

Bexley Team News

St Barnabas, Joydens Wood

St James, North Cray

St John the Evangelist, Bexley

St Mary the Virgin, Bexley

Sunday 6 December 2020 Issue 38

The Second Sunday of Advent



There will be a **Team Zoom Service this Sunday at 10.00 am.**

Log-in details have been sent to regular members of our congregations on email.

Do contact a member of clergy if you have not received this.

Team Services in Churches this Sunday -

St James, North Cray 9.30 am Informal Communion with Baptism

St Barnabas, Joydens Wood No services

St John's, Bexley 8.00 am Holy Communion

10am Morning Prayer

St Mary's, Bexley 10.00 am Holy Communion with prayer for healing and wholeness

Wednesday 9 Dec 10.00 am Team Holy Communion at St Mary's

Hygiene measures advised by the Church of England are being observed in our churches, which includes disinfecting door handles etc, and having hand sanitiser available, and observing the two-metre proximity rule. Face coverings must be worn. If you feel you are in the at-risk group you might prefer to pray at home and use the many prayer resources available online.

The Collect: O Lord, raise up we pray, your power and come among us, and with great might succour us; that whereas, through our sins and wickedness we are grievously hindered in running the race that is set before us, your bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit, be honour and glory, now and for ever.

The Additional Collect: Almighty God, purify our hearts and minds, that when your Son Jesus Christ comes again as judge and saviour we may be ready to receive him, who is our Lord and our God.

Bible readings Isaiah 40, 1-11 2 Peter 3, 8-15a Mark 1, 1-8

Reflection

Do parents still sing lullabies to their babies? I hope so. I remember singing *The King of Love my Shepherd is* to my children and later my grandchildren to settle them to sleep. I don't have a good singing voice but it worked

If I'd been a Hebrew woman at the time of Isaiah, the lullaby I sang might have contained the word *Nechamu*, the first word of our Old Testament reading. Comfort ye... be comforted! Imagine soothing a fretful child with the words... "There, there...It's alright, it's alright..."

Now, imagine if you will, a small child who has behaved badly, has been reprimanded, and as every good parent knows, needs to be assured that they're still loved.

'Comfort ye'.... Those words begin what is known as 'the Book of Consolation to Israel' from the prophet Isaiah. Chapters 1-39 have warned of God's judgment if people put their trust in secular rulers rather than in God. But then it changes.... Chapters 40-55 speak of the promise of redemption. No sooner is judgment pronounced than words of comfort come. Yahweh – God – has punished Jerusalem for their sins, but his purpose was not harsh punishment, but rescue. He allowed them to suffer in order to restore them to their former status as his chosen people – a status that they never fully lost, but that they compromised by their unfaithfulness.

These words speak to a people in turmoil. They had suffered double for their sins (v 2) Isaiah begs them to return to God and to remember his covenant with them. It is a song of comfort to a confused and scattered people, a reminder that God's word and love stand forever.

A reprimanded child then, comforted by a loving father. A lovely image!

Now another image. Isaiah ch40 v3 is echoed in the Gospel reading, with another prophet... John the Baptist. (Mark ch1 v3) ³ A voice of one calling: "In the wilderness prepare the way for the LORD."

In ancient times when a visiting ruler was expected, it was customary to do some maintenance on the local roads, where harsh desert conditions would have brought rocks to surface, and flash floods would have created uneven ground. John the Baptist with his outlandish clothes and austere lifestyle calls the people into the desert, that through that desolation they might come to renewal. He calls them to '*a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.*'

The wilderness of our lives and the desert of our hearts require preparation for receiving our Lord, perhaps through some sort of Advent spiritual discipline, prayer, scripture reading, honest worship and pure lives. And that can be just as hard work as shifting rocks!

Let us return to the image of that reprimanded child who, knowing they are in disgrace, wants to say 'Sorry Daddy' and be forgiven. As we come to this strange Covid-Christmas, we are together experiencing a time of Lament, a time of grieving for the past, in a world that seems to many to be a wilderness.

But in the midst of it all, let us listen for the song of our Lord and Saviour... *Comfort ye...*

Reverend Ren

A prayer for Advent season

At Advent we should try the key to our heart's door. It may have gathered rust. If so, this is the time to oil it, in order that the heart's door may open more easily when the Lord Jesus wants to enter at Christmas time! Lord, oil the hinges of our hearts' doors that they may swing gently and easily to welcome your coming. from *The Lion Prayer Collection* compiled by Mary Batchelor

Christmas Hampers Update

We are in the process of completing the distribution of 150 hampers to families on free school meals across the five schools in the Bexley Team Ministry.

