

NEWS & CHAT 16 December 2021

The online service will remain 'joint' while each church has its own service as pre-pandemic. For the foreseeable future, the online service will be live-streamed from the church where the minister is leading, but always on the Christ Church Facebook page.

Following the introduction of Plan B by the government, the wearing of masks is now compulsory in churches.

In order to keep Covid-19 safe, please remember to:

- Wear a mask at all times (unless you have an exemption), including at groups meeting at church.
- Sanitise hands when entering the building
- **Keep at least 1m from people you are not in a 'bubble' or live with** including at groups meeting at church.
- Try to keep conversations after worship to a minimum

During services and other events, we will endeavour to keep the Church as warm as possible whilst maintaining good ventilation, so please dress accordingly.

CHRISTMAS SERVICES at THE BRIDGWATER DRIVE CHURCH

Sunday 19th Dec. 4th Sunday of Advent - 10.30 am - Christingle led by Margaret

Friday 24th Dec. CHRISTMAS EVE 6.00 pm - Communion at BDC led by Naomi (no midnight service)

Saturday CHRISTMAS DAY 10.30 am A short service of carols, readings & prayers led by Margaret

Sunday 26 Dec. NO SERVICE

You can listen to the URC Daily Devotions service for 26 Dec. here: <https://soundcloud.com/andy-braunston/urc-daily-devotions-sunday-service-for-26th-december-2021-the-revd-james-church?si=b580218acf9b44bb8f7632857788a96e> or read it here: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ZYvupFuVbCKxScw19vXKq_ubq75pTZ51/view

CHRISTMAS SERVICES at CHRIST CHURCH

Sunday 19th Dec 10.00 am The Minister – Communion

2.00 pm meet at the church for Posadas and Carols – (walk up the High Street), and/or at **3.00 pm** for Carols at church and refreshments

Friday 24th Dec Christmas Eve 3.00 pm Christingle – ticket holders only (contact Naomi)

Sunday 26th Dec No Service (see above)

There will be **NO News & Chat for the week between Christmas and New Year (30 Dec)**, so if you have any news that cannot wait until January, please let me or Margaret have it by next Monday (20 Dec) for inclusion in next week's Christmas News & Chat. Thanks, Naomi

BDC NEWS

Carols Round the Tree last Saturday



Such a lovely occasion – a good excuse to put on the Christmas jumpers, (Dexter won the prize for this) to sip some mulled wine or drink a cup of tea, eat a mince pie (or two) and sing some carols.



Thank you too to the people who helped and to all those who came.

Christ Church, Rayleigh (CC) and the Bridgwater Drive Church (BDC)

Cats and Dogs Quiz - The winner of the £10 voucher was announced last Sunday –Only one person had all the answers correct!

Advent Course – This week the discussion focussed on the shepherds, just ordinary people doing a dirty job, living mostly outdoors, very poor, yet they were the first to hear the news and to be told to tell the world. In our modern world, who would God choose to tell others. Next came the question about the angels, now seen as friendly, caring, guardians but why, then, were they so terrifying to people in Biblical times?

HARP – Just to repeat the message from HARP last week, ‘With Christmas approaching, it is always lovely to give the residents a small gift. A selection box or other small gifts would be particularly acceptable.’

Kate sent this message, *‘I have had donations from several people already which is wonderful.’*

Tuesday 20th Dec. 10.30 – 11.30 ‘Let’s Talk about Books’ This week the starting theme (ice breaker) is ‘magazines’- magazines we’ve read in the past or read now. Do bring along any magazines you want to talk about. Do also bring a book you’re reading or think of one you want to tell us about. Any unwanted books and magazines can be added to our book store. Please help yourself to any books in the store (in Room 3).

Used Postage Stamps Don't throw away your used postage stamps. If you don't already give them to someone, then please put them in the stamp box at church or give them to Janice who collects them to send to Motor Neurone Disease and Southend in Sight.



TIPS & IDEAS

No particular creative tip this week. See how creative you can be with wrapping gifts or making (instead of buying) Christmas cards. Maybe use paper or cards from last year to minimise waste!

RESOURCES

An Advent reflection by Revd Dr Cally Hammond who is the Dean of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge. <https://mailchi.mp/18d2bc9de2b9/coming-up-from-st-pauls-cathedral-8251160?e=e30a1f608a>

The Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell in conversation with the theologian Paula Gooder about Advent and Christmas: <https://youtu.be/MpPyv3keef8>

This may be of particular interest to those of you following the Advent Bible Study, though it makes some excellent points about the importance of observing Advent, and about the real meaning of Christmas.

