

Thursday 16 December 2021

Dear Friends,

One of the joys of life as a Vicar at this time of year is being invited to school carol services and Christmas concerts. This last week I've watched some wonderful productions, and despite the difficulties teaching staff are experiencing through the pandemic, time is still being given to enable children to play their part in the nativity story, taking on the roles of the key characters with as much energy and imagination as ever before. The great Christmas Nativity tradition is, I'm pleased to say, alive and well in Richmond.

Sometimes clergy are also asked to offer a few thoughts on the season, and it can be quite challenging each year to find something fresh and relevant to say which speaks to very young children as well as their parents. This year I decided to take along a new addition to the Crawford family's Christmas decorations: an ornamental fanfare trumpet, the sort of instrument Heralds might play to announce the arrival of an important guest at a royal occasion. I'm not sure that my little trumpet is capable of making any noise at all, it's purely for decoration, but it's proving to be a good talking point with the children and it's brought a little freshness to my own nativity thinking.

Historically heralds have been messengers. On ancient battlefields they would travel between warrior kings and queens, passing on important messages and preceding grand announcements of victory with a flourishing fanfare. In the Christmas story the heralds are angels, bearers of good news, their dazzling appearance a fanfare in itself of God's impending arrival. School children know well the story of the herald angel appearing to Mary to tell her that God had chosen her to be the mother of his beloved Son, but they are less familiar with the herald angel appearing to Joseph, reassuring him in a dream that it would be alright to take Mary as his wife, that it is in fact God's intention for Joseph to play a vital part in the incarnation. And it was herald angels who appeared in a shining throng to the shepherds who were taking care of the sheep on the hillside above Bethlehem on a cold winter's night. Those heralds of good news made so much noise that they frightened the shepherds half to death, but the announcement they had to make deserved to be heard to the ends of the earth. The herald angels, like master trumpeters, were required to make a big noise, the greatest fanfare the world has ever heard.

We don't think of little children being like herald angels, but the more I've watched their enthusiastic and joyously noisy presentations of the Nativity story this year, the more I appreciate the role school children are playing in keeping the rumour of God alive. We can moan about the real meaning of Christmas being overshadowed by tinsel and greed, but school nativity plays have the ability to keep it real and, more importantly, take the story to parents who quite often these days are in the dark. Children, with their ability to sit with mystery and be awed by it are, in the face of an increasing clamour to take Christ out of Christmas, shouting about the birth of Jesus from the rooftops and doing exactly what the Church is called to do: to make a glorious, noisy, joyful song and dance for God, a fanfare of royal proportions to announce the biggest and best news ever. In the words of that famous carol: 'Hark the Herald angels sing, Glory to the new born King!'



With our prayers and joyful Advent blessings,

Anne, Charlie, 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; also for the peace of Jerusalem

...**Christ's School**, and for all schools in the Team

...**Glass Door staff** and for all volunteers, especially those who are working to provide hot soup and sandwiches

...**the sick and those in need** – Hermione Lockyer, Ron Bond, Madge Thorns, Joy Clarke, Pat Mygind, Veronica Huci, Penny and Michael Carleton-Smith, Megan Vaughan-Jones, Claire and Peter Day, Charles Stiller, Keith Hogan, Suzie and Mark Cox, Margaret Myatt, Fiona Bartlett

...**the departed, may they rest in peace** – and for those who mourn and miss loved ones

Church Services:

The government has announced that, from Friday 10 December, **masks should be worn in places of worship**. We continue to be careful and look after each other, as is our Christian duty.

At St John the Divine this Sunday, the 11.00am service will be both in-person and live-streamed via their [Facebook page](#).

St John's midweek service takes place on Tuesday evenings with a half an hour of silent contemplation at 6.30pm, followed by the Said Eucharist at 7.00pm.

St Mary Magdalene will be holding in-person Sunday services at 8.00am, 9.30am, 11.30am (third Sunday only) and 6.30pm. The 9.30am service will also be live-streamed via their [Facebook page](#). During the week St Mary Magdalene will be holding an in-person service at 10.00am on Wednesdays.

St Matthias' 9.30am Sunday service will be both in-person and online via Zoom (please [contact Revd Anne Crawford](#) for log-in details). There will be no midweek Eucharist at St Matthias on Thursday 23rd December.

