

*St. John the Divine,
December 2020*



*Coppull
January 2021*

Vicar: Rev Matthew Hornby 01257 791218 Pastoral Assistant Mrs. Joyce Heaton 793501
Churchwardens: Mr. Geoffrey Magrath 794176 Mrs. Susan Williams 793100

I can't predict the future!

When I wrote last month's magazine article and qualified everything "unless the government introduces further restrictions in the meantime", I did not know how prophetic I was being! Of all the things I said would happen in November, hardly anything happened the way I said it would. It's been a useful reminder to me of my own limitations.

Yesterday (20th November) I received a really encouraging email from the Diocesan Coronavirus Task Group. (Now that's a sentence I never thought I'd write!) I'd like to share with you its opening paragraphs:

"Deep within the human psyche lies the need to justify ourselves. So in the midst of lockdown, when a great deal of routine ministry is suspended, it can be tempting to generate endless activity and make countless plans. But it is Jesus who justifies us. It would be wonderful if lockdown provided us with the space to remember that we don't need to earn his approval through the depth and perceived quality of our ministry. He loves you anyway!

"Many churches are now busily making plans for Advent and Christmas. This is right and good and much to be encouraged because the nation will desperately need to hear the message of hope in the midst of the darkness of this winter. But as yet we have no clear guidance and no idea what regulations will be governing our lives in December. We don't even know if we'll be allowed out carol-singing! This means that any plans you make will be subject to cancellation or last minute amendment.

"So don't invest all your emotional energy into what you are planning or you risk crushing disappointment when things have to be changed. Focus instead on the deep truth of Christmas – that Jesus enters into the lives of those who have no capacity to justify themselves to set them free through an act of reckless grace"

Online Ministry

Whilst I cannot predict exactly what will be happening in December for Advent and Christmas, or even whether we will be able to gather in our church buildings for worship together, I am reasonably confident that we will be able to continue our online ministry! Even if we are able to have physical church services again, we will continue our **online ministry** for those who are not able meet physically for whatever reason. We will continue to livestream **Sunday services at 11.00am** on the **Coppull Church of England Facebook** page. We also have a short "morning meditation" consisting of a Bible reading, a prayer and the Lord's Prayer at 11.00am on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays on the same Facebook page. Our home group continues to meet via Zoom on Wednesdays at 8.00pm. If you would like to join, and/or would like technical assistance to do so, contact Matt.

Church Services?

If we are allowed to hold church services under the same sorts of conditions we could from July to October, then we will return to that pattern of one physical Sunday service at 9.30am, alternating between our two church buildings. If we are able to do this, our first Sunday service will be in St John's, as our last service before the second lockdown was in Coppull Parish Church.

For example, if the present lockdown ends as planned on 2nd December, and is not extended, we will meet in St John's Church on Sunday 6th December at 9.30am, then in Coppull Parish Church on Sunday 13th December at 9.30am, etc.

If we are able to hold Christmas services in church, we intend to celebrate Midnight Holy Communion in St John's Church on Christmas Eve @ 11.30 p.m. and Christmas Morning Holy Communion in Coppull Parish Church @ 10.00 a.m. This is obviously dependent on the exact restrictions in place at the time! I will try to keep people informed by email, Facebook and telephone.

Advent Windows

We hope to decorate 24 front windows for Advent! We hope that some or all of the windows may also host a charity collection box and/or a covid-secure craft. Lots of people will be putting lots of effort into Christmas decorations this year. Let's make sure the Christian message of Christmas is not drowned out.

Stone Painting

In a similar vein, I know many of you like to paint stones and/or find stones that others have painted. Could you paint a stone with a scene or motif from the Nativity, or with a suitable Bible verse, and place it somewhere around the village for others to find? People can hunt the stones during December. Then, even if we're not able to meet together for Christmas, we can gather the stones together and bring them into church as a sign that the Church has not forgotten Christmas, and Christ has not forgotten His Church. Let Matt know if you're painting a stone, and where you're placing it!

