like to share the verses from Psalm 71 with you.

- ¹In you, LORD, I have taken refuge;
let me never be put to shame.
- ²In your righteousness, rescue me and deliver me;
turn your ear to me and save me.
- ³Be my rock of refuge,
to which I can always go;
give the command to save me,
for you are my rock and my fortress.
- ⁴Deliver me, my God, from the hand of the wicked,
from the grasp of those who are evil and cruel.
- ⁵For you have been my hope, Sovereign LORD,
my confidence since my youth.
- ⁶From birth I have relied on you;
you brought me forth from my mother's womb.
I will ever praise you.
- ⁷I have become a sign to many;
you are my strong refuge.
- ⁸My mouth is filled with your praise,
declaring your splendor all day long.
- ⁹Do not cast me away when I am old;
do not forsake me when my strength is gone.
- ¹⁰For my enemies speak against me;
those who wait to kill me conspire together.
- ¹¹They say, "God has forsaken him;
pursue him and seize him,
for no one will rescue him."

- ¹² Do not be far from me, my God;
come quickly, God, to help me.
- ¹³ May my accusers perish in shame;
may those who want to harm me
be covered with scorn and disgrace.
- ¹⁴ As for me, I will always have hope;
I will praise you more and more.

We don't know what will happen next year or what the enemy is planning to strike us. But we will, as the psalmist says, always have hope and we will choose to praise our God more and more.

I wish you all a happy Christmas and a blessed new year.

With love in Christ

Jun

Worship for this month

Advent Sermon Series: The Unexpected News of Christmas

There were people several people who played their part to welcome Christ even though the news they received about the coming of Christ was somewhat unexpected and even disturbing. How did they respond to that unexpected news? What gospel message do they have for us who are living through these uncertain times? How can we welcome Christ in our world?

This month's Preachers

28th November, Advent 1: Elizabeth and Zechariah - Revd. Rachel Hetherington
5th December, Advent 2: John the Baptist - Liz Kelly
12th December, Advent 3: Joseph - Prester Coleman
19th December, Advent 4: Mary - Alison Barnes
25th December, Christmas Day: Christ with us - Revd. Jun Kim

Christmas Services

12th December at 3 pm: Christingle Service at the church rooms

19th December at 6 pm: Lessons and Carols*

24th December at 3 pm: Crib Service*

24th December at 11.30 pm: Midnight Service

25th December at 10 am: Christmas Day Service

*Please book your seats in advance by sending an email to booking@abingtonchurch.org.uk

This month's prayers and prayer topics

Prayers for December

This year the church's Christmas collections are being equally divided between two organisations. These are the Leprosy Mission, supporting those with leprosy around the world and the West Northamptonshire Afganistan Relief Fund, which has been established to help families in need who have been relocated to our county. We thank you for your prayers and generosity.



Almighty Father, the giver of life and health, look mercifully on those who suffer from leprosy.

Stretch out your hand to touch and heal them as Jesus did during his earthly life. Grant wisdom and insight to those who are seeking the prevention and cure of the disease; give skill and sympathy to those who minister to the patients; reunite the separated with their families and friends; and inspire your people with the task set before The Leprosy Mission, that it may never lack either the staff or the means to carry on its healing work, in accordance with your will, and to the glory of your holy name.

We ask this for the sake of Jesus Christ your son, our Lord. Amen.

Prayer for Refugees

Almighty and merciful God,
whose Son became a refugee and had
no place to call his own;



look with mercy on those who today are fleeing from danger,
homeless and hungry.

Bless those who work to bring them relief;
inspire generosity and compassion in all our hearts;
and guide the nations of the world towards that day when all will rejoice in
your Kingdom of justice and of peace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Readings Readers and Intercessors for this month

28th Nov, Advent 1: **Reader:** Chris Waters, **Intercessor:** Donald Loe

5th Dec, Advent 2: **Reader:** Pam Norman, **Intercessor:** Alan Sutton

12th Dec, Advent 3: **Reader:** Matthew George, **Intercessor:** Rhiannon George

19th Dec, Advent 4: **Reader:** Liz Kelly, **Intercessor:** Owen Warr

24th Dec, Christmas Eve: **Reader:** Alison Barnes, **Intercessor:** Prester Coleman

25th Dec, Christmas Morning: **Reader:** Sue Harrison, **Intercessor:** Pam Norman

26th Dec, Stephen, First Martyr: **Reader:** Andrew Munns, **Intercessor:** Liz Kelly

