

Thursday 17 December 2020

Dear Friends,

We are all in need of hope. The news has been a little depressing this last week: transferring to stricter Tier 3 restrictions on Wednesday; a new strain of the virus identified with worrying rises in infection among young people; the unsettling possibility that the government may want to reduce the numbers in our longed-for Christmas bubbles; all this and more has left us feeling a little flat and despondent. We fear for the survival of so much of the hospitality industry, for the restaurants, pubs and cafes which once again have to close their doors, but which have been our much-loved happy places, providers of joy and celebration. We can feel overwhelmed by negativity and it's understandable that at times like this we feel low and our mood suffers. We will hear a great deal from the Prophet Isaiah over the coming final week of Advent, and it's to Isaiah I turn when I want to be reassured that better days will come, that the wilderness experience of this last year will not last forever. In one of my favourite Advent passages Isaiah writes: *"The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom;It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy singing (Isaiah 35:1-2a).* Well, we may not feel able to 'rejoice with joy singing' at this moment in time, but as one of my recently received Christmas cards reminds me 'Jesus is the reason for the season' - our means of celebrating may have to change this year, but the reason for the celebration remains unchanged. I'd like to share a poem with you, a gift of hope-filled encouragement as we move deeper in to Advent, and nearer to the God who bathes us in the eternal light of his love at the end of this year's long, dark, challenging tunnel.

The Way

Lesley Steel 1995 (from Seasons with the Spirit, Churches Tog in Britain and Ireland)

I am The Way
The only Way.
In winter or summer, in peace or war
In all creation
Come, follow me

I am The Way
The Way of Truth,
For heavy laden or light of heart
In all human feelings
Come, follow me

I am The Way
The way of life.
Through sorrow and joy, rough and smooth
In all of life
Come, follow me

I am The Way
The Way to God.
From childhood to adult, from birth to death
In all of your being
Come, follow me.

We continue our prayers for all of you.

Anne, Neil and Wilma

This week the letter has been written by Revd Anne Crawford

Please pray for:

...**Fr. Jamil Khadir and the Anglican congregations in Nablus** in the West Bank and the Anglican Church in Beirut

...**Christ's School**, for staff and students

...**Glass Door Staff**, and for volunteers cooking and baking for those who have otherwise no hot food

...**the sick and those in need** – Hermione Lockyer, Ron Bond, Madge Thorns, Valerie Llewellyn, Bob Smith, Molly Lambert, Sarah Swanson, Joy Clarke, Chris O'Toole, Patricia Doling, Dolly May, Harold Gill, Roz Hogan, Alan Sykes, Kate Muammer

...**the departed, may they rest in peace** – Jacqueline Mills, Nick Carpenter

Church, Community and other news:

Sunday Services

Sunday services for this week (20 December) are: 11.00am at St John the Divine, 9.30am at St Matthias (and Nine Lessons & Carols by Zoom at 5.00pm – [contact Revd Anne](#) for log-in details) and 8.00am, 9.30am, 11.30am and 6.30pm (ticketed Carol Service - sold out!) at St Mary Magdalene.

As before we will be asking members of our congregations to maintain social distance when they come to church, or to remain in their social bubble, and not to embrace or shake hands during the Peace – a friendly wave and a smile will be the greeting – and remember to wear a face covering in church, unless you are exempt from doing so. Although there will be paper copies of the order of service available for those who would like one (these paper copies will 'belong' to you alone – please take it home with you), you will now be able to download a copy of the order of service and readings on to your phone or tablet before coming to church – please go to <https://www.richmondteamministry.org/orders-of-service-readings> and download it - don't forget to bring your device with you. Instead of the Offertory after the Peace, there will be a retiring collection and also the opportunity to give electronically.

As before, we are unable to offer a crèche area or Junior Church for our young people, though please note that St John's is holding Zoom Junior Church sessions during Advent at 10.00am on Sundays – [contact Neil for more information](#). We would encourage parents to bring a book or soft toy for their own child, if that is helpful. There are more subtle changes, but you will notice those when you are in church. The changes we have made are there for your safety and wellbeing. Services will still be live-streamed from St John the Divine (at 11.00am) and St Mary Magdalene (at 9.30am) on their Facebook pages (please see the bottom of this page for links to our Facebook pages) and they can be watched live if you have a Facebook account. If you don't have access to Facebook, you will be able to view the services from our website once the links have been uploaded, usually on Monday morning: <https://www.richmondteamministry.org/messages> The Sunday service at St Matthias (at 9.30am) can be viewed via Zoom – [please contact Anne](#) for log-in details.

Of course there is also a service of Eucharist on **Wednesdays at 10.00am** at St Mary Magdalene on 23 December and 30 December.

