



THE MINISTER WRITES ...



Dear All,

As the season of Advent now begins and we embark on our annual walk towards Christmas, I don't know about you, but to me it feels unusual to not be so certain about what our journey will be like and how Christmas, when it comes, will be celebrated both as a church and also within our own families. While our worship will, as ever, continue, and Christmas will, as ever, be a special occasion, we will no doubt miss many aspects and events that usually help make this season so wonderful. That said, we will still embrace the hopeful waiting and anticipating of the season of Advent and in time, the love and joy of Christmastime, just in a slightly different way!

Of course, many much loved aspects of how we modern Christians tend to mark Advent and Christmas are not quite as ancient as the wonderful stories we faithfully remember and retell in familiar ways. I really like what the Revd Dr Simon Woodman (Minister, Bloomsbury Central BC) has written in his recent article, 'Christmas isn't Cancelled' on Christianity.org.uk:

Christmas has been around, and deeply meaningfully so, for far longer than most of our beloved Christmas traditions. Our favourite carols are mainly Victorian in origin. Pipe organs didn't widely exist in churches outside Cathedrals until about three hundred years ago. Church Carol Services didn't happen until the invention of the 'Nine Lessons and Carols' service in the 1880s. So in a year when we can't gather in large groups and sing, there is an invitation here to discover some of the other, older, traditions and stories of Christmas, and bring them to the digital age.

Here, Simon refers to the stories found in the early chapters of Matthew and Luke, where the Gospel writers, each in their own way and with their own emphasis, draw us through their wonderful stories to reflect upon the birth of Jesus. While I don't think that the details should ever be pushed or pressed too hard, (they are stories!), still we gladly rekindle our love for these narratives and certainly, we gladly take their point: here is the birth, the coming of someone extremely significant and special, the new Moses, the promised Deliverer, one greater than Herod and Caesar, 'a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord' (Luke 2:11). For a thoughtful exploration of the Christmas story and its wider significance, we would do well to ponder on the opening chapter of John's Gospel too.

It will all be different this year, we'll try to accept this. Yet we also acknowledge that much of what makes this time of the year so special within the Church has a very long tradition. So even though we will be experiencing our Advent and Christmas worship in different ways to usual, still we know that our worship and our celebrations are deeply meaningful, still we wait in hope for the coming of the Saviour this Advent, still we will greatly rejoice as again Christ breaks into our lives this Christmastime, bringing his gracious gifts of grace, redemption and renewal. I pray that you will experience the love, joy and peace of God breaking into your life this Christmas.

Grace and peace to you and your family,
Neil

Simon's article is quoted with his permission and can be read at: <https://christianity.org.uk/article/opinion-christmas-isnt-cancelled>



IPSWICH WINTER NIGHT SHELTER 2020

Planning for the Ipswich Winter Night Shelter has had its challenges this year. There has been an ambition for some time to establish a venue to be the permanent home of the shelter and Selig were delighted when they found 1 Civic Drive and were able to obtain the necessary planning permission. The building had previously been a pub and later a drug rehabilitation facility but had been empty for some time and was not in a good state. A good deal of work was going to be required to convert it into premises suitable for the shelter, but the new facility would improve greatly the experience of guests. Instead of being put up in a different church hall every night, which meant having to be out all day, carrying their belongings with them, guests would now be able to have a proper base, able to leave their things there and with better access during the day. Furthermore, Selig's offices would also be based there, providing a permanent presence and on-the-spot space for working with guests and other meetings as well as the inevitable general admin.

So, with plans underway for a facility for up to 15, Covid and lockdown struck. Rules now meant that the shelter would only be allowed to operate if guests had their own rooms. Plans were altered to accommodate 7 small bedrooms. In late July, Julia Hancock, Selig Business Manager, was told that, to allow for any potential Covid cases to self-isolate, all rooms would need to be en-suite. The plans were hastily reconfigured once more to provide 5 rooms, each with their own en-suite. Finding the funding for this and getting the work done in time for this winter has obviously been a challenge.

However, difficulties have been overcome and the shelter is now up and running. Covid protocols are rigorous and much thought has gone into, for instance, how food will be served or the siting of dishwashers and crockery to be Covid-safe. There is a brand-new kitchen, a dining room and a sitting area as well as the basic, but comfortable small bedrooms – with proper beds! A far cry from a camp bed in a church hall. The experience, for guests and volunteers alike is rather different and we are very thankful that the Ipswich Winter Night Shelter has this wonderful new home.

