



St Nicolas Church, Cranleigh

WORSHIPPING AT HOME

Christmas 2

Sunday 3rd January 2021

WELCOME to our Worshipping at Home resources for this week, provided for us by The Rector.

COVID-19 – URGENT UPDATE with the arrival of Tier 4, and the worsening infection rates in Cranleigh, we have taken the decision to greatly reduce the number of ‘live’ services in church for the duration of January. There are two reasons for this – the obvious safety aspect, and the less obvious fact that most of our volunteer stewards, without whom we cannot open the church, are in the over 70 and vulnerable category. Whilst this will be a disappointment to many, we feel that it the sensible and responsible thing to do. We strongly encourage you to stay at home for January, and we will review the situation as the month comes to an end. After this Sunday, we will only be opening the Church for live worship at 11am on Sundays – all other services are cancelled – the Tuesday Communion, Thursday Prayer Time and Sunday 8am Services will not take place.

THIS WEEK (*Events in red will be online events*)

Sunday 3rd January – Christmas 2:

8am: Holy Communion (1662). In Church and Livestreamed

10am (Zoom): Church at Home.

11.15am (Zoom): SEA Church (for young people)

(the Zoom joining code for both of these is ID: 148-785-166)

11am: Holy Communion (CW). In Church and Livestreamed

Tuesday 5th January

12noon: Holy Communion (1662) *****Cancelled*****

Thursday 7th January

10am: Quiet Time for Prayer **Cancelled*****

Sunday 10th January – The Baptism of Christ:

8am: Holy Communion (CW) *****Cancelled*****

10am **(Zoom)**: Church at Home.

11.15am **(Zoom)**: SEA Church (for young people)

(the Zoom joining code for both of these is ID: 148-785-166)

11am: Holy Communion (CW). **In Church and Livestreamed**

4pm: Church at Home *****Cancelled*****

CHRISTMAS 2:

COLLECTS:

Almighty God,
in the birth of your Son
you have poured on us the new light of your incarnate Word,
and shown us the fullness of your love:
help us to walk in his light and dwell in his love
that we may know the fullness of his joy;
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

God our Father,
in love you sent your Son
that the world may have life:
lead us to seek him among the outcast

and to find him in those in need,
for Jesus Christ's sake.

FIRST READING: *Jeremiah 31:7-14*

For thus says the Lord:

Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob,
and raise shouts for the chief of the nations;
proclaim, give praise, and say,
'Save, O Lord, your people,
the remnant of Israel.'

See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north,
and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth,
among them the blind and the lame,
those with child and those in labour, together;
a great company, they shall return here.

With weeping they shall come,
and with consolations I will lead them back,
I will let them walk by brooks of water,
in a straight path in which they shall not stumble;
for I have become a father to Israel,
and Ephraim is my firstborn.

Hear the word of the Lord, O nations,
and declare it in the coastlands far away;
say, 'He who scattered Israel will gather him,
and will keep him as a shepherd a flock.'

For the Lord has ransomed Jacob,
and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him.
They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion,
and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the Lord,
over the grain, the wine, and the oil,

and over the young of the flock and the herd;
their life shall become like a watered garden,
and they shall never languish again.
Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance,
and the young men and the old shall be merry.
I will turn their mourning into joy,
I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow.
I will give the priests their fill of fatness,
and my people shall be satisfied with my bounty, says the Lord.

GOSPEL READING: *John 1:10-18*

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. John testified to him and cried out, 'This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me."' From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

POST COMMUNION PRAYER:

All praise to you,
almighty God and heavenly king,
who sent your Son into the world

to take our nature upon him
and to be born of a pure virgin:
grant that, as we are born again in him,
so he may continually dwell in us
and reign on earth as he reigns in heaven,
now and for ever.

SERMON (written by The Rector, Canon Roy Woodhams):

I often find myself wondering at the logic of those who put together our Lectionary of Sunday readings! This week's Gospel contains a large chunk of the passage that most clergy will have chosen as their text for Christmas Midnight, and probably Christmas Morning as well!

But then, there is that old saying, coined by Harold Wilson during the first 'Winter of Discontent', as it was known, in 1973, that '*. . . . a week in politics is a long time*'!

