

Christmas at St Andrew's

Thursday 1st December 2022

Happy Advent to you all!

I'm not sure I can believe that we have arrived already into Advent and the nights are dark and cold once again. I've been pondering the role of Elizabeth in the Christmas story recently and the fact that she was somebody who gave encouragement and hope to Mary her cousin when they met in that Holy Spirit encounter as described in Luke 1:39 onwards. She didn't dwell on her own situation (whether she was fed up with being pregnant or eagerly awaiting her own gift of life growing inside her!) but purely to exclaim her amazement that she should be so honoured that Mary would visit her. *Why am I so favoured, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?* Luke 1: 43

How often are we generous with our excitement and enthusiasm to encourage others? How about you drop a little note to somebody you've not seen or heard from in a while? What encouragement could you share with somebody today or in this advent season?

With every blessing

James

Christmas services

We kicked off our season of Christmas services with a lovely [Christmas Tree memorial service](#) on Sunday, if you'd still like to hang a star on the tree in memory of somebody, there's plenty available at the back of Church.

This weekend is our **Christingle and Toy service** at 10:30am with collection of toys to go to the Alice Charity – the oranges are on order, please come!

We are also having our **church social** down at the bridge centre from 12pm, if you've not signed up, please let us know and if you need a lift, we'll make sure somebody can take you.

Sunday 11th is **Gloriously Messy** down at the Indi Club – starting at 4:30pm. Everyone is welcome!

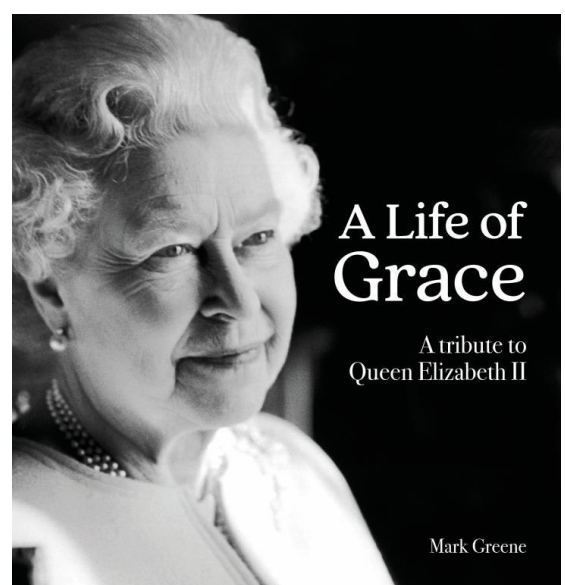
Tuesday 13th is **Lunchtime Communion**, 12pm in Church.

Sunday 18th is our outdoor **Carol Service** – 6pm on the front lawn. Please do invite people to come along.

Christmas Eve we have two services, 4pm for an **all-age Nativity** and 11pm for the **Midnight Communion**. Christmas day will be just one service as usual, 10am for a family **Holy Communion**. We'd love to see you!

Alongside our posters and fliers which are already out, we have also got a large number of Christmas cards – printed following our competition amongst local children – which are for distribution to the local community. Please grab a bunch from the back of Church and pop them through your neighbours' letterboxes! There's been a delay at the printers, but they should be with us this weekend.

We also have some gifts to give out at Christmas, of a book sharing the story of the Queen and her faith entitled 'A Life of Grace'. Please feel free to pick up a copy from the back of church, give them to friends and neighbours as a gift from us (perhaps with a Christmas card). If you'd like to contribute towards the cost, they were just under £2 per book and money can be put in the collection plate.





Pray for our schools work this Christmas!

Building on the positive links and relationships with Sneyd Academy and Holden Lane Primary school, we are going to have an opportunity to share the real meaning of Christmas with hundreds of local children and many of their parents over the coming weeks – both inviting groups of children to church for Christingle services and doing assemblies, services and lessons in the schools too. PLEASE PRAY for this ministry and especially for Sarah, Tom and I and our opportunities to talk openly about Jesus this Christmas! We are gathering to pray for this specifically on **Wednesday 7th December** from 10am in church if you are available to join us.



Children and Holy Communion

At our last two PCC meetings, we did some theological and liturgical exploration around the issue of children receiving Holy Communion at St Andrew's. We balanced the historic position that children have been allowed to receive the bread (wafer) alongside the Church of England and Diocesan guidance that children should firstly be baptised and secondly introduced to communion in a formal way. A number of things have come out of this discussion which I would like to share with you.

1. Holy Communion is deeply significant and important and Paul is clear that it is not to be taken lightly. (1 Corinthians 11:17-34)
2. Receiving the bread/wafer is a full experience of Communion according to Anglican theology, you are not 'second best' if you don't take the wine. Therefore there is no reason to not allow all who receive communion to do so with both the bread and the wine.
3. Although baptism is the strict entry point into the community of faith enabling somebody to take communion, we felt it important to continue to allow those who have been dedicated to receive, and those who believe



and trust in Jesus in their heart to do so as well – and bring their children too.

4. We have therefore taken the decision to have a policy that children may receive both the bread and wine, which continues to be at the parents' discretion. This could be via one of the cups (alcoholic or non-alcoholic) or having the wafer dipped.
5. To enable greater accessibility for those who choose to receive non-alcoholic wine, we will move to having this in the small chalice used for dipping (at the 10:30am service only).
6. We will also be doing some work in teaching our children the true meaning of Communion over the coming months, so they are more fully equipped to 'receive in a worthy manner'.
7. Finally, our Easter plans culminate in a service of Baptism and Confirmation on Easter Sunday with Bishop Matthew coming. There is an open invitation to all who are interested in being baptised (young or old) or those who would like to find out more about confirmation to let Tom or I know. There will be a series of preparation sessions in the lead up to Easter for those interested.



Hall Cleaning

Sam Littler has decided to step down from her role of cleaning the Church Hall which she has done faithfully every week. Firstly, we would like to say a massive thank you to Sam for doing this for us. Secondly, we are looking to employ a cleaner to take on that role for approximately 3 hours a week. This would involve the main hall, toilets and kitchen, being flexible around hall bookings. All cleaning equipment and products provided. Contact us for more information but do consider who you may know locally who might be up for it.



Staff time off and office hours

The church office will be closed from Thursday 15th December all the way through until Wednesday 4th January. The rotas for December and early January are out, please arrange swaps if you can't do your duty for a service.

James and Tom will be off from Christmas day until Sunday 1st January but back at our desks on 3rd and 4th January. If you need to be in touch in an emergency, please call the vicarage landline or Martyn will be able to get hold of us if needs be.

Sarah is also taking some time off, certainly between Christmas and New Year but possibly some other days in the lead up to Christmas too.



Looking ahead

There is going to be another City Celebration at Swanbank Church to see in the New Year on Sunday 8th January at 6:15pm.

As part of a season of outreach at Easter, we will be having a week of prayer and door-to-door evangelism from 27th-31st March 2023 followed by the Easter Holiday club on the 4th, 5th and 6th April. We have various other services and events going on culminating in a big Easter celebration service with baptisms, confirmation and shared lunch afterwards! Sarah would still love to hear from you if you can help out with the holiday club, do be in touch and please put the dates in your diary!



Please accept my apologies for the delay in writing to you all, and then for filling this newsletter so full! May God bless you this Christmas season, with hope, encouragement and a fresh revelation of Jesus Christ - come to earth as Emmanuel.

With love to you all

James

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