

# The Parish of Christchurch



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

for Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2020

Dear Friends,

This first Sunday of Advent launches us into the season of the Church year when, with a focus on penitence and preparation, we look both to celebrating Jesus' birth, and to the day when Christ will return as Judge. Advent Sunday this year also falls a few days before we go into Tier 2, along with most of England.

We might be forgiven for thinking that a sombre Advent may be the last thing we need: this year has been sobering, even penitential, enough. I suggest, however, that we can learn from one way in which this season of Advent and the 'season' of the pandemic can both help us focus on what really matters and hold on to the reality of things.

In Advent we are invited to pause, amid all the hustle and bustle of pre-Christmas activity; to stop for long enough to put ourselves consciously with God, in humility to ask Him to be with us, to help us look below the surface of our lives long enough to ask ourselves: "What's really going on here?" Sticking with that question until we discern some answers is rarely comfortable, and never easy, probably because, as T. S. Eliot wrote, "humankind cannot bear very much reality" (from *Burnt Norton*, first of *Four Quartets*).

And yet, reality and truth go hand in hand, two sides of the same coin: in the original Greek of the New Testament, the word *aletheia* can be translated as 'truth', and also as 'reality'. For Christians, both senses come together in the person of Jesus Christ, who said to a group of Jewish believers, that "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth (the reality) will make you free" (John 8.32).

We cannot "bear very much reality", particularly about ourselves, on our own. We need God's help. Above all, we need God's presence with us. Which is why I'm breaking the habit of a lifetime and, this Advent, hope and intend to hold in my heart, mind, soul and imagination, some words that really belong to Christmas. Their root is in the meaning of Emmanuel – God is with us; they derive from the Orthodox Church's Great Compline for Christmas Eve, which in turn draws on Isaiah chapters 7 and 9 and, in this form, were set memorably to music by the late John Tavener:

God is with us.  
Hear, ye people, even to the uttermost ends of the earth.  
The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light.  
The people that dwell in the shadow of death, upon them the light has shined.  
For unto us a child is born! For unto us a son is given!  
And the government shall be upon his shoulder.  
And his name shall be called wonderful! Counsellor!  
The mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace.  
Hear, ye people, even to the uttermost ends of the earth.  
God is with us.

May God indeed be with us, every one, throughout this Advent, giving us the faith, courage and confidence to trust ourselves to Him, and walking with us as we go confront the reality of what it means to follow our incarnate Lord today – whether in lockdown, in Tier 2, and beyond. God bless you all,

A few days ago, the Prime Minister announced the Government's 'Winter Covid Plan' which, for us in Christchurch, as part of BCP, means being in Tier 2 until at least December 16<sup>th</sup>. This means that it is now possible for us to resume public worship in person once again, which we intend to do as follows:

- **Sundays:** from Sunday 6 December, there will be an 8.00am BCP Eucharist and 10.00am Sung Eucharist at the Priory (which will also be online); also a 9.30 Eucharist at St George's.
- **Midweek Services** will not resume until the New Year, with one exception: on Christmas Eve, December 24<sup>th</sup>, there will be a Common Worship Eucharist at the Priory and a BCP Eucharist at St George's, both at 11.00am.
- **Christingle:** we shall be holding two Christingle Services, aimed primarily at children and young families, on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> December in the Priory, at 2.00pm and 4.30pm. Tickets for the Christingle services will be available through Eventbrite; details to follow.
- **Christmas Carol Services in the Priory:** we shall be holding three Carol Services, on the 18<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> December, all at 6.30pm.. All three Carol Services will be ticketed (please see below).
- **Christmas Crib Service:** we shall be offering a Crib Service on Zoom this year, at 3.00pm on Christmas Eve. Details about how to ask to join this Zoom will be made available in the coming days.
- **Christmas Midnight Mass:** we shall be holding Midnight Mass in the Priory only, beginning at 11.15pm on Christmas Eve. This service will be ticketed (please see below).
- **Christmas Day:** on Christmas Day we shall be holding an 8.00am BCP Eucharist and 10.00am Sung Eucharist in the Priory (which will be ticketed and will also be online), and a 9.30am Eucharist at St George's Church.

In order to cope with the likely demand for the Carol Services, Midnight Mass and the Priory Christmas Day Sung Eucharist, tickets will be issued for these services. Tickets for all these services are free and can be booked by members of the congregation from **Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> December**. To apply for a ticket, either book online via the parish website, or phone up the Parish Office (01202 485804 ext.3) on weekday mornings between 9.00am and 1.00pm.. Thank you.

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Tickets for our annual 'Messiah' performance, on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> December, are now available online at <https://www.christchurchpriory.org/services-and-events> and will be on sale from the Box Office when it re-opens on 2<sup>nd</sup> December. Tickets are £12, £15 and £20 – students half-price. The Box Office can be contacted on 01202 485804 Option 4 between 11 and 4 on weekdays; before it re-opens you can leave your name and number on 01425 278862. Doors open at 7pm; please be seated, wearing a face covering, by 7.20pm at the latest. Sadly, we will be unable to offer refreshments in the interval.

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Our Advent course begins on Wednesday December 2<sup>nd</sup> and will explore the Advent Antiphons. If you would like to participate in this course, please send an email to [conference@christchurchpriory.org](mailto:conference@christchurchpriory.org) or using the email contact form on the website. We will then give you details of how to join the Zoom call for each session and send you the course booklet. To help us plan, please indicate whether you intend to join the afternoon or evening sessions (though you can come sometimes to one and sometimes to the other, to fit with your availability).

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Finally, it is a great pleasure to be able to announce some very good news. We have been awarded a major grant from the Culture Recovery Fund of £230,000. This will be used to help fund the next phase of our programme of conservation and repair: repairs at the East end of the Priory Church to the stonework, window glass and rainwater goods of the Lady Chapel; also miscellaneous repairs to the South Nave Aisle, South Transept and the Porch. This is phase 5B of the Priory's conservation programme. We are one of only 445 'heritage organisations' across the nation to be awarded a grant. The work has to be completed by March 31<sup>st</sup> 2021, which is a very tight schedule. I am grateful to all those who have played a part in securing this welcome grant.