2nd Jan, Christmas 2: **Reader:** Douglas Rutherford, **Intercessor:** Alison Barnes

9th Jan: **Reader:** Rhiannon George, **Intercessor:** Matthew George

15th Jan: **Reader:** Hilary Hodge, **Intercessor:** Cathy Tinsley

23rd Jan: **Reader:** Prester Coleman, **Intercessor:** Bob Purser

30th Jan: **Reader:** Bob Purser, **Intercessor:** Hilary Hodge

Welcoming day for Afghan Refugee Families

On Monday, the 8th November, The church was full of children and their families from Afghanistan who are staying in Northampton. There were about more than 40 people who visited to Abington Park for the first time and about 20 volunteers to welcome them to the community.

It felt like our park, the church and the community came alive with children's laughter and by the fellowship shared by people from all backgrounds and cultures.

The children were so fascinated by the church. In fact, they liked the church so much, they took so many of our postcards that has the photograph of the church!

The adults were so appreciative and enjoyed the afternoon thoroughly. When I was delivering my speech for them, they enthusiastically responded to every sentence I said despite that each sentence had to be interpreted and interpreted back to me. All that made a lovely mutual conversation.

We were all saddened by the bombing in Liverpool. There will always be risks in this world that is torn by all kinds of violence, war and division. But that is why it is so important to remind ourselves and others that there are other kinds of forces in the world that are not possessed by darkness and hatred; The forces of goodness, kindness, forgiveness and love.

The Scripture tells us that where suffering is increased, God's loving grace abounded all the more. What we witnessed together on Monday was a reminder to us all that there is much more goodness, kindness, welcome and generosity in our community than it sometimes appears to be. And we all need that if we are going to continue to build this land together to make it a better place for our children.

So thank you once again for all support and kindness. I am sure this was a first of many other good things that we will do together.

Some of you asked me to share my speech for the afternoon. It is attached below.

“Salam Alaykum

Sanga Yaast? (How are you? in Pashto)

Chetor asten? (How are you? in Dari)

Starray Ma-shay (you are welcome here, in Pashto)

It is my absolute privilege and pleasure to welcome you all to this place of prayer and worship, the Parish Church of St. Peter and St. Paul, Abington.

In Quran it says,

Righteousness is not that you turn your faces toward the east or the west, but true righteousness is in one who believes in Allah... and gives

away what he has, in spite of love for it, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the traveler... (Al-Baqarah 2:177)

In the Bible it says,
*This is the worship I desire:
to loose the chains of injustice
and untie the cords of the yoke,
to set the oppressed free
and break every yoke?
to share your food with the hungry
and to provide the traveller with shelter (Isaiah 58.8)*

Like you, I, myself, was a stranger in this land. I came here about 8 years ago. I didn't have a home or hardly knew anyone. I stayed in a small room as you do now until I found a more settled place. So perhaps I can say that I share a few things in common with you. Now everything might feel strange and different. Things might not be the way you expected. But despite all the difficulties and differences you might feel now, I want you to know that you are welcome here. I want you to know that you have friends here.

And I want you to know that there are really good people here. I know this because I was a foreigner and yet people who are here today, welcomed me as one of their own. So even though my parents are still in Korea, I call this land my home. My children call this land my home.

This is your home. Your children will call his land their home. My children will grow up with your children. And it will be up to us to set the good example for our children, to show them we are friends, that this is OUR Home and we need to build this home together.

This land has seen many strangers and immigrants arriving. And this land has been always a generous and gracious place for those who arrived as they make this land as their home.

Friends, this land is now our home. And we welcome you from the bottom of our hearts. We look forward to getting to know, living together with you, sharing joys and sorrows together as one big family of this land. ”

COVID19 UPDATE

It is encouraging that Northampton's COVID rate has reduced from over 600 per 10,000 in October to 400 in late November and now lies just below the national average. Whilst infections remain very substantially concentrated in the under 19 age group, there has been some spread to parents and we need to continue to be cautious as we approach the Christmas season. Let us hope that increased mask use over the coming weeks results in the continued reduction in the local rate. We think it prudent to reintroduce booking for our two most popular services.

In the last few days, we have news of the Omicron variant and we will take into account any advice issued by the government in the coming weeks.

However, if the present trend continues through December and into January, and with more people having had a booster injection, and as long as the Omicron variant does not result in the need for further restrictions, we can hopefully see a further reduction in the local rate and we will then be able to consider a further relaxation of measures.

