



The Ship

St Jude's Church, Englefield Green Newsletter

Anglicans and Methodists working together

Number 126

December 2020

Doing Christmas Differently

Please see our programme of services for December which is highlighted in this edition of our Newsletter. Christmas Services this year have had to undergo some significant changes. Our Carol Service and our Children's Crib Service will both go out on our YouTube Channel. Please do join us for them there.

We are indebted to Guy Bunce, Geoff Chew and a small choir who have recorded some of the loveliest of the Christmas Carols to include in those services. Thank you also to Claudia Tubb, who will lead our Crib Service online this year and, as she always does, involve lots of children in retelling the story of the amazing love of God in sending Jesus.

We are very mindful of all those for whom Christmas 2020 which be especially hard. There are those among us who have experienced significant loss this year and this may well be for many the first Christmas without someone dearly loved. Please know that you are in our hearts and thoughts most especially. God be with you.

A Special Request

We continue to be grateful to everyone who so generously supports St Jude's financially. If you would like to make a Christmas donation please find details on our website of ways in which you can do this. Thank you for your gifts which enable us to continue our work at this challenging time.

www.stjudeschurch.info

Hear My Song

(songs from the Musicals)

Abi Burrows

(vocalist)

Simon Lindley

(piano)

**Saturday 5th December
at 4.00pm on YouTube**

This will be streamed on YouTube —
(search for St Jude's United Church
Englefield Green)

Christmas

"Christ always seeks the straws of the most desolate cribs to make his Bethlehem. In all the other Christmases of my life I had got a lot of presents and a big dinner. This Christmas I was to get no presents, and not much of a dinner; but I would have, indeed, Christ Himself, God the Saviour of the world".

Those words of Thomas Merton (1915–1968), an American Trappist monk, writer, theologian, mystic, poet, social activist, and priest, have a strange resonance today against the background of COVID 19. Thomas Merton, the son of an American artist, was educated in England. Whilst he was exploring his sense of call to the religious life Thomas Merton spent his first Christmas in a Trappist Monastery and recorded his impressions of that time.

I am writing this article just ahead of further announcements from the government as to what will happen following the completion of this present period of Lockdown. Most of us assume that Christmas 2020 will be somewhat different from previous Christmases. Questions about where we might spend Christmas, and with whom, have taken on a more than usual significance. Those questions are encumbered with far greater uncertainty this year.

Does that not lead us to ask ourselves what it is that lies at the very heart of Christmas? Is Christmas simply about the giving and receiving of ever more expensive gifts? If so, where does that leave those facing real financial struggles at this present time?

Is Christmas solely designed to be a crowded family gathering with plenty of food and drink on the table and maybe, as Eastenders would have us believe, the traditional family row to follow the Queen's speech? If so, where does that leave the lonely and the bereaved, the hard-pressed frontline workers many of whom will not enjoy a Christmas break, the isolated and the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable?

At St Jude's this year we have had to pare back our traditional pattern of Christmas Services. Both our annual Carol Service (4pm 20th December) and our Children's Crib Service (4pm Christmas Eve 24th December) will be online. Very sadly, we are unable to hold our Blue Christmas Service this time. BUT although our services may be fewer, their message remains the same and so does the warmth of our invitation to you to join us.

Christmas can survive the absence of costly presents and even precious family gatherings. Just like Diwali and Hanukkah, two of the other major festivals of faith which fall at this time of year, Christmas celebrates the enduring themes of hope and light; themes which are ever more relevant in the depression and darkness of today. If our celebrations must be muted this year it is perhaps worth remembering the words of St. Francis of Assisi: "All the darkness in the world cannot extinguish the light of a single candle."

In the Christian faith both hope and light are invested in the baby of Bethlehem. One of my favourite Christmas carols is "O Little town of Bethlehem" which proclaims:

*"Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting Light
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight".*

If ever there was a year of hopes and fears it must surely be this one. But the everlasting light shines on. And, once again at our Christmas Services we shall hear God's promise of old, the promise fulfilled in the coming of Jesus: *"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned".* (Isaiah 9:2) How pertinent that seems today.

