

Sunday 13th December
Third Sunday of Advent

Readings for 13th December

Isaiah chapter 61 verses 1-4, 8-11

1 Thessalonians chapter 5 verses 16-24

John chapter 1 verses 6-8, 19-28

Prayers:-



From Churches Together in Hitchin – Zeo Church ask that we please join in prayer with them as they plan for an open-air drive-in carol service, and that they can get both the permission that they need and that the weather will be good.

We give thanks to God for the church services that are now able to happen in **Walsworth Road Baptist Church** some Sunday afternoons. Pray for all who lead or steward at these services.

From St Mark's Prayer Cycle – today we pray for our Sacristan, readers, intercession leaders, assistants and servers. We also pray for the Westmill Community Centre and Bancroft Youth Centre.

This week we pray for the residents of Swinburne Avenue and Westmill Lane.

Prayer Requests – please send any prayer requests for the whole church to pray for to Andrew, who will then pass them on to the groups. Do contact your own group to ask for prayer too.

Daily Advent Prayer Meeting is at 6pm on Zoom every evening until 24th December, led by Gail, Hannah and Imogen Litterick. The Zoom link is [here](#)
Meeting ID: 716 2530 1855
Passcode: StMarks

ONLINE & LIVE CHURCH DIARY – links and details will be sent at 9.30am on Saturday 12th December.

Sunday 13th December – our **10am Communion service will be in church** and livestreamed on Zoom. It will also be recorded and uploaded to Youtube later in the afternoon.

Monday 14th December – **Morning prayer reading and reflection** with John on Youtube.

Wednesday 16th December – Morning Prayer will be in church at 9.15am.

Online Morning Prayer led by Tricia will be on Zoom at 9.15am.

Friday 18th December – **Morning prayer reading and reflection** with Andrew on Youtube.



Services in December

Here are our planned services for December and Christmas.

The ones highlighted in red will be in church and so will need a place booking – please contact Maggie on admin@stmarks-hitchin.org.uk

If you don't get an acknowledgement of your email after 24 hours please do double-check with Maggie – there are sometimes email glitches!

Sunday 20th December

10am Zoom All Age Nativity – join us online for our Nativity service, as told by members of the St Mark's family!

11.15am Communion in church

4pm Car Park Carols – come and join us outside the church to sing your festive favourites. Bringing mulled wine and mince pies for your household is encouraged, and a torch is advised! (You will need to find alternative parking for your car – or walk! 4 spaces will be available in the vicarage driveway for those with a particular need: contact vicar@stmarks-hitchin.org.uk).

6.30pm Carol Service in church and on Zoom - this will be a traditional service of lessons and carols.

Monday 21st December

7pm Blue Christmas in church and on Zoom – this is a quiet service, aimed at anyone finding Christmas hard this year, for any reason.

Wednesday 23rd December

1-3pm Advent Adventure – come and enjoy our (covid-secure) Advent Adventure around the grounds of St Mark's...you'll see some videos, pick up some Adventure Packs and visit our nativity scene along the way (no need to book).

Thursday 24th December

1-3pm Advent Adventure – see above for details.

4pm Advent Adventure service on Zoom – Use the Adventure Packs you picked up on the trail to make something Christmassy with us...

10pm Nearly Midnight Mass in church and on Zoom – a traditional Christmas Eve communion service (earlier because we need to clean the church afterwards!).

Christmas Day

10am All Age Communion in church and on Zoom.

Sunday 27th December

10am Communion in church and on Zoom.

See www.stmarks-hitchin.org.uk for more info on our Christmas services or you can see the Christmas Flyer [here](#).

Reminder:- Now that we're able to worship together in church again can we give a gentle reminder to please remain vigilant about keeping everyone safe. We praise God that vaccines are on the way, and we have hope that next year will be better but at the moment coronavirus is still prevalent, and we do need to be cautious about keeping our distance from each other. Please remember to wear a face covering in church, and sanitise your hands, and if you want to speak to each other please do so after the service outside on the patio area. Please observe

the one-way system unless your mobility is impaired and leave any papers and booklets in the boxes near the exits as you leave.

We seem to be so close to getting to the end of this awful time and it would be heartbreaking if any of our church members caught the virus at this stage. Please be careful!

Helping with our Advent Adventure Trail.



This year we're turning our Crib Service into an Advent Adventure Trail and a short zoom service on the 24th Dec 4pm. We will have Advent Stations around the grounds of the church and vicarage (plus a couple inside the church), for families to follow a trail, pick up pieces to a Christingle kit and hear more about the Christmas story.

