

Tuesday 22 December 2020

Dear Friends,

Each year, and this year is no different, I'm surprised that despite receiving many Christmas cards, there are very few doubles. There is a huge variety of Christmas card images, from very funny to serious, from political to cheeky. And then there are the beautiful nativity scene cards, often based on well-known paintings. How many nativity scene paintings from the National Gallery haven't been turned into cards that are a joy to receive? Most of those will show us a stable or cave, with an angelic looking baby, a beautiful virgin Mary, a..... Joseph and some animals. A scene of peace and tranquillity. Yet you and I know that that can't have been the reality of that first Christmas. A young girl giving birth in a cave in Bethlehem, after having to travel so far from home? A new-born in a feeding trough? Seldom do we see nativity paintings that portray the difficulty of that first Christmas, the hardship, the mess.

This year, our Christmas will be anything but sweetness and light. It will be different, challenging maybe, quieter. Our Christmas will be filled with worry about loved ones whom we can't see. Christmas will not be like the Victorian images for large gatherings round the dinner table, with huge turkeys or geese. How can we then relate to the Christmas images we receive on our Christmas cards, or in well-known nativity paintings, or through carols in which all is well?

My travelling companion through Advent this year has been the poetry of R.S. Thomas. In one of his poems he describes a different kind of Nativity scene. Yes, there is still the manger, but around the edges, from the bottom corners there is darkness looking in on the centre of the scene.

Top left an angel

R.S. Thomas

Top left an angel
hovering. Top right the attendance
of a star. From both
bottom corners devils
look up, relishing
in prospect a divine
meal. How old at the centre
the child's face gazing
into love's too human
face, like one prepared
for it to have its way
and continue smiling?

Thomas reminds us that Christmas is not about the absence of evil, but about good conquering evil. He dares to name that which is dark, menacing even. Did he write this for our time? I found it immensely helpful to be allowed to acknowledge that in our celebrations this year, we experience those devils looking up, messing up the serene centre image. The pandemic, the absence of loved ones, the isolation, all these are like devils trying to disturb us. Yet we are drawn to the smile of the One who came to be human among us, to dwell with us. There is our hope for Christmas, a hope in God among us, Emmanuel.

Despite everything, we may dare to pray:

God of comfort and joy,
may we know your presence with us this Christmas.
Amen.

Some good news.....

Downing Street has announced that the Right Reverend Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani, (former parishioner of Richmond and wife of Lee, who was Team Vicar at St Matthias) will be the next Bishop of Chelmsford,

succeeding the Most Reverend Stephen Cottrell, who became Archbishop of York earlier this year. Guli is currently Bishop of Loughborough in the Diocese of Leicester. We pray for her and the family as they prepare for the move to Chelmsford.

As you remember the birth of Christ in a few days' time, wherever you may find yourself, know that you are loved and that you will be held in prayer by your clergy.

With every blessing this Christmas for you and those whom you love,

Anne, Neil and Wilma

This week the letter has been written by Wilma

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:

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!**

St John the Divine:			
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:			
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	FULLY BOOKED
25 December	9.30am	Christmas Day	booking via Eventbrite
St Mary Magdalene:			
23 & 24 December	11.00am-3.00pm	Visit the Crib and Collect a Christingle <i>donations for the Children's Society</i>	
24 December		Carol Singing	CANCELLED!
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

As usual 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. 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. 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 Wednesday 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/StJohntheDRichmond?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).

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

Morning Prayer will be on a short break until the beginning of January.

Glass Door

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. 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.

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>

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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Registered Charity No 1130018

Our Privacy Notice can be viewed at: <https://www.richmondteamministry.org/wp-content/uploads/Privacy-Notice.pdf>



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[Click here for St Mary Magdalene's Facebook page](#)



[Click here for St Matthias's Facebook page](#)



[Click here for the Team Rector's Twitter feed](#)