A lot has happened in the world in those ten days, since we last listened to the prologue of John's wonderful Gospel:

- Another 5,000 or so British people have died from COVID 19
- Our NHS has been pushed to the brink of sustainability
- We have been forced, as a nation, to make difficult and unpopular decisions, and that has been reflected in our own local decision to close down a number of our 'live' worship opportunities, as response to the worsening situation regarding COVID-19.

To mention but a few of the sadnesses that have befallen us – and all of that without the acknowledgement that we have finally and officially left the European Union!

Those of you who joined us at Christmas Midnight will have heard me talking about the way that we, like the ancient Israelite people, may be feeling as though we are walking through a 'land of deep darkness'. And if you joined us, instead on Christmas Morning, you will have heard Rutton talking about the need to follow the quest for truth, both in the ways of the world, and in the message of Christmas.

Each Christmas we sing the traditional carols and hear the familiar readings, and we manage to create in our minds a picture of an idyllic scene of cosy comfort – a chubby, cuddly baby, warmly wrapped and smiling sweetly at the odd array of visitors who pass through! But that is a false picture, because it doesn't allow for those walking the land of deep darkness, and it doesn't give us a glimpse of the truth about which John wrote! Frankly, such a baby would have had nothing to say to the people of deep darkness, and such a baby has nothing to say to us at a time like this, and such a scene has no relevance in the face of events like those which are taking place daily in our hospitals!

But that image of Christmas, perpetuated by Christmas Card artists and just about everyone else from Marks and Spencer to the BBC, is not the right image of what that first Christmas was like. Neither is it a right image of what Christmas means to us today!

And so, the one positive thing about the dreadful things that happen in our world is that they draw our attention away from the 'fairy-tale' side of Christmas and jolt us into a sense of reality, reminding us that we do all live in a real world in which pain and suffering and war and violence and natural disasters are a real part.

And we're reminded, too, that it wasn't so very comfortable for Mary and Joseph and the baby in those early years. Stables aren't ideal places for a birth, and having to flee from their home and family and go to live in a foreign country for fear of the child's life was no picnic!

Each year at our Christmas Eucharists and again today we have heard those familiar words from John's Gospel: "...and the Word became flesh and lived among us, full of grace and truth." But how often do we take the time to stop and look seriously at those words to see what they really mean? Because, you see, 'grace' and 'truth' are what Christmas is all about, and they are at the heart of God's transforming and redeeming power which can break into and through even the darkest depths of despair.

Of course, we cannot banish from our minds the pictures of heartache which we see on our television screens from around the world. But our Christmas is no less Christmas, and our joy is no less joy because we have kept the season within the shadow of a dark and troubled world.

Our rejoicing, however, should not be an escaping from reality, a flight of fancy into the realm of fairy-tale Christmas card scenes. Rather it must be a joy in which we face up to, and feel in our hearts, the world's tragedy, and celebrate that there is this wonderful grace and truth which can break through it all.

Just as the Christmas message is one that breaks through the ordinariness of life, so too is it a message which breaks through all of the suffering and the sadness and the despair and the darkness of our lives.

And it is because we believe that the answers to the world's predicaments lie in Christ, the '*Word made flesh*' at Bethlehem, that we

are able to have hope. And it is because we do have this hope that we are able year by year to celebrate Christmas with joy, despite the brokenness of the world around us.

And then there is that other side to the Christmas story, which it is so easy to forget – that the baby grew up!

And that growing up may have begun with the baby in the stable – but not the comfy, cuddly baby – rather, the baby who was born in a cold, damp smelly cow-shed because there wasn't room at the inn, the child who in the words of Simeon was to '*...see the rise and fall of many....*', the child whose parents had to run away to save his life, and the child who was to grow up and become the man who hung on a cross and three days later rise from the dead!

And there we have the real truth and the real grace, and the only way in which we can make sense of Christmas in the light of all this suffering. Because unless we do let Jesus 'grow up' in our hearts, then he's not much good to us – unless we view Christmas through the eyes of Easter, then we've missed the point!

For it is through the resurrection that the world has hope - as a Jesuit priest working in Portadown in Northern Ireland said to me a few years ago during the worst of the troubles there: "*Resurrection doesn't wipe out suffering, but it takes it on board and transforms it*".

So, there it is – the truth of the Christmas message – Jesus, the baby of Bethlehem, who is also the crucified and risen Lord, the one who gives hope to all humanity.

May his grace, and that truth continue to break into each of our lives, support us in our sadness and carry us with joy at this beginning of another year! Amen.

