

December 2020 Edition 59

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing;  
it is the gift of God. *Ephesians 2:8*

Over the past few weeks there has been a great deal of discussion about “saving Christmas”. In such challenging times, there appears to be a constant tug-of-war between the desire to get together with friends and family over the festive season, and the inevitable risks involved in doing that during a pandemic. The Prime Minister has coined his own phrase: ‘Tis the season to be jolly careful.

For the community at St Mary’s there is no doubt that this will be a Christmas like no other. While we will be able to re-open for public worship, numbers attending will continue to be limited to ensure

that we can maintain our social distance. We will have to listen to our favourite Christmas carols, singing in our hearts rather than out loud. I have images in my head of the Cuddington Hall full to bursting, the wonderful smell of mulled wine and warm mince pies, with the windows steaming up as people enjoy one another’s company. These things will not be possible this year.

Yet I hope that even in what has undoubtedly been a challenging year, we will be able to appreciate a wider perspective. At Christmas we celebrate God’s desire to be

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with us. A desire so great that God took human form in a vulnerable baby and risked all that the world would then throw at him. These are some of my favourite words from the prayers used at Midnight Communion: "In this holy night heaven is come down to earth, and earth is raised to heaven." In the baby Jesus, God shows the most extraordinary connection with humanity, and invites us to recognise how that connects us with God. We are reminded that our lives belong to God, and that our calling is to be followers of that holy babe.

Whatever this year has been like for you, and however you're feeling about a very unusual Christmas, the good news is that God is with you. That God knows how you are feeling – the joy and delight; the pain and anguish. Christmas doesn't need to be saved by us because God is the one who saves – who has saved; who does save; and who will save.

When Bishop Jo was with us on the feast of Christ the King, she set our 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations in the context of the history of St Mary's. Not just the 125 year history of the present

church building, but the history of the Christian community here in Cuddington since long before that. She reminded us that our history is one of deep faith leading to boldness.

At the time the present church was built, the number of Sunday congregants was quite low – a particularly good Sunday saw 36 people receive communion. Yet the Churchwardens and PCC had a vision of a brighter future, planning for the church to be extended – which it was in 1959, meeting the needs of a growing congregation.

Both in the 125 year history of the current building, and long before, this community has faced different challenges, and that is no less the case today. Yet, as Bishop Jo so eloquently reminded us, we know in the face of our current circumstances that Christ is King. It is this vision that enables us to take each step on our own journey, because we know that the path we are to take is the one that follows in the footsteps of Jesus.

So, as we wait expectantly for Christmas this year, knowing that however it is marked, what

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matters is the knowledge of God's love for and with us, we can also take time to consider our next steps as a church community. Whatever those steps are, they must be marked out by our care and concern for those who are the

most vulnerable; the poorest; the voiceless. For it is in following Christ in this way, and seeing Christ in the faces of those around us, whoever they are, that we will find ourselves truly blessed – this Christmas and beyond.

**Theresa Ricketts**

## Church Opening Times

The church building is currently open Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 10-12, and during the week of 21<sup>st</sup> December it will be open daily from 10-4, so please come along to see the crib.

## Help Our Finances while Celebrating Our Anniversary



If you are looking for ideal Christmas gifts, we now have more of our 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary tea towels and recipe books. These are available for £7.50 each, or any three for £20. To place your order, please contact Sara on [sarablairtomlin@gmail.com](mailto:sarablairtomlin@gmail.com)

## December Services and Events

<b>Sunday 6</b>	<b>08.00</b>	<b>Holy Communion</b>
<i>Advent 2</i>	<b>09.30</b>	<b>Holy Communion</b>
	<b>11.00</b>	<b>Children's Service</b>
<b>Sunday 13</b>	<b>08.00</b>	<b>Holy Communion</b>
<i>Advent 3</i>	<b>09.30</b>	<b>Holy Communion</b>
<b>Sunday 20</b>	<b>08.00</b>	<b>Holy Communion</b>
<i>Advent 4</i>	<b>09.30</b>	<b>Holy Communion</b>
	<b>11.00</b>	<b>Children's Service</b>
	<b>18.00</b>	<b>Carol Service *</b>
<b>Thursday 24</b>	<b>23.30</b>	<b>Christmas Midnight Communion **</b>
<b>Friday 25</b>	<b>10.00</b>	<b>Christmas Family Communion **</b>
<b>Sunday 27</b>	<b>08.00</b>	<b>Holy Communion</b>
	<b>09.30</b>	<b>Holy Communion</b>

**Morning Prayer is said in church every weekday morning at 9am**

**Everyone is very welcome**

\* The Carol Service will be possible using pre-recorded music. Although a limited congregation may be present in church to hear the readings and music, current legislation precludes joining in with any carols. Members of the congregation at home on Zoom will of course be allowed to sing!

\*\* Booking is required - Contact the Vicar on 020 8337 4914

The Crib Service and the Nine Lessons and Carols - We are hoping to produce these as YouTube videos on our website or on Facebook.

Watch out for further details!

At the time of publication church services are subject to social distancing requirements and this results in a maximum of about 35 people present in church. However, all services in church will be available on Zoom also. Please contact the Vicar on 020 8337 4914 if you're planning on attending but, if you've not done so, please don't be put off from attending.