

St. Matt's Midweek Update – 23rd December 2020

Christmas Greetings and Reflections from the vicar!

It has been a very strange year and even as it draws to a close it seems to present fresh challenges – it was a huge frustration to have written, recorded (and uploaded) my talk for the Carol service, only to be presented with huge changes to what would be permitted this Christmas. I would have wanted to have the opportunity to respond to what was being said and the changes we all face. For many the change to tier 4 and these restrictions feel like the straw that broke the camel's back. We have been hanging on in there and then sadly our fragile grip on hope has broken. No matter how dark it might seem or how challenging the obstacles you are facing or great the disappointment you have endured, I want to say Christmas has **NOT** been cancelled! Yes, the way we can celebrate, who we can celebrate it with even, may have changed, but the hope that Christmas brings remains the same! The light that shines in the darkness is undiminished.

"The true light that gives light to the world was coming into the world" "The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it" (John 1:9 & 5)

It seems to me that it's not just the darkness that does not "understand" it, that many of us miss the point that at Christmas God came and dwelt among us – that if we trust in him he dwells in our hearts by his Holy Spirit and nothing can extinguish that light, the light of his presence – he is and always will be Emmanuel God with us. So, this Christmas, whatever your circumstance, I pray that the light and peace of Christ fills your very being.

"I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ." Romans 8:38 & 39

It has been a difficult year and it remains a privilege to be part of St. Matt's church family. I am continually overwhelmed by the love, creativity and willingness to serve exhibited by our church family. I do want to pay particular tribute to Hannah and Lois who have both worked so hard and gone beyond anything anyone could ever ask of them this year – but I also want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has volunteered and served throughout this year to provide ministry in these difficult times. And finally thank-you to everyone who has worked so hard to make this very different Christmas special for all of us.

Carole and I would like to take this opportunity to wish you a happy, peaceful and safe Christmas.
Chris Wicks

Notices

Please read on as there is some important information about our services over the next couple of weeks.



Our services over the next few days are as follows:

Christingle - 4pm Christmas Eve, online only

(<https://youtu.be/mydpyqTQxfw>)

8am communion - 8am Christmas Day, in church only

Christmas morning around the tree - 10am Christmas Day,
online only

Changes to services – due to the increasing nature of Covid cases in our area, as well as the concerns of those who were going to be facilitating the services, **our services on Sunday 27th December and Sunday 3rd January will now be online only. There will not be an 8am communion on 3rd January.**

We feel that we need to just see how things progress over the next couple of weeks, and whether the government make any more decisions, and so we will review on 4th January and hope to be back in church and online after that.

The online services can be watched on our You Tube channel www.youtube.com/c/stmatts or on our Facebook page www.facebook.com/stmatthewshighbrooms

The direct link to the service on the 27th December at 10am is <https://youtu.be/uDinrlp1-Bw>.

This will be a celebration of Christmas at St. Matt's!



Every year we give our Christmas offerings to one of our link charities, and this year we are supporting Tearfund. Please do give if you can.

You can give by bank transfer if you have the church details already, or you can use this link to donate using a debit or credit card

<https://stmatts.churchsuite.co.uk/donate/fund/ope5413e>

Please note that there is a small charge to donate using this link, and you will be asked whether you would like to cover the charge yourself or not.



Just a reminder that the community larder will be open on Thursdays this week and next week, as Christmas Day and New Year's Day are on Fridays. So the opening times are:

Christmas Eve (Thursday) 12.30pm - 1.30pm

New Year's Eve (Thursday) 12.30pm - 1.30pm

Birthday photos

It's that time again when we ask for photos of anyone who has had a birthday this month.

Due to staff leave and giving volunteers a rest, we won't be showing a birthday slideshow on the 3rd January, but we'll do it the following week.

So if you have had a birthday in December, do email a photo of yourself into office@stmattschurch.org.uk and we'll add it into the slideshow.

Staff on leave - Chris, Lois and Hannah will all be on annual leave from Christmas Day until New Year's Day. If you need any urgent help or support during that time, please contact David Johnson on 07802720072 or wardens@stmattschurch.org.uk

All that leaves me to say is have a very merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year!