Any queries about this project, please contact Rev Sue Twynam on either 01322 559501 or 07952 468127, or by email at susantwynam@btconnect.com.



Last week we sent round a flyer for the Bexley Team Christmas Trail and we will be promoting this through local schools and groups.

In case you missed seeing it, this is a reminder that we're setting up four outdoor activity trails in the grounds of the churches. Each one will be different and will help us tell a part of the Christmas story.

From **Saturday 19th December – Sunday 3rd January** you can visit each one of the churchyards and take part in 'The Christmas Trail'. The trails are designed to be fully outdoors, family friendly and completely free. Do talk to any families you know who might be interested, and if you'd like to, come and have a look for yourself!

'A Special Message!' is at St. Mary's Church

'Follow the Star' is at St. Barnabas Church,

'Look to the Skies' is at St. John's Church

'Any Room in the Inn?' is at St. James's Church,

Deanery Confirmations

Will be on Sunday 18th April 2021 at 6.30pm at Holy Redeemer, Lamorbey with Bishop James. Please speak with any of the Team clergy if you are interested in being confirmed.

St John's

Giving to St John's: You can give financially to the continuing upkeep and ministry of St John's via our Just Giving page: www.justgiving.com/stjohntheevangelist-bexley

Sermons are posted each Sunday at fatheredwardbarlow.wordpress.com

Social Media - engage with us via Facebook (/stjohnsbexley), Twitter (@stjohnsbexley) and Instagram (@stjohnsbexley)

St James North Cray

Sunday 13 December 9.30 am Toy Service

CHARITABLE GIVING – We will once again be supporting Bexley Women's Aid by donating gifts from our Toy Service. They have particularly requested smaller toys, gift cards, stocking fillers and sweets or chocolates. Please bring your new, unwrapped gift to church on 13 December, you are welcome to leave these in the porch if you do not feel able to join us inside.

We have postponed our annual Christingle service until early next year, hopefully Sunday 31 Jan (Candlemas)

Sunday 20 December 9.30am Communion.

3.00 -5.00 pm Christmas Reflection - The church building will be open, decorated for Christmas and lit with candles. Please come and go as you please, to enjoy a quiet moment of reflection, and listen to a selection of Christmas music and readings.

St Barnabas

St Barnabas is linking with the Christmas Trail and inviting the local community and beyond to join with our **STAR IN THE WINDOW PROJECT**. We are encouraging people to decorate a star and put it in their window over the Christmas period.



Because the church building is in Tier 3 and the figures show that rates of infection in Joydens Wood and Bexley Park are fairly high, the PCC have made the decision NOT to open for Public Worship for Sunday 6 Dec and Sunday 13 December.

We aim to continue with our Bexley Team Zoom Services at 10am

We will keep the situation under review and hope to reopen on: -

Saturday 19 December 3-5pm The church will be decorated for Christmas and will be open for Christmas Reflection with music and readings. Come and go as you please within that time.

Sunday 20 December 10.45am Communion

Open for Private Prayer on Saturday 5th December from 9.00 – 10.00am

The church will NOT be open for Private Prayer on Saturday 12 December as the building is being used by a local Medical Practice.

CHARITABLE GIVING – We are collecting financial contributions for our regular Christmas charity – Homestart. Payments to Rev Ren or to David Peters please.

St Mary's

Sunday 13th December- 10.00 am Family Advent Service. 3.30 pm Holy Communion

Sunday 20th December – 10.00 am Holy Communion 6.00 pm Service of Nine Lessons and Carols Admission by ticket only. To book contact Andrew Hill on 07306 330356.

Christmas Eve 11.30 pm Midnight Mass

Christmas Day 10.30 am Holy Communion

Calendars and Diaries- there is a box at the back of the church, choir vestry side, for any 2021 calendars and/or diaries which are surplus to your requirements. After Christmas, we plan to sell them for church funds.

Clive will be leading a holiday to Austria and Oberammergau including the Passion Play 22-29 June 2022. Brochures and booking forms are at the back of Team churches.

THE BEXLEY TEAM CLERGY

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