We have had strong representations that we are taking too cautious an approach and that we have to live with the virus. The challenge is how we live with it. We need to take with us those who think we are being overly cautious and those who think we are not taking sufficient precautions – to steer a middle course. We are recognising that we have a number of vulnerable members of our congregation and that churches have the potential to be a high-risk setting. We also need to be setting an example to our local community in promoting sensible public health measures. And, so as a community we need to take a cautious approach.

Bob (Lay Chair of the PCC)

Reader Reflections: Christmas Presents

As Christians we all know that Jesus is God's greatest and ultimate gift to the world.

As adults we all know that presents are not the most important part of our Christmas – though children may think otherwise!

Unless we opt out of Christmas present buying, then we all face the task of choosing the right present for the right person. We have all seen (or felt) the disappointment when the parcel that looked so promising turns out to contain something too small or too large, or the wrong colour or shape, or identical to what one has already.

As a newly married man I thought I had the answer. Ask the person what they would like! Okay, it takes away the element of surprise, but it should result in a happy recipient.

I spoke to my father-in-law. “So what would you like for Christmas this year?”

Almost immediately he responded: “Peace!” Each year I knew him, I asked him. The answer was always the same. Peace. The older I get, the more I appreciate the wisdom of his answer.

He had fought in the Second World War, in the Italian campaign. He knew the realities and consequences of modern warfare. He did not wish to see this country caught up in such a conflict again. I’m reminded of the Book of Common Prayer; “Give peace in our time O Lord, because there is none other that fighteth for us, but only thou, O God.” That sixteenth century prayer goes back to a seventh century hymn. As hopes for world peace are threatened by terrorism and mutual suspicion, the prayer for peace seems ever more relevant.

The prayer for peace is also relevant in our national situation. The security services warn us that the current level of terrorist threat is severe. And there are other factors. Divisions exposed by Brexit have, I suspect, not gone away. NHS administrators warn of the threats posed by Covid or flu pandemics when hospitals are already at or close to capacity. Much of our economy works on a “just in time” basis. As we have seen, it only takes a threat to the supply of fuel – or the HGV drivers to deliver it – to create significant disruption. Climate protesters are taking direct action such as blocking roads to promote their cause. Without wishing to sound alarmist, any or all of these could produce growing civil unrest.

Inner peace is vital, too. If we are secure in our relationship with God and with others, we are more likely to behave in a consistently fair and loving fashion. Our homes, our country, and our world will each be a better place to live in. “Blessed are the peacemakers”, says the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:9.) It takes us back to the message of the angels at the first Christmas: “Glory to

God in the highest, and on earth peace..."(Luke 2:14). It is the coming of Jesus into the world that makes true peace possible.

I think my father-in-law was on to something.

Prester Coleman (Reader)

Junior Church



Sunday 12th December from 3pm – 4.15 pm

at the Parish Rooms

Make your Own Christingle Afternoon, (for all ages)

followed by a simple Act of Worship

Saturday 18th December from 10.30 am to 11.30 am at the Parish Rooms

A Toddler Party for young children with their brothers, sisters and family. We are inviting all the children who have been baptised at Abington church over the past few years, and other young children too.



Friday 24th December at 3 pm to 4 pm in Abington Church

Crib Service for Children and their Families.

Children are invited to come dressed as an innkeeper, an angel, a shepherd or a king, if they wish.

From 10th January 2022

We are planning to restart our Tots Group at the Parish Rooms. This will take place at the Parish Rooms every Monday from 10 am to 11.15 am. All young children with their parents and carers are very welcome to join us for fellowship and fun. There will be toys and activities for the children and refreshments for all.



For more information about any of these events, please contact Cathy Tinsley, the newly appointed Children and Youth Missioner on 07516979223 or cathy.tinsley@abingtonchurch.co.uk

Thursday Prayer Group

Thursday Prayer Group continues to meet every Thursday at 10 am. They do hold a prayer meeting in church once a month. They are going to meet in person in church on 23rd December at 10 am and then hold a Zoom meeting on the 30th. Here is the invitation detail for weekly Zoom

Meeting ID: 815 8020 8528

Passcode: 409450

News from the Pastoral Team

During the Pandemic the Pastoral Team has been supporting many parishioners through regular telephone calls and this is continuing for those who need it. Now that restrictions have been lifted members of the team are also making pastoral visits. Home Communion is available too. If you, or anyone you know, would like someone from the pastoral team to get in touch, please contact Liz Kelly, Lay Pastoral Minister and Anna Chaplain. Her contact details are lizmk@outlook.com and telephone 01604 636947 or 07745 604591. We offer a listening ear, someone to pray with, bereavement support, or a friendly visit.

