

The Parish of Christchurch



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

for Sunday 6th December 2020

Dear Friends,

The histories of these days may well record that this was the week that many people found new hope. From recent announcements confirming that three different vaccines are effective against coronavirus (all three at levels that epidemiologists and governments would have jumped at six months ago), one of which has now cleared the UK regulator, and now the news that the first doses of that vaccine are arriving in the UK already – this has fostered hope of better times and a return to something closer to the life we knew pre-Covid 19.

There is a striking correspondence between this Covid-related hope and the season of Advent, which is, every year, a season of hope. As Pope Francis has said, “Advent is a journey towards the horizon of hope.”

We see this hope, week by week, in the lighting of the Advent candles; in some traditions, in lighting the first Advent candle, we ask God to “enflame us with hope,” the hope rooted in the birth of Jesus over 2,000 years ago and looks to a future secure with God. This same hope is alive and gives meaning to our present, today, tomorrow, next week. This is the “living hope” of which Peter writes in his first Epistle (1 Peter 1.3).

We are not to keep this hope to ourselves. As Peter writes later in the same epistle, we are always to be ready to give “an account of the hope that is in you, with gentleness and reverence” (1 Peter 3.15). This is part of our mission, as Christ’s people in this place, carrying Christ’s light wherever we go.

This calls to mind a book, ignored on the shelves for many years, and which I dipped into again a few days ago. Called “Taking Sides”, it is a collection of articles written by the late Bernard Levin, published originally in *The Times*. Writing in 1978 about a visit he made to a ‘Festival for Mind and Body’ at Olympia, he said:

“... what is common to all the exhibitors ... is a conviction that what the world lives by at the moment just will not do. Nor will it; nor do very many people suppose any longer that it will. Countries like ours are full of people who have all the material comforts they desire, together even with such non-material blessings as a happy family, and yet lead lives of quiet, and at times noisy, desperation, understanding nothing but the fact that there is a hole inside them and that however much food and drink they pour into it, however many motorcars and television sets they stuff it with, however many well-balanced children and loyal friends they parade around the edges of it, however much contentment they place between it and their own consciousness, it aches.”

Levin was not a Christian (he said so many times), nevertheless what he wrote is as true today as it was in 1978. Indeed, this goes back at least as far as 398 AD, when Augustine wrote in his *Confessions*: “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.” At a time when many are restless, anxious and crying out for hope, may we cherish the flame of hope that comes to us in Jesus Christ; a hope, in Pope Francis’ words, that “does not disappoint, simply because the Lord never disappoints! He is faithful!” May that be our experience this Advent; and may that fuel our prayer for our neighbours. CS

Information about forthcoming Advent and Christmas Services:

- **Advent Windows** is a gift from some Children and Youth workers from churches in Christchurch, for Christchurch. Every Tuesday until Christmas we’ll be sharing a short video journeying through the nativity story. Why not join us and create your own Advent window at home, adding to it by printing and cutting out the pictures each week as we explore courage, hope, peace and wonder: people passing by will see the Christmas story. We hope to see many Christchurch homes with an Advent Window! *Videos and print-out on <https://www.christchurchpriory.org/services-and-events/advent-windows-2020>*, the Advent windows page on the website under services/events.

- **Christingle:** This year we're putting on 2 Christingle services with a difference, where household/support bubbles can come together and sit in their own "pod" area. During the time together children will have the opportunity to create their own Christingles and we will hear a little about what they mean, the light that Jesus brings and though we can't sing, we may dance a little! TICKETS MUST BE PREBOOKED as places are limited; please book at <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/131024151765>
- **Christmas Carol Services in the Priory:** we shall be holding three Carol Services, on the 18th, 20th and 22nd 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.

Tickets for Carol Services, Midnight Mass and the Priory Christmas Day Sung Eucharist, are free. 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.

* * * * *

Tickets for the performance of 'Messiah' on Saturday 12th December are available from the box office and online at <https://www.christchurchpriory.org/services-and-events>. 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.

* * * * *

Because of the circumstances surrounding Covid-19, this year we shall not be able to offer a Christmas card exchange, either in the Priory or St George's, as we usually would.

* * * * *

The Revd Jonathan Evans' final Sunday in the parish will be 24 January. This means, among other things, that the time has come to invite you to contribute to a leaving gift, as I know many of you will want to do. To make a contribution, please follow the following guidance:

- **by bank transfer,** please use: Account Name - P.C.C. of Christchurch No.2 Account; Sort Code 52-21-34; Account Number 52428001.
- Please use "Curate" as the reference and email Ian Penny on prioryhouse@christchurchpriory.org, when you have sent the donation.
- **by cheque:** please make cheques payable to P.C.C of Christchurch No.2. Account and mark for Ian's attention. If posted, to Priory House, Quay Road, BH23 1BU. Whether by post or by hand, please clearly mark "Curate" on or in the envelope.
- **by cash:** please put in an envelope for Ian and bring to the Priory, clearly marked as above.

* * * * *

Just as we were getting used to the reality of one departure, I have to announce another. Heidi Haagensen, our Children and Families Worker, has been appointed to a new job in another Deanery, with effect from mid-February. This appointment is subject to DBS clearance, which is why no more information is available at present. We owe Heidi a huge debt of gratitude for all she has done as our first Children and Families Worker, much of it pioneering ministry in the parish and its schools, unseen perhaps by many in the congregation, but bringing the Good News to many young children and their families. There will be an opportunity to thank her properly at a later date; her last Sunday in the parish will be February 14th.

* * * * *

The American poet Emily Dickinson once wrote that: "Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul and sings the tune without the words — And never stops at all." That sounds about right. May our eyes and ears be attuned to this song of hope in the days and weeks to come. God bless us all.

Charles Stewart