'Doing Advent Differently'

It is also good to have time to reflect together on Advent, so we are offering you 4 **Advent Meditations**, via Zoom, the last one will be on 23 December, 7.30pm till 8pm. There will be a short reflection on the theme of Advent, followed by saying Compline together. The order of service for Compline is now on the website for you to download: <https://www.richmondteamministry.org/orders-of-service-readings>

The log in details for the Advent Meditations are as follows:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84068536220?pwd=QIV6UTJDeGxKZkw2b3VIRTFYQWlIdz09>

Meeting ID: 840 6853 6220

Passcode: 471976

Virtual Posada – Advent 2020

St John the Divine would like to invite you to take part in our Virtual Posada during Advent 2020. Each day Mary and Joseph (and their donkey) will take a step on their journey towards Christmas. Many of us have

participated in the Posada over the last few years, in which the (knitted) Holy Family travel around from house to house during the lead-up to Christmas, symbolising the journey to Bethlehem. Sadly, it hasn't been able to happen in the usual way this year, so we have devised a virtual Posada instead! We are posting pictures with Mary, Joseph and the donkey travelling around familiar local scenes, which will culminate in their arrival at St John's on Christmas Eve. You can follow the Posada at:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/980722069118669> or <https://twitter.com/StJtheDRichmond?s=20>

If you would like to get more involved in the Virtual Posada why not print out a picture from our Virtual Posada or use your own nativity figures. Take them with you when you go to work, or school, or out for a walk, and then photograph yourself holding the (picture of the) Posada at a place of your choosing - maybe the place in the photograph, if you can. You could then share this on social media (remember to tag St John's and Richmond Team Ministry) or send it to [Fr Neil](#) or the [Parish Office](#) for inclusion in the next congregational news email.

Church in the week after Christmas:

On Sunday 27 December, services will be as follows:

St Matthias, 9.30am

St John the Divine, 11.00am

St Mary Magdalene, 8.00am and 9.30am (please note there will be no evening service that day).

On Wednesday 30 December, there will be the usual 10am service at St Mary Magdalene.

You are welcome to come to **Morning Prayer via Zoom** on Mondays to Thursdays, 8.30am. Do make sure you are signed in just before 8.30am as we start on time. If you have access to Daily Prayer, that helps, but even without a book or the app you can still join in prayer!

Zoom details for December:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87365460639?pwd=d3JEaFdmY2JlEjE0dWlZZHRXTnNQOT09>

Meeting ID: 873 6546 0639

Passcode: RTMDec

Morning Prayer continues until 24 December, then there will be a short break until the beginning of January.

Christmas in the Richmond Team: Comfort and Joy

As people keep saying: Christmas will be different this year. Some things which we love and value, like singing carols, will not be possible. Getting together with friends and family to celebrate will be limited. However, there are things about Christmas which stay the same, for there is nothing that changes the heart of the message of peace and goodwill brought by the Birth of Christ. Within the current restrictions, we have tried to keep most things as familiar as possible in our services over Christmas, but inevitably, there will be differences. Perhaps the most obvious change is that you will need to reserve a place at some of the services. We are very sorry about that, because worship is something to which everyone is welcome as a sign of the love of God. But we need to ask you to do so because we do not want to see anyone turned away from our churches and to ensure that as many as possible can celebrate Christmas in the Richmond Team.

All our Christmas Services are now listed on our website – **you will need to book for some of them and some are now fully booked!** Please go to our website, click on the service you'd like to attend and the text will tell you if you need to book and give you a link to Eventbrite to reserve ticket/s if necessary - the links are also available in the table below. Please don't book more tickets than you need because that will stop others attending – we need to restrict numbers to allow everyone to be socially distanced in our churches. **Don't forget to bring your ticket when you come to one of the ticketed services!**

This has been a tough year for all of us on so many levels. And we are well aware that a number of our parishioners have had to face up to personal challenges, too. This year's Team **Blue Christmas** service will be held at St John the Divine on **Monday 21 December at 7.00pm**. It won't be 'blue' in the sense of being downbeat or miserable, but if you find Christmas a bit of a challenge, and would value a smaller, quieter and more reflective service this year, you are very welcome to come. No booking required! For obvious reasons, it won't be quite the same as normal, because we can't yet sing congregational carols together, but there will be still be some music, together with Bible readings, symbols, poems and prayers, and also some short times of silence.

St John the Divine:			
21 December	7.00pm	Blue Christmas	
23 December	4.00pm	Christingle on Zoom	Contact Fr Neil for details
24 December	2.00-5.00pm	Visit the Crib and Collect a Christingle <i>donations for the Children's Society</i>	
24 December	11.00pm	Midnight Mass	booking via Eventbrite
25 December	10.30am	Christmas Day	booking via Eventbrite
St Matthias:			
20 December	5.00pm	Nine Lessons & Carols via Zoom	Contact Revd Anne for details
24 December	12.00-4.00pm	Visit the Crib and Collect a Christingle <i>donations for the Children's Society</i>	
24 December	8.00pm	First Eucharist of Christmas	booking via Eventbrite
25 December	9.30am	Christmas Day	booking via Eventbrite
St Mary Magdalene:			
19 December	3.00pm	Carol Singing in the Churchyard <i>donations for the Children's Society</i>	
20 December	4.00pm	The Nativity – for youngsters, via Zoom	Contact Mtr Wilma for details
20 December	6.30pm	Carol Service	FULLY BOOKED
21, 22, 23 & 24 December	11.00am-3.00pm	Visit the Crib and Collect a Christingle <i>donations for the Children's Society</i>	
24 December	3.00pm	Carol Singing in the Churchyard	
24 December	11.30pm	Midnight Mass	FULLY BOOKED
25 December	8.00am	Christmas Day Communion (BCP)	
25 December	10.00am	Christmas Day All Age Eucharist	FULLY BOOKED

Please note that the **Parish Office will be closed** from 12.00noon on Tuesday 22 December until 9.00am on Monday 4 January 2021.