Video Carol Service

We'll hold a **Facebook Livestream carol service at 11.00am on Sunday 20th December**, so you can sing along at home. Could you do a video reading or a video carol? You could simply do a video of yourself, perhaps with the help of your family, reading from the Bible or singing a Christmas carol. But you might like to consider dressing up in Nativity costumes, or even producing an animated video if you have the technology and the ability to use it! I can then incorporate your videos into our online carol service. Contact Matt if you're interested, and we can arrange who's doing what reading and what carol.

Doorstep Carols

Premier Christian Radio are organising a doorstep carol service at 5.30pm on Sunday 20th December. This seems like a good thing to join in with. Visit their website (or listen to their radio station!) for more details. I'll try to pass on what I know.

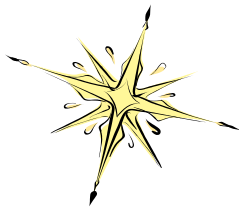
Doorstep Christingle

We will hold a doorstep Christingle at 6.00pm on Sunday 20th December. Make your own Christingle beforehand, then stand on your doorstep at 6pm, holding a lighted Christingle, and sing Silent Night! The Premier Radio carol service should be just ending, so some of us will be standing on our doorsteps anyway! We aim to distribute instructions for making your own Christingle, together with an explanation of what the orange, the sweets, the candle and the ribbon represent, to the whole village. (Please note we're aiming to do this at 6.00pm on Sunday 20th December, not on Christmas Eve as previously advertised, though if you want to do it on Christmas Eve as well...)

Let's show that the Church (that is, the people of God) is still active even though we can't make the same use of our buildings. And let's remind people, and ourselves, that Christmas is about God's love for the world in sending his Son Jesus!

Yours in Christ,

Matt

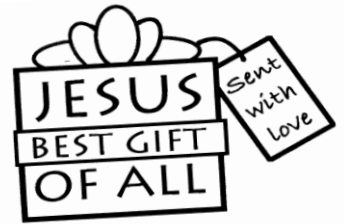


The Friends of St. John's



Martin received the latest Christmas coronavirus regulations from the diocesan office.

We may not have seen very much of each other this year but to All Friends of St. Johns May I wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.
Sue Williams



Christmas Message

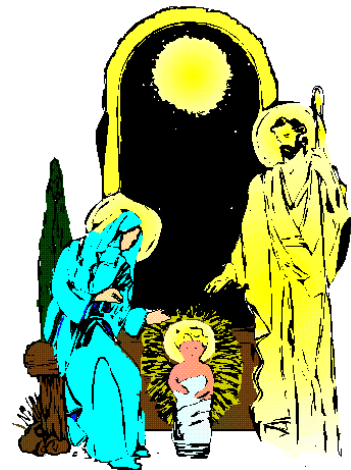
Away in a manger the baby lay,
No blankets or pillows – just some hay.
Shepherds watching their flocks by night
Angels appear midst blinding light.

Wise men travelling from afar
Following a guiding star,
Herod filled with rage within
Planning to kill this new born king.

What can this mean for us today?
Just a story some would say,
Perhaps we need to think it through,
A Saviour born – for me, for you?

Well it's that time again, another but very different year has passed, our thanks yet again go to Julia at St. John's School for doing the photocopying for us, it is appreciated Julia, along with all the little extras I've dropped in yet again this year.

Thanks also go to those who distribute the newsletter for us, you see the newsletter doesn't just appear a lot of hard work does go into it, even the unintended mistakes



SERVICES DURING DECEMBER 2020 & JANUARY 2021

These dates are assuming lockdown ends on 2nd December, if not whenever, we are allowed to return to Church the first Sunday Service will be at St. Johns @ 9.30 a.m.

Sunday 6th 9.30 a.m. Holy Communion – St Johns Church

Sunday 13th 9.30 a.m. Holy Communion – Coppull Parish Church

Sunday 20th 9.30 a.m. Holy Communion – St. Johns Church

Christmas Eve

Thursday 24th **11.30 p.m. Midnight Communion - St Johns Church**
First Communion of Christmas

