

REFLECTIONS

The News comes to us, and at us, from all directions, or as they say, 24/7. In fact, at times, there is too much news and so much that is repetitive. Added to that, there is, very often, a dearth of good news.

The reading from Isaiah today is all about Good News, because this is the season of GOSPEL. Even though it is good news, unfortunately, with all the pretty paper, tinsel, adverts about incredible festive meals and extravagant entertainments, the Good News story is, very often, swamped by all such festive trimmings.

It is good to take time to think of the INCREDIBLE at this time of the year and how these events we know so well would eventually change the world.

Just for a moment, think of three people - Mary, Jesus' brother James, and St Paul.

Mary, in the stable with the baby Jesus, was also there at the crucifixion and during the first Easter.

James saw his brother die and experienced the resurrection drama or in other words 'to have his own brother appear alive before him'. He then went on to lead the Church in Jerusalem as it began to grow in the aftermath of that resurrection.

Paul went from being an aggressive persecutor of Christian communities to being one convinced of the errors of his ways and a receiver of the Good News.

Looking at all the images of stables, shepherds, wise men etc at this time of the year, someone might ask you why you believe all this? In answer you could say 'look at the lives of Mary, James and Paul, to name but three, for there is some Good News that has been passed down to us!'

Let us make sure it doesn't get crowded out.

Chris Bishop

THIS WEEK'S SERVICES

SUNDAY

St Mary's Saffron Walden

10am Holy Communion President: John Sibson
in church plus Zoom/YouTube

Other services in Church

Sewards End 9.30am Holy Communion President: Chris Bishop
Little Walden 11.15am Family Service Leader: Tracey Nicholls
Hadstock 9.30am Holy Communion¹⁶⁶² President: Paula Griffiths
Ashdon 9.30am Holy Communion President: Caroline Curren
Debden 9.15am Holy Communion President: John Saxon

TUESDAY

5.00pm Evening Prayer (Zoom) Leader: Judith Hasler

WEDNESDAY

9.30am Holy Communion (Zoom) President: Caroline Curren

SUNDAY 20TH DECEMBER

St Mary's Saffron Walden

10am Holy Communion President: Andy Colebrooke
in church plus Zoom/YouTube

6.30pm **A SERVICE OF NINE LESSONS & CAROLS** YouTube only

Other services in Church

Hadstock 9.30am Holy Communion President: Paula Griffiths
Ashdon 9.30am Holy Communion President: Caroline Curren
Debden 6.30pm Carol Service Leader: John Saxon
Wimbish 3.00pm Carol Service Leader: John Saxon

See St Mary's Church, SW, website at www.stmaryssaffronwalden.org to find out more.

Please 'Like' our Facebook page so we reach more people! Click on the link on our website, or go to: www.facebook.com/saintmaryschurchsaffronwalden



The Grapevine

COVERING THE PARISHES OF SAFFRON WALDEN,
WIMBISH, DEBDEN, ASHDON AND HADSTOCK.

Welcome to our services today

Third Sunday of Advent

13th December 2020

Collect

O Lord Jesus Christ, who at your first coming sent your messenger to prepare your way before you: grant that the ministers and stewards of your mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready your way by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that at your second coming to judge the world we may be found an acceptable people in your sight; for you are alive and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

First Reading: Isaiah 61.1-4, 8-11

The servant of the Lord said: The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the LORD's favour, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those who mourn in Zion – to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, to display his glory. They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations. For I the LORD love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed. I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

Gospel: John 1.6-8, 19-28

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, 'I am not the Messiah.' And they asked him, 'What then? Are you Elijah?' He said, 'I am not.' 'Are you the prophet?' He answered, 'No.' Then they said to him, 'Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?' He said, 'I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the Lord"', as the prophet Isaiah said. Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, 'Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?' John answered them, 'I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.' This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

Post Communion

We give you thanks, O Lord, for these heavenly gifts; kindle in us the fire of your Spirit that when your Christ comes again we may shine as lights before his face; who is alive and reigns now and for ever.