Thank you to those who have already volunteered your time: we will be in touch very soon! **We still need people to help** create the stations beforehand, and to be at one of the Advent Stations on the 23rd and/or 24th for a shift. We are running the trail from 1-3 pm on the 23rd and 24th December. Help is also needed for setting up and clearing away (particularly on 24th!). I am sure it will be a fun and festive time! Can you let either one of us know if you can help? Thank you very much, Marie and Nick

Helping us keep church accessible

For the foreseeable future we'll feel it's important for us to offer 'blended' church services - some people there in person, some joining on Zoom. This is so nobody gets left out at St Marks! But so far it's been a tiny team doing every service. To continue making church accessible we would like to put together rotas of people who can commit to being part of a larger digital service team (we'd like the current tiny team to have the chance to receive ministry at church, after all!). We are open to our young people being on these rotas as well as adults and we will gladly train up anyone who is willing but daunted!



There are several jobs outlined below which cater to varying levels of confidence with zoom and tech in general...

1. Admitting people into zoom church - this is just checking who is in the waiting room, and letting people in. Checking people are muted at the appropriate times in the service.
2. Slides and spotlighting - this involves screen sharing preprepared slides, moving through the slides and spotlighting the person who is talking, reading or intercessing.
3. Being a zoom host - this is the person responsible for opening up zoom church, checking settings with key contributors to the service.
4. Providing a hotspot signal from your mobile phone - this is needed until our wifi connection is established (hopefully in January!). Just be in church and link your phone data to the laptop. A decent data package required!

5. Setting up the 'kit' in church (arriving around 40 mins before the service starts). We have to get the TV, sound system, mics, set up and linked into the laptop etc.
6. Uploading the recorded services onto our YouTube Channel - we record the majority of services now, the file then needs to transfer up to YouTube - a good wifi bandwidth is useful for this!

NB. 2,3 & 6 can all be done from home – you don't need to be in church to do them!

If you think you could give one or more of these roles a try, we would be rather ecstatic to hear from you 😊. Rotas will start in January but we urgently need some support to ensure we can zoom out the following:

Indoor Carol Service 20th 6.30pm

Blue Christmas 21st 7pm

Nearly midnight mass , 24th 10pm

Holy Communion 27th Dec

Thanks very much,
Nick and Marie

This week our friends without computers will receive a hard copy of the sermon given by Nick on Sunday 6th December.

CHURCH & COMMUNITY NEWS & UPDATES



The Hitchin Christmas Tree Festive Trail this weekend!

Friday 11th December: 4pm-10pm

Saturday 12th December & Sunday 13th December: 10am - 10pm

The annual Christmas Tree Festival can't be held in Holy Saviour Church this year, so it is moving into shop windows throughout the town centre, as the **Hitchin Christmas Tree Festive Trail**.

The response from the community has been great. Retailers and businesses have welcomed the opportunity to offer window space for an exhibitor's tree, or decorate one themselves. There will be around 60 decorated and illuminated trees and other festive displays on show all around the town!

A Trail Guide, listing the trees and mapping their locations, will be on sale (price £2) from the Town Centre Office and various retailers, and from the Festival stall in the High St on Saturday 12th December.

We really hope this will add to the town's celebration of Christmas - do come and join in and follow the trail!

St Mark's Tree will be in the window of D&J Lettings in Sun Street – thanks to Joy Bennett and Jan Spicer.



Don't forget – if you'd like to send a Christmas message to everyone at St Mark's, please let Maggie have them by Sunday 20th December either by email or drop something through her door. We're not able to do the Christmas card postbox in church this year because of the coronavirus. You may like to consider making a donation to a charity of your choice, in lieu of the cost of the cards!



Thank you everyone who kindly cut out hands for the **World Day of Prayer** tree for the town Christmas tree trail. Very colourful! Watch out for the tree which will be in Christchurch window.



The Christmas Mice continued...

Pointed faces, twitching whiskers,
Bright eyes and little noses,
On hind legs they looked about them,
At holly bright and Christmas roses.

Across the floor they scampered,
Towards the candles light,
Thankful for this warmth and shelter
From the rigours of the night.

They searched for somewhere hidden
So they could snuggle down and rest,
A hole, a crack, or cosy niche,
That would really suit them best.

Through a stained glass window
The moonlight cast a spell

The coloured shafts shone downwards
And on a tiny stable fell.

The mice all gazed in wonder
At some statue figures there,
In a straw and sawdust setting
To enter, would they dare?

Twitching noses brushed a shepherd,
But he did not move at all.
A donkey and the oxen too,
Stood so still within their stall.

A tiny lamb, curled motionless,
With a kindly man near by,
And a gentle lady with a baby,
Above, a star in a cardboard sky.

As the snow flakes tumbled down outside,
The mice cuddled down to sleep,
In that straw and sawdust stable,
On that night so cold and deep...

...to be continued



Please let us know what you would like to see in the notices, and send in any ideas, messages, photographs, poems or prayers (not too long please!)

*If you would like to have a notice included please email
notices@stmarks-hitchin.org.uk*

Please send notices by 7pm on the preceding Wednesday.