Christmas Day

Friday 25th **10.00 a.m. Holy Communion – Coppull Parish Church**

Sunday 27th 9.30 a.m. Holy Communion = Coppull Parish Church

JANUARY 2021

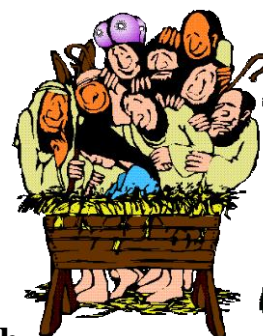
Sunday 3rd 9.30 a.m. Holy Communion – St. Johns Church

Sunday 10th 9.30 a.m. Holy Communion – Coppull Parish Church

Sunday 17th 9.30 a.m. Holy Communion – St. Johns Church

Sunday 24th 9.30 a.m. Holy Communion – Coppull Parish Church

Sunday 31st 9.30 a.m. Holy Communion – St. Johns Church



BUY A SQUARE MONTH DECEMBER FUND RAISER

St John the Divine is fundraising to support our church for much needed Funds.

We have 1000 squares available at £1 a square, or £10 for 12 squares

We have prizes which include a Tesco voucher, Christmas Hamper, Chocolate Hamper
Alcoholic bottles, Christmas cake, and many other prizes.

The Squares will be drawn after the Service on the 20th December at St Johns
Please try to support this Fundraiser. Thanking you for your continued support.

You can obtain your Squares from

Sue Williams 01257 793100

D. Appleton 01257 792456

G. Magrath 01257 794176

And at St Johns following the Services until and including Sunday the 20th December.

What's in a (Christmas) Name?

What do your family call him, that cheerful old man in a red robe and floppy hat who pops up everywhere at Christmas? Sometimes he's Father Christmas, sometimes Santa Claus, and in parts of Europe he's Saint Nicholas. That's his real name, abbreviated to 'Santa Claus' by Brits and Americans who don't like to follow the Europeans, and then turned into a more homely, cuddly kind of name for the children. Whatever he's called, his function is the same – delivering presents to children at Christmas.

The first St Nicholas was bishop of Myra, in the country we now call Turkey, in the fourth century. He was known as the friend of the poor, and especially poor or abused children. At (or just before) Christmas he went around handing out presents to them, as well as rescuing some from dreadful circumstances. The red robe our modern Santa Claus wears may be a vague representation of a bishop's garment, and the floppy hat is his mitre!

The original good bishop from 1600 years ago is remembered by the Church on 6th December, and the lucky children in Belgium and the Netherlands get their presents then.

Lazarus of Bethany – back from the tomb

Some people have near-death experiences.... Lazarus should be their patron saint. Except that he went all the way, and actually died for four days. He was quiet in his tomb and the mourners of Bethany were in full swing - before Jesus called him back to life. (See John 11.)

What happened next to Lazarus and his sisters Martha and Mary? The New Testament never tells us, but there are some clues from early church history and legends.

It seems that Lazarus became very popular with the early Christian Church because he was living evidence that Jesus could bring people back from the dead. It also seems that Lazarus was NOT popular with the local Jews, for the very same reason. They wanted to forget Jesus, and here Lazarus was still walking around, talking about resurrection...

So eventually some exasperated Jews decided to act. According to an early Eastern tradition, they placed Lazarus and his sisters into a leaky boat and set them adrift in the Mediterranean.... where the little boat carried them safely to Cyprus. Here Lazarus became bishop and lived for another 30 years.

Another, later, tradition has it that the boat had no rudder or oars, but still bore them safely to Gaul, where Lazarus founded a church and became the first bishop of Marseilles, so to speak... until he was martyred under Domitian (81-96AD).

Either way, second time round, Lazarus stayed dead. But it was thought he was still at work. By the late Middle Ages, anyone who had a vision of the afterlife knew just whom to thank for this 'postcard from heaven' – St Lazarus!

Annual Vestry & Parochial Meetings

At the Annual Vestry Meeting held last month Mrs Joyce Heaton informed the meeting that she did not wish to carry on as a Churchwarden. Mrs Heaton has been a Churchwarden from 2002 – 2007 and 2010 – 2020. Rev. Hornby thanked Joyce for all her hard work in various capacities at St. Johns over very many years. Mr. Geoffrey Magrath & Mrs Susan Williams were elected Churchwarden for 2020/21.

