

Sunday 1st Dec Advent Sunday

What a welcome! My wife and I have been truly bowled over by the warm welcome and generosity of the church family (and community). I am grateful to God for all of you (a theme in Colossians - my Collation reading) as we settle. First came the Collation, then the Wonderful Winter Fair and my first Sunday (complete with two baptisms) I could not think of a better way to spend my first weekend as Vicar of St Mary's. A Massive Thank you to everyone who helped with the Collation, my family and friends as well as local church and community leaders were given a glimpse of the 'St Mary's welcome'.

Claire and our Winter Fair team (a significant number were her extended family) did an amazing job for a spectacular day. I met so many people from the local schools and community (grabbed a bargain or two and certainly ate a few more sweets than I should have). We raised over £5400. THANK YOU for all your support and prayers. As we look forward to the Christmas season I pray that these initial connections will in time bear fruit and see many come to Christ and join us at St Mary's. Leon and I attended a training evening last night with Dr Rachel Jordan-Wolf from Hope Together. She encouraged us with research that flies in the face of the media headlines - our generation is open to the gospel! The number of committed (practising) Christians in the UK is not declining (Those who read their bible, pray and attend church have stayed the same), only 'non-practicing' Christians have dropped off, and our city is a place of gospel growth. Matthew 9:38 tells us that "the Harvest is plentiful but the workers are few"! I believe it still. There are more and more people on our planet to share the gospel with, we just need to join the labourer's and invite, invite and invite people to church.

I look forward to Advent and our Christmas opportunities to share the gospel, inviting family, friends, and neighbours around for Christmas drinks and inviting them to a Crib / Christingle or Carol Service. Matthew 9:38 continues to tell us what to do..

"therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest." Please pray as we need to urgently find a home for Leon by this weekend... and pray for more opportunities and more 'Leon's' in 2025.

The statistics (Hope Together

https://www.hopetogether.org.uk/Groups/371503/Talking_Jesus.aspx)

say that one in 3 non-Christians want to know about Jesus. Few have actually read the bible but amazingly many know he was real and was a spiritual, wise, peaceful leader. Let's have boldness this Advent to invite others to hear more from this man, who turned the Roman world (and our nation) upside down.

Yours in gospel partnership.

Rev Mark

This Week's Bible Readings: 8am Jer 33: 14-16, 1Thes 3: 9-13 & Luke 21: 25-36.

10am 'Alive at Ten' Ish 9: 2-7.

Prayer requests: Please pray for: the victims of the severe flooding in Spain.

We continue to pray: Break through the barriers that set people apart and the suspicions that make them walk alone. We remember our World, particularly the many troubled spots including Gaza, Israel, Ukraine and the Sudan.

The governments and their leaders. Show to all their need for each other and their shared responsibility for the world. Grant compassion in the little things of life, as well as the great, that all humanity may be united in your love.

We pray for the sick in our parish: especially remembering all who suffer from mental ill health and are victims of abuse and discrimination.

Please remember our Mission Partner: The Walton and Hersham Food Bank and Rentstart. **The recently departed:** Anthony Cilia, Pauline Gale, David & Annelies Reynolds, Pam Winton, Madge Campbell and Angela Menderson.

From the Memorial Book at their year's mind: Hester Kippax, Claire Driver, Mary (Mollie) Cleland, Frederick Hobday, Lucy Yardley, Irene Dene and Vera Johnson.

Funeral: The funeral of the late Madge Campbell will take place on Mon 2nd Dec. 9.30am Randalls Park Crematorium. Family and close friends at the crem only. 11am St Mary Oatlands. Thanksgiving Service for the life of Madge Campbell. All are welcome to the reception at Burhill after the Thanksgiving Service.

Activation Youth: Please note the following changes regarding 'Activation Youth'. We shall no longer be hosting two separate youth sessions but one.

Youth will now take place at 7pm to 9pm. These new times will accommodate all those in school years 7 to 12. If you have any questions, please contact Leon.

Meeting Point Christmas Lunch: St George's Hill Tennis Club. Wed 11th Dec (12.30pm tbc). Everyone welcome. You don't need to be a MP member. Please contact Jane R for more details.

Church Christmas Tree: Fri 29th Nov from 7pm. Revd Mark invites you to join in with the decorating of the Church and the Church Christmas tree. A family-friendly event with seasonal refreshments. Please let the parish office know you are coming.

Making of Christingles: Sat 7th Dec 2.30-4pm in the Church hall. Everything provided.

Christingle Service: Sunday 8th December at 4pm with seasonal refreshments in the hall.

Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols by Candlelight: Sun 15th Dec 6pm. Seasonal refreshments afterwards.

Colouring Club and Knit Wits: Wed 18th Dec 12.30-2pm. Let your mind roam whilst colouring. Bring a packed lunch, we will provide the tea, coffee and company. Contact Hugh.

Film Night: Wed 18th Dec. 6.30pm for a light meal and drinks. Film 7pm. Please use the signing-up sheet at the back of the Church.

Host: We urgently (from early December) need a new host for Leon, our PAIS Apprentice. Please consider accommodating Leon for a month or two.

The church will be willing to contribute towards any costs. If you can help, please speak to Rev Mark. Thank you.

Christmas Cards: There is a huge card at the back of the church for you to transcribe your wishes. Instead of sending individual cards (and perhaps forgetting someone!) please consider using this. And, of course, the money you save on cards and postage could be gift-aided to St Mary's.