WEEKLY PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION:

Church and Christian Ministry:

- For the Diocesan Board of Education (Chair Bishop Jo) The Education Team Director: Alex Tear; Deputy Director: Jonathan Gambier. For wisdom, strength and resilience for the Team, together with school leaders, governors and their staff as together we press forward in Christ's name in an education system that is increasingly pressured
- For the 22,000 children in our church schools and affiliated schools, that they might experience the light of Christ in their lives.
- For our own Church School (Headteacher: Gill Leadbetter-Sims and Chair of Governors Revd Tim Lewis)

National and World Affairs:

- For our government and nation at this time of crisis.
- For those whose role it is to administer the delivery of Covid vaccinations around the UK.

Community and Family:

- For those who live in Village Way, John Wiskar Drive and Onslow Mews.
- For our Churchwardens (Katherine and Mike) and Interim Church Administrator (Nicola)

The Sick and those in Need:

- Ray Corver, Stefan Godier, Stella Goldsmith, George Hill, Philip Jones, Amy and Dennis Loveless, Libby O'Brien, Brian Pettyfer, Jean Quallington, Jean Sandow, Jack Sieber, Bert and Eileen Steed, Maureen Steele, Dennis and Rosemary Talbot, Marion Tomkins, Mac Walker, Frances Webb, Darcy Wigfield, Angela Wild, Henry Young and Nicholas. *(and from Dunsfold and Hascombe: Amanda and Hugh, Tim Bailey, Michael Burt, Sarah Godwin and John Davies, Norman Edsall, William and James Mason, Sally Rivett, Sue Simper, Jacky Williams, Bill and Tracy Wood, Alli, Judy Bolt, Sue and Dennis Evans, Lorna Thompson, Sami Bennewith)*

The Departed:

- All we have known and loved, and especially Alan Chivers, Mike Ford, Michael Hart *(and from Dunsfold and Hascombe: Sheelagh Thomason)*

WEEKLY NOTICES:

COMING TO CHURCH – RULES AND REGULATIONS in connection with COVID-19 are changing fast at the moment – ******PLEASE SEE NOTICE ON PAGE 1***** Whilst our entry to Tier 4 has not significantly changed the regulations, cases in our area are on the increase and the danger is significant. If you are aged over 70, or clinically vulnerable and are able to access our worship on-line, please consider not coming to church for the next few weeks in order to reduce the risks to yourself and others. We will make every effort to keep you up to date with what's happening, but it should always be remembered that our printed material may have gone out of date by the time you read it!

If you know of anyone who does not have internet, and who would like a written communication from us each week, please email:

nicola@stnicolascranleigh.org.uk or call the Parish Office on 01483 273620. I am aware that this Christmas is going to be challenging and difficult for many people, so please feel free to contact either Nicola, or myself (roy@stnicolascranleigh.org.uk 01483 800655), if you have, or are aware of, any particular pastoral or practical needs during this time.

WHITE ENVELOPES: If you're a member of the white envelope weekly giving scheme, you should receive your envelopes for 2021 this week. If you don't, please get in touch with the Church Office.

TRAI DCRAFT: Sue Knight is offering Traidcraft goods for sale by appointment or would be willing to deliver to Cranleigh on receipt of an order. She will have catalogues or you can go on line at traidcraftshop.co.uk to see the whole range and if she has to order it in, this usually takes about a week. You can pay for any orders by BACS or she will accept cheques. Call Sue on 275032 or 07950 025137.

KEEP IN TOUCH:

The Rector - Revd Canon Roy Woodhams
(Day off: Monday)

Tel: 01483 800655. Email: roy@stnicolascranleigh.org.uk

The Curate - Revd Tim Clifford Hill
(Day off: Monday)

Tel: 01483 276267. Email: tim@stnicolascranleigh.org.uk

The Part time Curate - Revd Rutton Viccajee
(Works Wednesday, Friday, Sunday)

Tel: 01252 910212. Email: rutton@stnicolascranleigh.org.uk

Interim Administrator - Nicola Craven-Smith
(Works Monday, Wednesday and Thursday 9.30-2.30)
Tel: 01483 273620. Email: nicola@stnicolascranleigh.org.uk

Young People's Minister - Gabrielle Clarke
Tel: 07427 748408. Email: gabrielle@stnicolascranleigh.org.uk

Church Website: www.stnicolascranleigh.org.uk
and on Facebook.