At the Annual Parochial Meeting which followed the Vestry Meeting the Electoral Roll was submitted, 68 names comprising the Roll. The Annual Report & Financial Statements for 2019 were submitted and approved. The Fabric Report was given by Mr. G. Magrath. The Log Book, Inventory & Terrier Log were submitted.

The P.C.C. appointed in 2019 were re-elected with the exception of Mrs Heaton & Mrs Taylor who wished to come off.

Sidespersons were appointed and Mr. P. Wood & Mrs. S. Wood were re-appointed Auditors.

The Vicar gave a report on 2019, He thanked the Churchwardens for their continuing support and expressed his Thanks to the very many people who carry out duties here at St. Johns. He was pleased with the new groups which had been formed during 2019, Invictus for young teens & the Baby & Toddler Group and the continued support of the Friends of St. Johns and the Home Group members. He was also pleased to see a steady growth in the numbers attending the various services at St Johns. All this of course was prior to Covid 19.

A discussion took place on whether any of the usual Christmas Services could take place this year but following guidance from the Diocese only the Midnight Communion Service on Christmas Eve would be held at St. Johns.

Room

(Luke 2:6,7)

There was no room for Him.

There is no room.

In a world full of
grasping, acquiring and keeping,
of rights and demanding and
self-centred living,
there is no room for Him,
the Child who is God.
The world is full.

And yet...without Him,
without Jesus,
this full world is empty.

Make room.
Invite Him in.
Make room.
Find life in all the fullness
Christmas offers –
Love and hope and joy and peace.
Emmanuel,
God with us and in us, always.

Make room!

by Daphne Kitching

Christmas Dilemma

What a dilemma for a slimmer
Eating all that Christmas fare,
Getting fatter, what's it matter?
It's only once a year.

Now the party has begun,
Crackers and cheese and party hats
Turkey with trimmings, presents with
ribbons,
Figgy pudding – do we still eat that?

Food a-plenty, plates all empty
Waistbands bursting, no room left,
Soon we'll reach for the Alka Seltzer
That's the truth, I do not jest.

Celebrations, assignations, party frocks with
lots of bling,
But the reason for the season
Is the Baby in the manger, came to earth as
a stranger
Peace on earth and joy to bring.

by Megan Carter

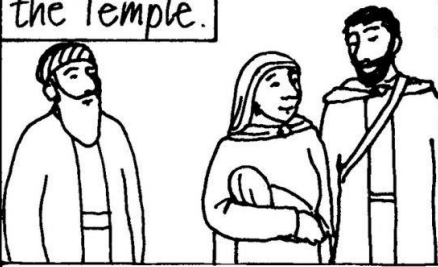
Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in
Luke 2 verses 22-38

God promised the Jews that when times were bad, He would send a leader to save them. He told Simeon it would happen in his lifetime.

God told Simeon to go to the Temple.



He saw a couple with a baby.

Mary and Joseph had come to give their offerings for their first-born, Jesus, and for child birth.



Simeon held Jesus and praised God.



I can now die in peace because You have kept Your promise.



I have seen the one You have sent to save Your people and all the world!



Mary and Joseph were amazed! Simeon blessed them, but said..



This child will show what people are really like inside and this will mean pain for you as well.



Anna the prophet was also in the Temple.



Her family was from the north of Israel and she was very old.



She spent every day praying in the Temple.

When she saw Jesus she praised God.



Anna spoke about Jesus to everyone who was waiting for God's Saviour.

The man who married Mary

The traditional Nativity scene on our Christmas cards has Mary with the Holy Babe. Around her are the shepherds and Magi. We may also see stable animals, angels and a star! While Joseph is often included, his presence seems to be of minor importance.

After all, we praise God for Jesus with our familiar Christmas carols, mentioning angels, shepherds, Wise Men and Mary but the name of Joseph is absent! Why is Joseph given a low profile? For he is a man to be remembered.

Joseph was a resident of Nazareth. He worked as a carpenter and his skills would have included making furniture, repairing buildings and crafting agricultural tools. Although Joseph had an honourable profession, he would not have been a man of great wealth.