Streamed Advent Taizè Service from St Mary's

Thursday 3rd December at 7pm

(40 min approx)

The church is in semi- darkness, lit up with candles and a few lights.

Beautiful music, of monastic chants, from the depth of the Scriptures,

is wrapped around with deep silences and prayerful intercessions

All are invited from the deanery & beyond

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCCJ4RA2ocNUgNNombaKiy5A>



TACKET STREET BOYS' BRIGADE OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION

Annual Christmas Fayre

It is sad that we will not be able to hold our annual Christmas Fayre on Saturday 28th November due to the pandemic. According to our records, a Christmas Fayre was first held in November 1947, after the start of a Parents Committee, and apart from only one other time, this has been arranged every year since.

However, we will plan ahead for next year and have booked Saturday 27th November 2021. Most of the current helpers have agreed to continue which is really good. We do need more help!

Funds raised will be in aid of the Christ Church general fund. Last year, we raised £455.45 and in 2018, we donated £500.

It is hoped that church members will be encouraged to offer help and assistance with the running of the stalls and also to come along, to what is generally seen as an outreach social event. We would love both BB Old Boys and our church members to join us so please book the date in your diaries.

Ron Baker

SUFFOLK HISTORIC CHURCHES TRUST RIDE AND STRIDE

I wanted to write and thank you for your support for this year's event. It has been a very different and challenging year for us all and the Trustees of our charity were a little hesitant about how successful the fundraising would be under the circumstances. I know that some churches were unable to open because of justified concerns about the Covid-19 virus and the vulnerability of some volunteers who would otherwise be there to sign forms and talk about your church. Some people found the opportunity to go out for a long(ish) walk or cycle ride was welcome after being indoors for a long time. However, you and your congregation were able to engage with the event this year, and we are very grateful.

The good news is that Ipswich raised more funds this year than last! In 2020 we raised £6,070.50, which is £439 more than in 2019. That is quite some achievement and we are so pleased and grateful for your help.

The total for the whole of Suffolk is also higher – by £14,569.33! This of course means that the Trustees have been able to continue to donate grants to support Churches in Suffolk.

I hope you will be able to let your volunteers, riders and striders know how well we have done and to pass on our grateful thanks. Of course, half of all the money raised by each Church is returned to you for your own funds, so we hope you feel that you have benefitted too.

Tessa Forsdike, Local Organiser, SHCT Ride & Stride

SAVING YOUR STAMPS



Bearing in mind the increased post at Christmas, this is a reminder to continue saving postage stamps. If possible, please can you trim them, leaving 1/8th inch of envelope round each one. Hopefully, we will be able to get them all together in the New Year, as usual.

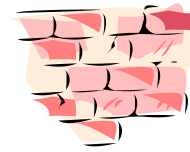




OVER THE GARDEN WALL

... from our neighbours at St Pancras

Dear neighbours,



Pope Francis has asked us to pray this month that our personal relationship with Jesus Christ be nourished by the Word of God and a life of prayer. Advent and the Christmas season is a really good time to do this.

At St Pancras some of us are following the online Bible Timeline study programme which has already given us an opportunity to really re-read and meditate on the early passages from Genesis, showing God's intention and love for us and his covenants with us. The old familiar readings always give us something new and allow us to fall into a sense of wonder at his patience and love. They also remind us to keep our end of the new covenant of Love he has given us.

The Catholic Church in England and Wales has recently welcomed the report, from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, relating to the institutional response of the Church in its duty of care to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation. The failings exposed will require action to ensure continuing protection to be offered to our vulnerable people.

At St Pancras and in our diocese, we have strong safeguarding measures, procedures and training which are constantly updated. And we now have two people working to ensure these are effective in our parish. Pray for us please. We send our love to you all, as we enter our new liturgical year this advent and approach the Christmas season of Joy and Grace. We look forward in Hope as we prepare to follow the Way of the Lord and journey with Him wherever He leads. Where will he lead us on that journey and what will we learn?

We are hoping for a new Priest to be sent to lead us at St Pancras, but grateful that in the meantime, we are supported by our neighbouring parish priests Frs Peter Raj and Paul Vincent.

We pray for all of you during these strange times of crisis and ask Christ Jesus to bless and keep us all close to Him.
Bernie and the folks at St Pancras

THE LEPROSY MISSION

Although no details have yet been received outlining how the World Leprosy Day appear will be done next year, this note is to remind friends that Sunday 31st January 2021 should be World Leprosy Day.

Further details will be shared when received.