

Sunday 20th December
Fourth Sunday of Advent

NB: There won't be any notice-sheet on Sunday 27th December, but the links for the service and coffee will be sent out to you sometime on Boxing Day.

Readings for 20th December

2 Samuel chapter 7 verses 1-11, 16
Romans chapter 16 verses 25-27
Luke chapter 1 verses 26-38

Readings for 27th December

Isaiah chapter 61 v 10 - chapter 62 v 3
Galatians chapter 4 verses 4-7
Luke chapter 2 verses 22-40



Prayers:- From Churches Together in Hitchin – Wymondley Baptist Church ask for our prayers in support of their Christmas Carol Service taking place today whatever form it has to take within Government guidelines. We continue in prayer for ongoing financial provision for **PHASE** as their income from individual fundraising events is reduced. **Our Lady's Roman Catholic Church**

ask that we join them in praying that those in care homes may continue to be kept safe from Covid-19.

From St Mark's Prayer Cycle – we pray for Churches Together in Hitchin. We also pray for all people living with mental health issues, for the lonely, bereaved and isolated, and all those who struggle with this time of year.

This week we pray for the residents of Old Hale Way, Brampton Park Road, Balmoral Road. Next week we pray for the residents of Ickleford Road, Dukes Lane, Bunyan Road.

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. The Zoom link is [here](#)
Meeting ID: 716 2530 1855
Passcode: StMarks

ONLINE & LIVE CHURCH DIARY – links and details for all the Christmas services will be sent at 9.30am on Saturday 19th December.

There are still spaces at most of the services, so if you'd like to come to a service in church please email Maggie asap on admin@stmarks-hitchin.org.uk
The services in **red** are the ones where places need booking please.

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

7.00pm 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

9.15am – Morning Prayer in church and online.

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 – Christmas Eve

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!).



Friday 25th December - Christmas Day

10am All Age Communion in church and on Zoom.

Sunday 27th December

10am Communion in church and on Zoom.

Wednesday 30th December

9.15am Morning Prayer in church and online.

John and Andrew are taking a well-earned rest so there won't be any Morning Reading and Reflections w/c 21st December or 28th December.

This week our friends without computers will receive a hard copy of the sermon given by Andrew on Sunday 13th December.

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 (contact details below)

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.1, 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,

Marie & Nick. Contact admin@stmarks-hitchin.org.uk

CHURCH & COMMUNITY NEWS & UPDATES



Christmas Messages – this Sunday is the last day to send a Christmas message (instead of cards) to everyone at St Mark's. Please send your message to Maggie either by email or drop something through her door.

They will be sent round by email next week and hard copies will be delivered to those members without computers.



Thank you – Shirley would like to thank everyone who has been helping her with shopping, and looking after her in recent weeks while her shoulder has been bad.

Churches Together Screen in the Square

Watch out for the large Churches Together screen among the stalls in Market Place on Saturday 19th and Sunday 20th December.

About 30 minutes of Christmas music by school children and church choirs and messages from local church leaders will be played in a loop from 10.00 am to 5.00 pm each day. We hope that this will bring the real Christmas message of joy, hope, love and peace to the town in this holy season.



Travelling crib reminder – please could those giving Mary and Joseph a bed for the night remember to take a photo of them and send to Rachel by Whatsapp or email, to be combined into a montage.

Food for North Herts Sanctuary

Each Christmas we collect food for the homeless shelter in Grove Road and this year it will also be for one in Baldock. A polite request for NO baked beans, tinned soup or pasta!! Please donate anything else and even some Christmassy things like biscuits, chocolates, soft drinks etc. No alcohol thank you.

Bring your goods to the boot of my car on 11 am this Sunday or Christmas day after the service till 12 noon. If you'd like me to collect from your home do contact me. Thank you.

Helen helenwrigh@btinternet.com



Christmas Messy Church Packs – these were sent out to you all earlier this week and have also been shared with a number of schools, nurseries and the other churches in Hitchin. They have also been sent out further afield – Helen Richardson had this lovely photo sent to her from the school her grandson, Max, attends in Australia. The teacher said that the children loved the packs and making the items. Has anyone sent them further than Australia??

Safeguarding

C2Leadership (Deanery) Safeguarding Training:- Just to confirm that there are new dates on the Diocese Website for the above training for January/February 2021. The dates get booked up fairly quickly. There will be more dates added so if there is not a time that looks suitable, then please check again later.

This is online through Zoom and will last two hours.

To access this course and book

<https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/diocese/deanerysafeguarding/>

If you have any queries or problems accessing the course then please do not hesitate to contact Pauline

Christmas Bags – a local lady and friend of St Mark's has been making some lovely cotton bags – ideal for a Santa sack or carrying presents. They are all lined, approximately 50x50cm, lots of different designs. They are £5 each, £4 to the Lister Hospital and £1 to St Mark's. Contact Cynthia via admin@stmarks-hitchin.org.uk



Congratulations to Nick on becoming voluntary Chaplain to Hitchin Town



Football Club. I'm delighted at the appointment - it may not guarantee wins every week and he will get some jokey comments, but experience in other clubs up and down the country is that having a chaplain is much appreciated by players and fans and it's a great

contribution from St Mark's to the witness of Hitchin churches in our wonderful community. Just a quiet bit of advice to Nick. St Mark's congregation includes supporters of a variety of clubs, including Fulham, Spurs, West Brom, Sheffield Wednesday, Ipswich and of course Wigan Athletic. We all go through tough times (I don't need anyone to remind me that mighty Wigan are bottom of League One....) and will need your sensitive ministry to see us through. Tough job being a chaplain to all of us, but I'm sure you are up to it!

John Richardson.

The Christmas Mice continued...

So soundly did the family sleep,
That they missed the sunlight's glow
Of dawn, in pink hue rising
Sending shimmers across the snow.

A sudden noise then woke them,
Wiping whiskers, blinking eyes,
It was the sound of footsteps,
The mice huddled in surprise.

The noise came nearer, closer still,
Children's feet on stony floor,
Tiny faces, all push forward
Looking through the blades of straw.

A peal of bells rang sweetly
With carols sweet and low
The joy of Christmas morning,
Ringing out across the snow.

Unseen, the mice watched quietly,
In wonder, keeping very still.
Listening to that lovely story,
That the whole world seemed to fill.

The mice stayed there all Christmas,
In their stable warm and bare,
Until the snow had gone away,
They were safe without a care.

Next time you see a Christmas Crib,
A surprise may be in store,
Amongst the figures round the manger,
In the sawdust and the straw.

J.M Bennett.

*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.*