

January 2023 Edition 84

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:2)

This December has finally felt as though we are entering a post-pandemic world. I am, of course, well aware that we continue to be affected by Covid, with the rate of infection remaining quite high. Yet for the first time since 2019 we have been in a position to enjoy the annual preparations for Christmas.



I visited Linden Bridge school for their Christmas celebration because the snow made it difficult for them to get to church. Cuddington Community Primary School came to the church for both their rehearsal and their Christmas service, which was also well attended by parents. The church was full for the 2nd Cuddington

Scout Carol Service, Sunday Club put on a super nativity, and even though it clashed with the World Cup Final, the St Mary's Carol Service was well attended, and much enjoyed.

It feels as though things are returning to something approaching normal. More than that, the joy of gathering for these services and performances has somehow been enhanced by the knowledge that this is the first time we have been able to come together in this way for so many years.

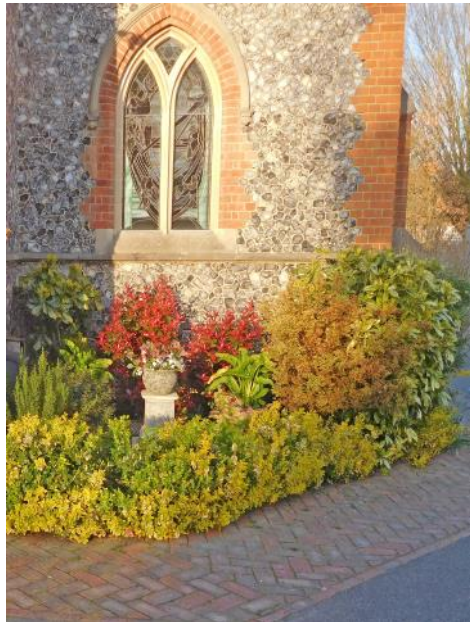
Our appreciation of something that we once took for granted is clear. While we continue to feel cautious about making any assumptions, as I write this, I am able to remain optimistic that the Crib/Christingle, Midnight Communion and Christmas morning services will go ahead as anticipated, hopefully with plenty of people able to hear the Christmas message and share in the joy of Christ's love for us.

We have become accustomed to talking about the unprecedented and I am beginning to wonder whether in fact the whole point of any time that we are living through is that it is new and in many ways without precedent. Perhaps that is something that the pandemic has shown us: the need to accept each day as it comes, for what it is and what it brings, without assuming that we can anticipate in advance what will happen.

I wonder, though, whether there are some lessons from the pandemic that we have not yet been able to learn. Things that we discovered during the pandemic that have somehow become lost in our desire to return to normality. Perhaps this Christmas and New Year season is a good time for a little reflection, and perhaps an opportunity to reset.

Can you remember some of the things that you appreciated about those days of lockdown? Each of our experiences was of course unique. Perhaps one of the challenges we have had is that while being locked down was a universal experience, each one of us felt differently about it. Our

experience will have depended on our personal circumstances at the time; our personalities – the extent to which we need and value socialising; and, of course, the impact of the virus itself on ourselves and those we love.



Nevertheless, I do remember in those sunny spring days of 2020 having some interesting conversations with people who were appreciating the change of pace; who were valuing opportunities to notice the changing seasons and the beauty of nature; who were able to spend time with family that had previously been spent commuting.

What was your own experience? What were the things that you discovered and hoped to learn from and hold on to?

And what is your experience now? In what ways has your life changed as a result of the lockdowns? Or has it returned to normal? Are you any less busy? Would you like to be?

Somehow in this country we emerged from lockdown to step right into a series of significant challenges. The political situation was volatile all over the summer months; the year has been shaped by the ongoing war in the Ukraine; we faced the end of an era with the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and the accession of King Charles; and we now face high inflation, related in particular but not exclusively to energy prices. Maybe this is the reason that the lessons of the pandemic have

somehow got lost, overtaken by more pressing concerns.

But perhaps this Christmas and New Year it's worth taking a little time to reflect. To reflect on what it is that we are most enjoying about a more "normal" Advent and Christmas season; what it is that we discovered during lockdown; and what it is that we don't want to lose sight of as we think about our hopes and aspirations for the coming year.

And as we do so, we are drawn once again into the story of a God who loves us; who knows us; who became present in the birth and earthly life of Jesus; and who longs to be alongside us in the ups and downs of our different lives. A God who longs for us to love ourselves and one another and to live in the sure and certain knowledge that we are never ever on our own.



January Services and Events

Sunday 1	08.00	Holy Communion
	09.30	Sung Communion
Monday 2	11.00	New Year Walk
Saturday 7	08.30	Men's Group Breakfast at the Hogsmill
Sunday 8	08.00	Holy Communion
	09.30	Sung Communion
	18.00	Evening Service
Sunday 15	08.00	Holy Communion
	09.30	Sung Communion and Children's Groups
Monday 16	19.30	Knit & Natter Group in the Leverton Room
Wednesday 18	20.00	PCC meeting in the Cuddington Hall
Thursday 19	14.30	Afternoon Club in the Cuddington Hall
Saturday 21	10.00	Women's Group in the Cuddington Hall
Sunday 22	08.00	Holy Communion
	09.30	Sung Communion
Sunday 29	08.00	Holy Communion
	09.30	All Age Worship

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

Everyone is very welcome

Dates for Your Diary

Saturday February 11th – Jazz Evening in the Hall

Sunday March 12th - First Home-Made Sunday of 2023

Saturday April 22nd – Music Evening in the church (we are looking for volunteers to perform)

Friday 30th June – Quiz night with fish and chips

September (date to be arranged) – Parish Barbecue

Saturday 2nd December – Christmas Fair