PLEASE PRAY FOR:

Churches Together Prayer Cycle: In December please pray for: **New Life Church, Great Chesterford Primary School**

MINISTER'S LETTER

Dear Friends

I have to admit that, back in the 1960s, it took me a few attempts to pass my driving test! One of the challenges today is a more complicated Highway Code. Not only do you have to master the skills of driving on busier roads, but you have to have your eyes open to a multiplicity of road signs, the dos and don'ts of driving, knowledge of the roads and how to get to your destination. Of course, Sat Navs do help these days!

Can you recognise any parallels there in the illustrations I have given to the life of faith?

When you read the Bible, you read of a number of Prophets who appeared at different times and in periods of crisis, to either castigate or encourage people to get them moving in the right Godward direction.

When John the Baptist appeared, some thought he was one such person, for everything about him was prophet-like. I have always pictured him as the Lord's road mender with a metaphorical pneumatic drill preparing a new road surface for Jesus to lead people along. (v23 *'make straight the way of the Lord'*.) New things were about to happen; so much so, we are still walking along the same road, hopefully following the Highway Code given to us by our Lord.

With my prayers this Advent.
Chris Bishop

PRAYER FOR THIS WEEK

Bend our hearts to your will, O Lord, and by your Word give us life, that we may accept your kingdom like children taking bread from the hands of their father.
Amen

BIBLE READINGS FOR THIS WEEK

Mon 14th	Morning Psalm 40 & 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 Evening Psalm 26
Tue 15th	Morning Psalm 70 & 1 Thessalonians 5:12-end Evening Psalm 50 & Matthew 17:1-13
Wed 16th	Morning Psalm 75 & 2 Thessalonians ch.1 Evening Psalm 82
Thurs 17th	Morning Psalm 76 & 2 Thessalonians ch.2 Evening Psalm 44
Fri 18th	Morning Psalm 98 & 2 Thessalonians ch.3 Evening Psalm 49
Sat 19th	Morning Psalm 146 & Jude Evening Psalm 57

NEWS

SERVICES IN CHURCH Full details on the back page. Congregations will be limited due to social distancing requirements. We strongly recommend pre-booking for St Mary's SW services either on Eventbrite or by contacting the Parish Office before noon on Friday. Please wear a mask unless you are unable to do so for medical reasons.

ONLINE SERVICES are listed on the back page. Full joining details are available on the weekly email bulletin and on the website. Please email Dawn if you would like to be added to the bulletin distribution list.

LIVE WORSHIP by phone - you don't need a computer or tablet to join our services from home. If you would like to know more please contact Judith Hasler on 525041 or John Saxon on 541619.

PRIVATE PRAYER St Mary's Church, Saffron Walden, is open on Wednesdays and Sundays between 2pm and 4pm. All Saints, Ashdon, is open every day. St Botolph's, Hadstock is open on Wednesdays between 1pm and 3pm.

REVD. JEREMY TREW has been appointed Team Rector and will take up his post in early March. You can find a letter from Jeremy and some photos on our website. Please pray for him and his family as they prepare to leave their current parishes.

NELL HARDINGHAM AND FAMILY would like to thank everyone who attended Tim's funeral virtually, all those who gathered at the church, and who lined the streets of Wendens Ambo, the many teachers and students who stood outside SWCH, all to pay their final heartfelt respects to a wonderful man. She is ever grateful for all the love and support she has received since Tim's death and asks that you all keep Tim, Nell and the Hardingham family in your thoughts and prayers, particularly at this time. Rest in Peace, Tim.

AMNESTY MESSAGE OF HOPE Unfortunately this year we have been unable to write messages in church. However you can go online at <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/write-rights-2020-get-started> and download the campaign booklet. This year the only person who you can send a religious message is German Rukuki. If you cannot go on line please contact Gill Caswell. 01799 520485.

AMENDED PARISH OFFICE HOURS The Parish Administrator is available by phone or email on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays 9.30am - 12noon, but no longer on a Tuesday. The office is not currently open to personal callers.

NEW SMARTPHONE APP We now have an App that can be downloaded to your smartphone. This will mean that at a touch of a button you can access the whole website and also visit the main areas with ease. To download our App for your smartphone, click on this link www.stmaryssaffronwalden.org/hubb and then click on the green 'install the app' bar at the top and follow the instructions. Any problems then do contact me. *Martin*

All items for the **GRAPEVINE** should be sent to secretary.swrectory@ntlworld.com by 9.00am on Wednesdays.

MINISTRY TEAM

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