PRAYER CORNER

I invite all of you to set aside time daily to pray for our churches and members but also for the whole nation and world. We pray especially this week for children and young people.



Particular prayer requests this week:

The BDC

Barbara: Barry: Clive: Marlene’s daughter, Christine: Janet: Colin: Celia: Sandra: Margaret and Ted: Gerry: Margaret’s friends, Jean, Peggy and Doreen. Special prayers for Yvonne as she settles into her new home at Admiral’s Court.

Christ Church

Mark E and his family: Judy H.: Audrey: Sheila S.: Phil and Grace: Peter C. Beth, Bill & Elizabeth G.: Joy A: Thora: Jenny & Tom

An Advent Devotion from the UCC, based on last Sunday's Gospel reading

Good News? by Marilyn Pagán-Banks

"John answered, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people." - Luke 3:16-18 (NRSV)

Good news?! I guess it depends which side of the fork you are on. This is certainly not a vision of the baby born in a manger and wrapped in swaddling cloth. John's idea of the Messiah was all about power and might and control. It is what the people wanted after centuries of oppression and colonization. "Finally, some justice!" I imagine some thinking. But instead of a winnowing fork, Jesus comes with open hands, inviting all into right relationship. A relationship grounded in a love so expansive it became flesh so we can feel it. Touch it. Allow it to transform us. Jesus comes and offers living water to all. He offers the bread of life to all. Jesus reminds us that we, too, are sourced from this love. Made from it. And can live into it more fully. This love will make us free.

Prayer

This is good news in this season of Advent, Immanuel, God with us. Thank you for this season of remembering, sharing the story, and inviting others into the possibility of your love. Amen

Finally, a heart warming poem sent in by Kate

The Christmas Coat

An old boy was fumbling' around one day
In a women's clothing store.
He'd found his wife a Christmas coat
And was headed for the door
When he bumped into a little boy
That looked like he was lost
And he said, "Mister can you help me
Find out how much something costs?
Here it is almost Christmas
And the nights are gettin cold,
Winter time is on us
And my mom don't have a coat.
I've been workin' for the neighbors
And saving for a time"
And in his tiny outstretched hand
Was a dollar and a dime.

His gaze went from that big eyed boy
To that pretty Christmas coat
And he finally cleared away the lump
That had gathered in his throat.
He said, "Son
That's just what this coat costs
We're lucky that we found 'er" -
And he turned around and gave a wink
To the lady at the counter.
She put it in a pretty box
And wrapped it up just so
And went off in the back
And found a big red Christmas bow.
He said "I thank you for your help, sir,
And I kindly thank you, ma'am.
I hope y'all are gonna have a big Christmas
Cause now I know I am"

Well the old boy walked home busted
Except for the dollar and the dime,
Thinkin' he'd just have to buy
The coat another time.
He told his wife that Christmas this year
Wouldn't be much fun
And he gently took her in his arms
And told her what he'd done.
She said " why you old softie,
I wouldn't trade you for a farm.
I've got two or three old coats
And your love to keep me warm."
She put that money in a matchbox
And placed it beneath their tree
And said "that is the grandest gift
You've ever given me"

The years went by like years will do
When people are in love.
Their marriage was a golden bond
That was forged by God above.
Then one day came some bitter news
That filled his heart with fright,
The doctor told the old man's wife
That she was going to lose her sight.
He said "There's an operation we can do
But it puts me on the spot,
'Cause it's a quite complex procedure
And it's going to cost a lot."
The old man said, "Doctor, I'm a failure,
I've made no preparation.
We don't have the money
For that kind of an operation "

The doctor got the strangest look
And he sat there for a while,
And then he slowly nodded
And he broke out in a smile.
He said, "Why, sir, you can't fool me,
You're a very wealthy man.
You long ago invested
In the world's best savings plan.
I'll see she gets the best of care,
She's going to be just fine,
And the total cost to you old friend
Is a dollar and a dime"

The old man stared in disbelief
Then he recognized that smile,
The one he'd seen those years ago
On a loving thoughtful child.
He said "What you gave to me that day
Was more than just a coat,
You gave me the gift of giving
And you gave my mother hope.
My mother'd been mistreated,
Neglected and abused,
But she gave life just one more chance
And it was all because of you.
Now every year she takes that coat
And lays it beneath our tree,
It represents to us the things
That Christmas ought to be.
She says that when we leave this world
For a better home someday,
The only things that we'll take with us
Are the things we gave away "

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