



# The Parish of Christchurch

*The Priory Church of the Holy Trinity, Christchurch*  
*St George, Jumpers • St John at Purewell*

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for Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2020, Christ the King

Dear Friends,

This week, there has been much talk in the news media about hope: the hope associated with the various Covid vaccines that are emerging from clinical trials; the hope that residents of care homes might be allowed to receive visits from close family and friends; the hope that Christmas might not have to be 'cancelled' after all. (Incidentally, what a very strange idea that is: 'cancelling' our annual remembrance and celebration of the Incarnation of our Lord because of a travel ban or the absence of large enough turkeys on the supermarket shelves! But that is probably a subject for a letter in Advent rather than now.)

The pupils and staff at the Priory school have also been spending time thinking about hope during this half-term and it has been good to share with them some thoughts about a Christian understanding of hope as we journey closer towards Advent.

It is a valuable exercise to ask ourselves from time to time the question: in what do we put our hope? Of course, we all hope for the swift distribution and application of an effective Covid vaccine. And I'm sure we all hope for a relaxation of the restrictions under which we have been living (some of us since March, without a break) so that we can visit those whom we love and can be physically close without a sense of fear or danger. But if we put our hopes in things that are not certain, there is always a risk of crushing disappointment. If you hope for a winning lottery ticket, the overwhelming likelihood is that you will be disappointed when your numbers don't come up. If you place hope in a cure for an illness or complaint and it does not work, you will again have to deal with the feeling of disappointment and perhaps even despair.

As Christians, we choose to place our hope in that which is certain and constant – the loving-goodness of God. The Psalms often turn to this theme of trusting in God; we place our hope in the One who will never let us down or let us fall away – however it may seem to us during times of pain or darkness. It is God's nature to be constant – trustworthy, if you like. Psalm 56 says: 'O Most High, when I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I am not afraid, what can flesh do to me?'. And Psalm 57 says: 'Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for in you my soul takes refuge; in the shadow of your wings will I take refuge, until the destroying storms pass by'.

In this Kingdom season, we are challenged to consider what it means for us to recognise the sovereignty of Christ, his Kingship. One aspect of that, I think, is reminding ourselves that our hope is in Christ. Not hope in the sense of wishing for something that we very much want, but which is unlikely and may well disappoint (like the winning lottery ticket or the miracle cure), but hope in the sense of trust in the One who will not, who cannot, do anything other than hold us in constant love.

As we think of Jesus as our King, so we willingly place ourselves within his loving care and we trust to his mercy, whatever this coming Winter may bring.

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## Advent Course – the ‘O’ Antiphons

- We are intending to run an Advent Course this year, helping us to keep the season of Advent and as an opportunity for fellowship and shared learning. We will be looking at the so-called ‘Great O Antiphons’, the refrains that are traditionally used before and after the Magnificat at Evening Prayer in the 7 days leading up to Christmas. They contain different ways in which we think of the coming of Christ – different ways in which we yearn and call for that coming. You may remember them from our Advent service ‘Darkness to Light’. We will be following a home-made course booklet and looking together at some poetry, some visual art and listening to some music.
- As matters stand, this course will take place entirely online, using Zoom. If government restrictions on gatherings are relaxed to the extent that we would be permitted to hold face-to-face meetings, and if we judge that there would be sufficient demand for this, then we may look at ways of offering the course face-to-face as well as online. We realise that this leaves those without access to the internet unable to participate, which is a great sadness. It is in fact very easy to use Zoom if you have a computer, tablet or phone that is connected to the internet. We can help with getting you set up.
- There is some introductory reading and listening to do on your own before the first session, then 7 sessions. It does not matter if you don’t come to all the sessions. The sessions will run at the following times – each session will take place at 3.00 pm and then be repeated at 7.00 pm to try to maximise the chances you can join in (i.e. each session takes place twice; you can attend either at 3.00 pm or 7.00pm).

Session 1	-	Weds 2 Dec	Session 2	-	Fri 4 Dec
Session 3	-	Sun 6 Dec	Session 4	-	Weds 9 Dec
Session 5	-	Fri 11 Dec	Session 6	-	Sun 13 Dec
Session 7	-	Weds 16 Dec			

- If you would like to join this course, and we hope you will, please send an email to ‘Conference’ using the email contact form on the website: (under the ‘Contacts’ menu at the top of the homepage, then under ‘Contact Us’ – select ‘Conference’ from the drop down list of addressees). We will then give you details of how to join the Zoom call for each session and send you the course booklet. It would help our planning if you were able to indicate whether you intend to join the afternoon or the evening sessions – you can come sometimes to one and sometimes to the other, and it does not matter if you change your mind at the last minute – it just helps us to have a rough idea of numbers for each session.

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With my love and prayers for the week ahead,



Reverend Jonathan Evans