At the close of his reflection on a Trappist Christmas Thomas Merton wrote: *"It is good that somewhere in the world there are men who realise that Christ is born. There were only a few shepherds in the first Bethlehem, and it is the same now. The ox and the ass understood more of the first Christmas than the high priests in Jerusalem. And it is the same today."*

Judith Allford



Advent and Christmas at St Jude's Church



Sunday 6th December

8.00am Holy Communion in Church
9.30am Service on our YouTube channel

Sunday 13th December

9.30am Family Communion in Church
(live streamed on our YouTube channel)
4.30pm Carol Service from
Staines Methodist Church
(telephone 01784 434133 for a Zoom invitation)

Sunday 20th December

8.00am Holy Communion in Church
4.00pm St Jude's Carol Service on
our YouTube channel
6.00pm Nine Lessons and Carols live-streamed
from Guildford Cathedral

Thursday 24th December Christmas Eve

4.00pm Crib Service on our YouTube channel
(with participation from Junior Church members
near and far!)
11.00pm Midnight Eucharist live streamed
from Guildford Cathedral

Friday 25th December Christmas Day

9.30am Holy Communion in Church
(live streamed on our YouTube channel)

Sunday 27th December

No service in Church
The Diocese of Guildford is providing online an
all-age pre-recorded service and
9.45am Holy Eucharist live streamed
from Guildford Cathedral

Readings at Communion

6th December (Advent 2)	Isaiah 40.1-11 Psalm 85. 1-2, 8-13 2 Peter 3.8-15 Mark 1. 1-8
13th December (Advent 3)	Isaiah 61. 1-4, 8-end Psalm 126 1 Thessalonians 5. 16-24 John 1. 6-8, 19-28
20th December (Advent 4)	2 Samuel 7. 1-11, 16 Psalm 89. 1-8 Romans 16. 25-end Luke 1. 26-28
25th December (Christmas Day)	Isaiah 52. 2-10 Psalm 98 Hebrews 1. 1-4 Luke 2. 1-20
27th December (John, Apostle and Evangelist))	Exodus 33. 7-11 Psalm 117 1 John 1 John 21. 19-end

From the Registers

Funeral:
(11th November) Kathleen Mavis Payne

Diary for December

For details of services, etc please see above

christians
against
poverty

CAP

Christians against Poverty

Who has inspired you this year?

For many of us it will be Captain Tom. I imagine when he started his walk he felt a little daunted, but he must have believed it was a possibility and had faith he could complete his challenge.

If he had been asked whether he thought he could reach number 1 in the pop charts on his 100th birthday, I expect he would have laughed at you, and yet he did! Perhaps you would feel the same if I asked you whether you could save a life, but perhaps that isn't so impossible either.

I read this week that 40% of people have money secrets and many of those will be debts that they haven't declared to their closest family. When people actually take the step of contacting Christians Against Poverty (CAP) to ask for help resolving their financial difficulties they have waited on average 3 years from the time they felt out of their depth and a third of them will have considered suicide as a way out of their predicament.

CAP want anyone in debt to call us today on our free helpline number 0800 328 0006. We offer free, non-judgemental support to anyone who needs it. After calling the number and speaking with our lovely team, clients will be introduced to the the Egham Centre, which is based at St John's Church.

Talking to someone about their financial worries and offering them step by step support can transform and may even save a life. This pandemic has altered all our lives in some way, this time last year we had very different thoughts. Financial hardship may be devastating you or someone you know but CAP offer a lifeline.

We also have informal courses for people wanting to meet online and learn tips for managing their budget, mental health and receive assistance in seeking a new job. We urge anyone who needs debt support to call us today on our free helpline 0800 328 0006.

(CAP is licensed by the Government through the FSA and is an award winning organisation which is recommended by money experts.)

The Village Centre

Lockdown Number Two has seen the closure of the Village Centre Café once again. With such a short space between the end of lockdown and the usual Christmas break, it has been decided that the Café will not open again until the New Year.

Initiatives for the future are still being explored. The details of establishing a food collection point in the Centre for the Runnymede Food Bank are being further developed. It should also be possible early in the New Year, COVID permitting, to offer every family in Egham and Englefield Green in receipt of a Food Bank parcel, a voucher for a free hot meal in the Centre.

Work continues on reviewing the safe use of our Computer Room with the intention offering support, for example, to those exploring the use of technologies such as Zoom or online shopping. More details soon!

Please remember, in the continued wake of COVID 19, that if you, or someone you know, has particular needs, you can still access help from the Village Centre/Mutual Aid by contacting 07526 360704 or the Runnymede Borough Council triage line, 01932 838383. If you would like to contribute to the work of the Village Centre please contact Ali:—

manager@villagecentre.org.uk