



ST ANDREW'S CHURCH
BIGGLESWADE



PARISH NEWS

Advent and Christmas 2023



Visit the Church Website:

standrewschurchbiggleswade.org.uk

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VICAR'S LETTER

So here we are in Advent. The season of preparation for the celebration of Christmas. This is the time of year when some of the most intensive bargaining goes on. No, not the bargaining that goes on in our shops, or the Government desperately trying to keep staff on board to keep the NHS functioning over this winter, or how best to care for the environment during winter weather to avoid negative impact and further harm to human and animal health, or over the cessation of hostilities and atrocities in the Holy Land, Ukraine and Russia, Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Libya, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, to name but some; in the hope that all swords will be beaten into ploughshares. (If you would like to join an Advent Study Group reading “An Advent Manifesto” by Martyn Percy, grappling with questions on how the light of Christ can illuminate this present darkness, you are welcome. Full details are available in Church Notices or via our website).

But for now, what I am talking about is in homes all over the country in which children are writing their Christmas wish-list! With imaginations fuelled by advertisements on posters, television and social media and playground chatter, children come up with ever more elaborate ideas each day. Families battle to try and manage expectations and scale down ambitions. You hear warnings of “Father Christmas will be too busy to get *all* of those things for you” or bribes such as “you’ll have to be very, *very* good to get one of those”.

How often do we scale down *our* hopes? We would like to see less poverty and hardship in the world, less suffering and starvation, less climate change and environmental damage, less wars and violence, friendlier communities, safer streets, and happier families. But it all

gets too much to try to bear. Often it becomes easier to shrug our shoulders and accept life as it is.

Looking at the Christmas story in Luke's Gospel we meet four people who have huge hopes for the coming of Jesus. First is Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb". She adds words about hoping for better things: "Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord".

Second is Mary who in response to Elizabeth sings a song praising God for the great things he has done: his mercy to those who fear him, for lifting up the lowly and feeding the hungry. Third, after John's birth his father Zechariah praises God for his mercy for saving the people from their enemies, for providing salvation and the forgiveness of sins and guiding all to peace. Finally, Simeon on seeing baby Jesus realises his work is done because God has sent his salvation as a light to guide us. The words of all four people are repeated in regular prayers as the Hail Mary, the Magnificat, Benedictus and Nunc Dimittis.

We are reminded in our Advent preparations that these were not trivial wishes, but people of vision hoping for better things and believing God could bring them about. As we know, God did not bring about change suddenly and powerfully, but by giving the world a little child – his only Son – to teach us to live differently. The cost was great as his Son was doomed to suffer and die for our sins.

As we approach Christmas this year, and especially amidst worldly horrors, let us do so with faith and hope that God can do great things. And be encouraged as we remember that great things happen through small things – the small acts of kindness, caring, generosity, peace-making, prayer, reconciliation and self-giving by which we can change the world. If you would like to contribute to our two chosen Christmas

Charities, Keech Hospice Care who provide free, specialist care for adults and children with a life-limiting illness across Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire, and UNICEF working with vulnerable children and young people across the globe, please do so via our website or at Church this Christmas. Thank you.

With love, peace and joy for the season of Advent, and wishing you a very Happy Christmas, when it comes,

Revd. Liz

DIARY: ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS 2023

NOVEMBER

THUR 30th ST ANDREW'S DAY.

9.30 am Holy Communion – Patronal, in Chapter House.

DECEMBER

SUN 3rd ADVENT SUNDAY.

8.00 pm Holy Communion [Order Two].

10.00 am Family Communion.

6.00 pm Advent Service of Light.

TUE 12th 7.00 pm Carols, remembering departed loved ones – Chapter House.

SUN 17th 6.00 pm Service of Nine Lessons and Carols.

WED 20th 6.00 pm Carols and seasonal refreshments, St Andrew's Church grounds.

THUR 21st 5.30 pm-6.30 pm Carols at Sullivan Court, Kings Reach.

SUN 24th FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT:
10.00 am Parish Communion.

SUN 24th CHRISTMAS EVE:
6.00 pm Crib Service.
11.30 pm Midnight Mass.

MON 25th CHRISTMAS DAY:
10.00 am Parish Communion.

THUR 28th NB No Holy Communion

JANUARY 2024

SUN 7th EPIPHANY:
8.00 am Holy Communion [Order Two].
10.00 am Family Communion.

FEBRUARY 2024

SUN 4th CANDLEMAS:
8.00 am Holy Communion [Order Two].
10.00 am Family Communion.
3.00 pm Christingle.

LOOKING AHEAD:

Ash Wednesday: Wednesday 14th February.

Palm Sunday: Sunday 24th March.

Easter Day: Sunday 31st March.

Confirmation: Sunday 5th May – The Bishop of Bedford.



@StAndrewsBiggleswade



@standrewsbiggleswade

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Brass Cleaning: Contact: Rosemary Jopson 313503.

Church Flowers: Contact: Jan Gardner 313124.

PAROCHIAL ORGANISATIONS

Sunday School:

Groups meet during the 10.00 am service on Sundays. Contact: Emma Pallett
319146 emmapallett@hotmail.com

**Uniformed Organisations – For all Girl Guiding please register first via:
girlguiding.org.uk**

Rainbow Guides:

‘1st Biggleswade’ (St Andrew’s). Meet on Wednesdays from 5.30 pm to 6.40 pm during term time. Contact: firstbiggleswaderainbows@hotmail.com.

‘2nd Biggleswade’ Meet on Mondays from 5.30 pm to 6.30 pm during term time. Contact: Joanna McMurray, jlmcmurray@hotmail.co.uk.

Brownie Guides:

‘1st Biggleswade’ (St Andrew’s) Meet on Mondays from 6.15 pm to 7.45 pm during term time. Contact: Babs Gurney, Leader.

Guides:

‘1st Biggleswade’ (St Andrew’s) Meet on Wednesdays from 7.00 pm to 9.00 pm during term time. Contact: Rachel Calver.

Youth Organisations:

‘The Kitchen’: School year 9 & above meets Sunday 7.30 pm. Contact: Chris Parker 07702 250776 – chris2parker@btinternet.com or Emma Pallett 01767 319146 – emmapallett@hotmail.co.uk

10+ (Afters): For young people in School years 5 & 6 meets on Thursdays 6.00 pm. Contact: Chris Parker (details above) or Claire Leeks 07484 684743 Claire.leeks@btinternet.com

12+: For young people in School years 7 & 8 meets on Thursday 7.30 pm. Contact: Peter Giles peterdgiles@gmail.com

Holiday Club: Runs for four days during the Summer Holidays. Contact: Emma Pallett on 01767 319146 emmapallett@hotmail.com.