

Dear all,

Once again, we are in a period of uncertainty regarding COVID restrictions and good practice. It is a time when we all have to think more carefully again about our actions and activities. We have just received new guidelines from the CofE, and I am glad to say that our current practices continue to fit the recommended good practice – with the exception that masks now become a legal requirement (except for those in exempt groups), rather than just strongly encouraged. We will continue to use the north aisle as more socially distanced, and continue to live stream services. To that end, we have just got a mobile wi-fi hub for the church and the hall, which should provide some much-needed stability for this.

The Rt Revd Dame Sarah Mullally, Bishop of London, who is the CofE lead on COVID has released the following statement:

"As we look forward to celebrating again the coming of Jesus into our world, we can do so with hope.

"Few of us imagined when we first heard of the coronavirus at the beginning of last year that we would now be approaching our second Christmas of a global pandemic.

"The recent emergence of the new Omicron variant and the evidence we've seen already of its rapid spread is a cause of real concern.

"And while we are hugely thankful for the rapid development and mass rollout of the vaccines - and the current booster programme - there are important steps we should take now to protect ourselves and each another.

"As Christians we have a duty to care for one another, especially those who are most vulnerable, and the latest measures announced by the Government should offer some extra protection and reassurance for people.

"Caring for one another, sharing, hope, faith and most of all the knowledge that God is with us are at the heart of Christmas.

"This Christmas we will be coming together – whether in person or online – to worship God and celebrate his coming into the world as a human being like us.

"Amid all that we have been through together in the last two years that hope is as strong as ever."

Those of us who have been looking at the Advent book, 'Music of Eternity: Meditations for Advent with Evelyn Underhill' by Robyn Wrigley-Carr will have heard me quote from the beginning of chapter 9 *Hope, which we might define as a certainty of God's goodness, is the attitude that underlies our Advent waiting.*

You will be pleased to hear that we have had a sound engineer look at the system in the church. The hearing loop amplifier is 'fried' (a technical term!), and will be replaced very soon. He also recommends additional speakers, and moving the master controls so that they can be adjusted during the service. Watch this space!

This Sunday is the Third Sunday in Advent, and focusses especially on John the Baptist. There is much discussion in church circles over whether we light the pink (sorry, Rose!) candle this week or next. The issue is whether it is Gaudete Sunday (3rd Sunday in Advent), or the Sunday that concentrates on Mary (the

4th). We do Gaudete Sunday, which means 'Rejoice' – so pink on Sunday. Interestingly, the chorus of the 2nd hymn on Sunday is 'Rejoice'. The hymns for the morning are: [Choral Advent Calendar - On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry - YouTube](#); [Carols from King's 2016 | #7 "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" | The Choir of King's College, Cambridge - YouTube](#). I cannot find a YouTube recording of the 3rd hymn, O child of promise, come!

You might also be interested in this version of O Come, O Come Emmanuel, sung in English and Hebrew [O Come, O Come Emmanuel | Anna Hawkins - Filmed in Israel \(Hebrew & English\) - YouTube](#)

The readings usually are Zephaniah 3: 14-end; Philippians 4: 4-7; Luke 3: 7-18. In the 10.00am service, we will be reading verses from Luke 3: 1-17. The Psalm is Psalm 146: 4-10.

Anglican Chant - [Psalm 146 "Praise the Lord O My Soul" - YouTube](#)

And in Hebrew: [ELIHANA - HALLELUYAH - PSALM 146 קמו פרק הללויה - תהילים פרק קמו - YouTube](#)

Or a more pop-y Hebrew version: [Jeremy Gimpel - Azamra \(Official Music Video\) \[קליפ רשמי\] ג'רמי גימפל - אזמרה - YouTube](#) (but be aware that it includes plugs for his books and tours!).

Anthems etc. suggested for this Sunday include:

[Gaudete omnes à 6 - YouTube](#) Praetorius

[This is the record of John - YouTube](#) Gibbons

[Rejoice In The Lord Alway \(Henry Purcell\) - St. John's Cambridge - YouTube](#)

[Paulus \(St. Paul\) , Op. 36, MWV A14: How Lovely are the Messengers \(Sung in English\) - YouTube](#)
Mendelssohn

[Saint-Saëns: Tollite Hostias HD - YouTube](#)

In the light of my opening to this letter, I'd like to share a recent prayer from my friend Nick Fawcett. And, yes, there is a plug for his upcoming book in the post!

A light that keeps on shining

From my forthcoming book *God of Here, There and Everywhere: Prayers Inspired by the Celtic Spiritual Tradition*, a prayer of trust in a light that keeps on shining, even on the darkest of days.

Though the day grows dark, Lord,
may your light continue to shine.
Though my fears are overwhelming,
may your peace be more powerful still.
Though my days on occasions feel lonely,
may your presence continue to sustain me.
Though time hangs heavy,
may I appreciate each moment you give me.
Though I feel weak and vulnerable,
may your strength be sufficient for my needs.
Though I am anxious about loved ones,

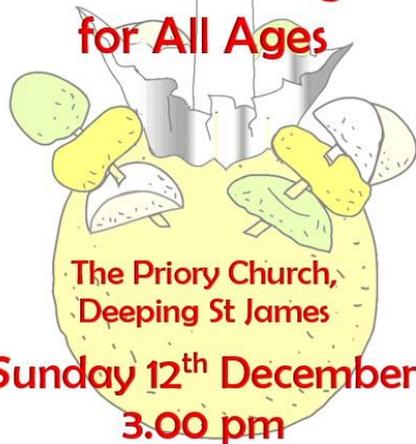
may your love bring reassurance.
Though I grieve those I have lost,
may your eternal promises bring comfort.
Though the future feels bleak,
may trust in you bring hope.
Though all things seem to conspire against me,
may you turn even the bad to good.
Though all else fail, Lord,
assure me that *you* will not.
Amen.

Finally, don't forget...

Christingle

Service

A service of Light
for All Ages



Stay safe.

Blessings and love

Mark