



Welcome!

We are so glad you are here with us today. We welcome those who are new to the Church. If you would like more information about us, please take and complete a slip in the Welcome Area and give it to a Steward or a Minister, or access the QR code in the welcome area.

Collect for This Sunday

God our redeemer, who prepared the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the mother of your Son: grant that, as she looked for his coming as our saviour, so we may be ready to greet him when he comes again as our judge; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Today at St. John's

8.00am	Communion	Reading: Galatians 4:1-8 <i>Preacher: Peter Chamberlin</i>
10:00am	Morning Worship	Reading: Galatians 4:1-8 <i>Preacher: Peter Chamberlin</i>
6:30pm	Carols by Candlelight	

Today at Emmanuel

9:30am	Morning Worship	Reading: Matthew 1:1-17
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Next week at St. John's

8:00am	Communion	Reading: Psalm 130
10:00am	Morning Worship	Reading: Psalm 130
No Service at 6:30pm		

No Service at Emmanuel Next Week

Gluten free wafers and a non-alcoholic alternative are available for communicants: please ask the administering clergy.

Events This Week:

Mon 23 rd	2:00pm	Family Film	Church
Tues 24 th	4:00pm	Christmas Nativity	Church
	11:00pm	Midnight Service	Church
Wed 25 th	8:00am	Holy Communion Christmas service	Church
	9:30am	Holy Communion Christmas service	Emmanuel
	10.00am	All-age Christmas service, followed by communion for those who would like to stay...	Church

Next Parish Prayer Meeting will be held on January 8th, 2025.

Coffee morning and daytime parish prayer meeting at Emmanuel will be held on January 8th, 2025.

AM's house update from Peter: Exactly a 100 days later... a new dining room and kitchen! Thank you all who contributed towards this project - we won't know who you are, but we'll try to share enough hospitality that you get to see this for yourselves. Photos are on the welcome board.

SGP Prayers: Pray for all Christmas services and activities: that good contacts would be made and the gospel would be shared clearly; that churches would be encouraged as they step out in faith and invite friends; that any follow-up in 2025 would be useful and see real fruit.

Prayer leaders' workshop: Peter is running an hour-long workshop on **Monday 20th January** exploring how to lead our Sunday prayers well. It is aimed at those who already lead prayers in church, or who would be interested in doing so, but not currently on the rota. The same workshop will run at **11:30am and 8pm** in the lounge. Please get in touch with Peter if you are interested in attending, even if you can't make the time/date.

We have an increasing number of people who no longer drive or have transport. Please consider if you could offer them a lift directly, so that they can attend our Christmas services.

Lost property: Please have a look through the lost property in the Welcome Area and take what's yours.

How many times in the last few weeks have you heard people say how much they love Christmas? Quite a few I suspect. For some, getting into the Christmas spirit is all about buying and wrapping presents, or getting a new outfit for the party season, or stocking up the drink's cabinet. For many it's the anticipation of time with family and friends. For others it's the Christmas food. One supermarket is running with the strapline 'helping feed your Christmas spirit' - and some of the festive fare on offer is pretty bizarre.

I don't wish to be a killjoy but they couldn't be more wrong about the true Christmas spirit. It's all too easy to be drawn into the hype and Christians are not immune from "cosyfyng" our image of Christmas to the depiction of the nativity scene shown on many Christmas cards. But the first Christmas was probably closer to the situation in Gaza that we have seen on our televisions over the last year. Dirty faced children playing in the muddy streets of refugee encampments; parents trying desperately to find a safe place to call 'home' and somewhere to buy food, toiletries or medicines; caring for the sick and vulnerable when there are few medical facilities.

We have many Christian brothers and sisters who will mark Christmas in dire situations similar to Gaza. It is an amazing work of the Spirit that there are Christian communities in countries where they experience crippling poverty, the threat of starvation, violence, warfare or persecution - Sudan, Haiti, China, Zimbabwe, Ukraine, Lebanon and Myanmar to name but a few. Despite this they continue to meet to worship and this year they will again celebrate the fact that God himself came to earth as a baby in Bethlehem, giving up the joy of heaven to be born in a dirty, unhygienic cow shed to a family who would, in a couple of years, be refugees in Egypt. I hope that we will all take time to remember our fellow Christians who may be imprisoned or alone; those who have no food (let alone M&S food*), who may face daily violence. Praise God for their witness in difficult and dangerous circumstances and commit to praying regularly for one country where being a Christian is hard. Be thankful that we have a Saviour who has experienced the worst of human pain and hardship and will be with each of them and us day by day.

There is nothing wrong with enjoying some of the pleasures associated with Christmas. But the Christmas spirit is so much greater and more wonderful. The baby in the stable is now exalted to the highest place in heaven and promises life abundant to all who trust in him. Far better than Tesco's Finest or Sainsbury's Taste the Difference*, Prosecco flavoured crisps or bubble gum infused gammon for anyone?

Chris Jones

*Other brands are available

Sermon Notes

Someone from our Prayer Ministry Team (with [blue lanyards](#)) will be available after the 10am service to pray with those who would like prayer.

Our Parish Safeguarding Officer, Mary Kirkman, is available for advice or to talk through concerns relating to safeguarding.

Tel 07763 456015 or email: safeguarding@stjohnswoking.uk

Recordings of our livestreamed services are available on our website.

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