We visited Abington Park View Care Home again on Wednesday 17 November and were joined by ten residents for our service on the theme of 'Christ the

King'. As usual, we sang several familiar hymns, listened to some short passages of scripture, and ended with prayers. Many thanks to Lisa, the Wellbeing Coordinator, who made us so welcome and organised the room and the refreshments afterwards. On Wednesday 24 November, Revd Jun will join us to celebrate the Eucharist for the first time at APV and we shall hold our annual Carol Service there on 15 December. If you feel called to share in this ministry, please do get in touch with Liz.

Liz has started visiting residents at St Christopher's Care Home again and she continues to support the weekly Friday service in St Ragener's Chapel for those who live independently.

Thank you all for your prayers for the Pastoral Team and for the staff and residents of Abington Park View and St Christopher's Care Home. Sadly, we have to say goodbye to Janet Winn who is moving out of the area. Janet has been a faithful member of the Pastoral Team and she has supported the work at APV for many years. We shall all miss her kindness, sensitivity, and loyalty and we wish her every happiness in her new home.

Liz Kelly (Lay Pastoral Minister, Anna Chaplain)

News from St Christopher's Home

I joined the team at St Christopher's in July 2021 and over the last few months I have been busy getting to know the role and getting to know all those in the Independent Living Community. I also help Revd Jun with the Holy Communion service in the main home on a Thursday morning. In October we were able to hold a Harvest Creative Craft morning in the Chapel with the help of Liz Kelly. Liz showed us how to make scarecrows which everyone enjoyed. In November we held a Songs of Praise service to celebrate St Ragener's Day which was attend by 25 people. This month we are looking forward to another musical coffee morning and a visit from Bishop John.

The Revd Rachel Hetherington

February Newsletter

For obvious reasons, there will not be a newsletter in January so the next deadline for submission to the February newsletter will be 21st January.

Standing Committee and PCC

The next standing committee meetings are on

*January Meeting date is to be confirmed as this will be a special joint meeting with the Ministry Team.

Wednesday 16th March 2022 at 7.30 pm

The next PCC meetings are on

Wednesday 26th January 2022 at 8 pm

Wednesday 30th March at 8 pm

[Draft Minutes from the last PCC Meeting](#)

Please click the title above to access the link.

How to get your contribution or event into the next Abington Newsletter

The Parish Newsletter is emailed on the last Thursday of the month.

Please send content to Matthew George

abingtonbulletin@outlook.com by the 21st of the month for inclusion in the next edition. If you wish to have a printed version delivered to you, please contact Bob Purser 785836. There will also be a small number of copies in church for visitors.

Ministry Team

The Revd. Byung-Jun Kim: Rector, rector@abingtonchurch.org.uk

The Revd. Rachel Hetherington: Associate Priest

Alison Barnes: Reader

Prester Coleman: Reader

Liz Kelly: Lay Pastoral Minister & Anna Chaplain

Cathy Tinsley: Children and Youth Missioner

Tim Dolan: Director of Music

Donald Loe and Jim Mercer: Churchwardens

Bob Purser: Lay Chair of the PCC

When you arrive for a service

A very warm welcome to St. Peter and St. Paul's, Abington. We are a family church and children (however noisy) are particularly welcome at our service. We are delighted that you join us in worship.



If you use a hearing aid, please use the T setting



Are situated at the back-left hand side of the church and include a baby change



To make an offering, please complete the yellow envelope and we can reclaim Gift Aid. Alternatively you can give on-line through our website or give regularly through the Parish Giving Scheme (talk to Damian Pickard or Bob Purser)



Our service is livestreamed. The Churchwardens can help you if you cannot see the screen or would prefer to be out of shot



[St Peter and St Paul Abington Church - Home | Facebook](#)

[St Peter and St Paul Abington Online - YouTube](#)



Please speak to our Churchwardens for any assistance during the service or for a Gluten free wafer

www.abingtonchurch.org.uk

If you no longer wish to receive the Newsletter from Abington Church please email bob.purser@abingtonchurch.org.uk

The Parish Church of St. Peter and St. Paul “The Church in the Park”

Park Avenue South, Northampton

Charity no. 1131414