Orders of service and readings can be found here <https://www.richmondteamministry.org/orders-of-service-readings>

Blue Christmas

St John the Divine will be holding their 'Blue' Christmas service on Monday 20 December at 7.00pm which is a small, quiet, reflective service for anyone who, for whatever reason, finds Christmas a difficult prospect. All are welcome.

Private Prayer:

St Mary Magdalene will be open for private prayer on Saturdays between 10.00am and 12.00noon when you will be able to light a candle, and reflect or meditate. The church is also open Monday – Friday, from 8.00am till lunchtime.

St John the Divine is normally open on Tuesdays between 9.30am and 12.30pm, Saturday mornings between 10.00am-12.00noon, and at various other times when Fr Neil is working in the office.

Morning Prayer, Monday – Fridays, at 8.30am:

Morning Prayer is now taking place in church and via Zoom. We will meet at St Mary Magdalene on Mondays, on Tuesdays we will be at St John the Divine, Wednesdays and Thursdays are at St Mary Magdalene and Fridays at St Matthias.

During December, Monday - Thursday:

Join Zoom meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86999464069?pwd=QkFpVDBSZIN3ck5MSTIxR0FkSIQzZz09>

Meeting ID: 869 9946 4069

Passcode: RTMPrayer

And on Fridays:

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81983343470?pwd=ejVpVnB4d3VGdkFtWjl2c2tTOC9XUT09>

Meeting ID: 819 8334 3470

Passcode: FriPrayer

There will be no Morning Prayer on 27 and 28 December.

Evening Prayer, in person, takes place in St John's on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at 4.30pm. All welcome.

Advent course 'The Family of Jesus'

There will be a team Advent Course this year, on Zoom, just as we did last year. There will be four sessions, each with a reflection and followed by Compline. Here are the dates and the log in details:

Dec 1, 2021 07:30 PM on Jesus' uncle, Zechariah

Dec 8, 2021 07:30 PM on Jesus' aunt, Elizabeth

Dec 15, 2021 07:30 PM on Jesus' earthly father, Joseph

Dec 22, 2021 07:30 PM on Jesus' mother, Mary

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86913030418?pwd=aWlYK3NpOTFRQWJPOlgbz3T09NQT09>

Meeting ID: 869 1303 0418

Passcode: RTMAdvent

All our **Christmas Services** are now listed on our website – **you will need to book for some of them**. 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 (if there's no text then you don't need to book for that service). **Please do not book more tickets than you need** because that will stop others attending (please send me an email if you've accidentally booked for the wrong service / church and I'll cancel your booking).

Children's Services at St Mary Magdalene

The next Children's Service will be on Saturday 8 January 2022 at 4.00pm. All are very welcome to a celebration with some very special gifts.

After January, the children's services will be on the first Saturday of the month again.

Please note that the Parish Office will be closed from 4.00pm next Wednesday, 22 December to 9.00am on Tuesday 4 January 2022.

Church, Community and other news:

UPDATE: From Parish Rooms to RTM Centre

The event planned for today, in the Parish Rooms, **has been postponed to Sunday 23 January**. More information will follow soon, including a leaflet with an update on the work the Working Group has done.

Glass Door

It is with a heavy heart that Glass Door has taken the decision **not to open communal night shelters this winter**. Unfortunately, despite all their best efforts over many months to provide a COVID-safe environment, staff and trustees felt the risks are too great. The transmissibility of the new Omicron variant and the related changes to self-isolation rules were important factors in their decision.

However our local team in Richmond is offering take-away soup and sandwiches two days a week. It's not a warm place to sleep, but it is warm food and human connection. The service runs from St John the Divine Church in Richmond and takes place on Wednesdays and Thursdays from 5-6pm. If you are interested in being part of our baking and soup rota please contact Sarah Percival: sarahpercival52@gmail.com and for volunteering and donations please contact Isabelle Swann: swannisabelle@hotmail.co.uk Many thanks.

A requiem for Angela Carpenter and the burial of her ashes will take place on Saturday 18 December at 11.00am at St Mary's, Fratton followed by light refreshments. All are very welcome.

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.

With best wishes,
Tina

Tina Roberts
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Richmond Team Ministry
St Mary Magdalene • St Matthias • St John the Divine
www.richmondteamministry.org

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