Update on the Parish Rooms on Church Walk

It all looks rather empty at the moment, the space we call the Parish Rooms. Since the restaurant 'La Buvette' departed, you may have been wondering what is going on. One of the users of the upstairs room has been coming in, while adhering to Government guidance. It is a local person who sees individual clients. The downstairs space, where the restaurant was, has been used for a while by the flower arrangers from St Mary Magdalene and by Mary's Little Lambs whilst works continued in the church and is at the moment being used as a temporary office by the parish architect. Obviously, due to lockdowns and restrictions, not as much progress on future plans has been made as we would have liked. However, as agreed by the PCC, plans are being drawn up, structural investigations are being done and conversations with Richmond Council are taking place about what might be possible in this lovely location.

The Parish Rooms are a wonderful resource to the Richmond Team and we want to make sure that whatever happens to the building will be sympathetic and useful for the churches and the local community. We hope to be able to share more news with you at the beginning of 2021.

from the Working Group, consisting of representatives from all three churches

Glass Door Update: As you will be aware our night shelter contribution has had to change significantly this year due to the pandemic and the need to keep vulnerable people safe. This winter Glass Door is able to provide homeless people with access to safe accommodation in other parts of the capital, but we are continuing to play our part locally by providing a dinner service where homeless people can receive a hot meal in the evenings plus access to case workers and any practical help they may need. Glass Door's current night shelter provision provides each guest with access to:

- individual rooms located in one of two hostel sites in London with a total of 88 beds. Our Paddington hostel opened on 16 November and our Victoria hotel on 23 November. Hostel guests will have their own room and can stay 24/7. Caseworkers will be on site 5 days a week.
- a dinner service will be open seven nights a week in the four boroughs where we normally operate: Kensington and Chelsea, Hammersmith and Fulham, Wandsworth and Richmond.

Guests are referred to the hostels by case workers or Glass Door partners. For more information about how this is done and to access help for someone you may be concerned about please visit Glass Door's website www.glassdoor.org.uk or call the hotline on 020 8016 6838 from 9.00am to 1.00pm. If you'd like to offer cooking support for the dinner service in Richmond at any point between now and April please let [Fr Neil](#) or [Rev'd Anne](#) know so that your contact details can be passed on to one of our coordinators. Donations of warm socks, gloves, hygiene products, tea, coffee, hot chocolate and sugar are also very welcome. If you missed the recent Zoom meeting with Lucy Abraham from Glass Door, you may like to know you can listen to the meeting at richmondandbarnesdeanery.org.uk/1492-open-meeting-with-lucy-abraham-from-glass-door/. Also, please visit www.glassdoor.org.uk/top-ten-ways-to-make-a-difference-this-christmas to find out how you can help the work of Glass Door this winter.

Give A Little

We are hugely grateful to so many who continue to make their weekly or monthly contribution to the finances of the Team, by standing order or direct debit. Contributions can also be made electronically in church and there will also be a plate for cash collections at the back of each church. However if anyone would like to make an additional donation to the work of our churches this can be done at <https://givealittle.co/campaigns/5260a080-4ee0-49b6-a1c3-d552ef9a0700> Whilst this is a challenging time for many, financially as well as emotionally, I hope we can continue to count on your support for the work of our 3 churches.

Children and Youth activities:

Like so many things at the moment, all our activities for young people are currently on hold. But our young people are not forgotten. We daily pray for families, for those who normally attend our various groups.

For something fun to do with the young ones in your life (or even just on your own!) you can watch how to make 'stained glass gingerbread baubles' here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/our-faith/faith-action/living-out-our-faith/advent-and-christmas/followthestar-baking>

Where to watch church services or access resources:

You can sign up for weekly Advent and Christmas reflections from the Church of England here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/our-faith/faith-action/living-out-our-faith/advent-and-christmas/comfort-and-joy-our-advent-and>

You can also access more online services produced by the Church of England here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/church-online> or join in with the call to pray for the nation during the month of November: <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/call-prayer-nation>

The Church of England have a special page for you to light a virtual candle and make time to pray for yourself or for others which you can view here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/our-faith/light-candle>

With best wishes,
Tina

Tina Roberts
Parish Administrator

Working remotely on Mondays and Tuesdays, 9.00am – 5.00pm
Mobile: 07521 299109
Working in the Office on Wednesdays and Thursdays, 9.00am – 5.00pm
Richmond Team Ministry
St Mary Magdalene • St Matthias • St John the Divine

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