The gospel writers Matthew and Luke give Joseph a few brief mentions. After the birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary go to the temple in Jerusalem to dedicate the Baby to God. Afterwards, they flee into Egypt to escape the wrath of Herod and much later return to Nazareth. 12 years later, Mary and Joseph go with Jesus to Jerusalem for the Passover feast. Here they lose Jesus, only to find Him in the Temple talking with religious leaders!

Apart from these verses, the New Testament is silent about the rest of Joseph's life. However, we do know that Joseph was father to other children by Mary. His four sons are named, and they had at least two daughters. (See Matthew 13:55)

And we also know that Joseph was someone who quietly and humbly took on the awesome role in caring for the early life of the Son of God. Joseph would have taught Jesus many things – not just the skills of a labourer, but the lore of the countryside which was evident in our Lord's teaching. Jesus grew up within a loving family and described God as 'Father', knowing also the good fatherly qualities of Joseph.

In the Christmas story, Joseph is placed into a situation that brought him misunderstanding and suspicion. But Joseph remained faithful in the knowledge that as long as God had spoken, the opinion of others mattered little. Before Jesus began His ministry, it is believed that Joseph died. It is likely Jesus took on many of His father's responsibilities before He left home.

In the eyes of the world, Joseph was a nobody. He was not a man of valour, fame and fortune. But he was the one who had parental responsibility for the greatest person who has ever lived!

It is sad that we often equate ordinariness with ineffectiveness. Down the ages, God has used many ordinary people to accomplish great things. God continues to use ordinary people. Like Joseph, we need to know that doing God's will is the most important thing in life. May we, this Christmas, respond to God's call to us and please Him in all that we do.

And there were shepherds

Luke's story of the birth of Jesus is brilliantly told – the angel's visit to Mary to tell her she would be mother of the long-promised Messiah, the old priest in the Temple told by another angel that his wife would have a son to be called 'John', who would prepare the people of Israel for that event, and then Mary and Joseph making the 60 mile journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, as required by the Roman census. When they got there, no room at the inn, and they settled instead for a convenient stable, where Mary gave birth to a boy child.

Suddenly, Luke changes the tone. 'And there were shepherds ...' – that's what he actually wrote, just like that. 'And there were shepherds', doing exactly what shepherds do, looking after their flocks by night. But this night was different: yet another angelic message – a call to abandon their sheep and go into Bethlehem to see the baby Messiah. They were given directions and a 'sign' to identify Him. He would be lying in a feeding trough. Well, at least they would recognise that.

And why the shepherds, in this glorious story of our salvation? Because the event needed witnesses, and the chosen witnesses would be this bunch of scruffy, smelly shepherds straight from the sheep-pen. Nothing could speak more eloquently of God's purpose than that. This was not a Saviour for the strong, rich and powerful, but for everybody. The carpenter and his wife guarded the Saviour of the world, and the very first witnesses were not kings or priests but a handful of shepherds.



"Nice idea, Amelia, but I don't think that the Angel of the Lord Zooming with the shepherds would have the same dramatic effect."



Donations of Flowers & Money given to the Flower Fund:

Loving Christmas Memories of our Dear Son Paul Rutter, always in our thoughts from Mum, Dad, Simon & Olivia

Christmas Flowers In Loving Memory of a very Dear Mum Norah Skinner from Susan & Family

*To Remember Our Loved Ones
Our Candlelit "Christmas Tree"*

In Memory of Our Loved Ones our specially made "Christmas Tree" on which we can again light a candle in remembrance of someone special to us. We require the name of the person to be remembered and also the person making the donation. The tree will be displayed in the Church Baptistry. If you wish to purchase a candle then we would like a donation please of at least £2.00 to cover costs etc., The more candles purchased the nicer the tree should look.

200 Club Winners:

August

30 S.Wilson 40 M.Riley 70 M.Howard 195 G.Pennington

September

28 J.Scott 50 G.Crow 62 E.Hatton 134 C.Fox

October

01 A.Magrath 13 Church Hall Fund 29 L.Woodfield 56 A.Wright
110 B.Moss £25.00

November

17 B Earnshaw 90 M Magrath 110 B. Moss 171 J/ Foster

December

50 G Crow 61 S Williams 71 J. Brooks 172 H. Foster
19 L. Briers £100.00

MERRY
CHRISTMAS