

St Martin of Tours  
Epsom

St Stephen on the Downs  
Langley Vale

The parish of  
St Martin of Tours  
with St Stephen-on-the-Downs

Weekly Newsletter  
Registered Charity Number: 1134149

## Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> December 2021 – Third Sunday of Advent

Dear Friends,

Prepare the way! The enduring advent cry from the time of the Isaiah through the time of John the Baptist and throughout the history of Christianity. How do we do this? Calling people to repentance and renewal takes many forms, but one consistent call is to face the truth. That is where repentance begins. Jesus famously said, 'the truth will set you free.'

*Nick Parish*

### **THIS WEEK**

#### **Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> December – Third Sunday of Advent**

- 8.30am – Holy Communion at St Martin's, led by Nick Parish
- 9.30am – Holy Communion at St Stephen's – led by Andrew Haviland
- 10.00am – Choral Mattins at St Martin's, in Church and live streamed – led by Graeme Lodge
- 3.00pm – Beacon Tea
- 6.30pm – Holy Communion at St Martin's, in Church and live streamed – led by Nick Parish

#### **Christmas Jumpers For Save The Children**

This Sunday, in support of Save the Children, the choir will leave their robes in the vestry and instead sport Christmas jumpers to sing Choral Mattins. The congregation is welcome to wear their jolliest jumpers too. A donation via the Save the Children website is all that is needed.

*Sarah Lutton*

#### **Beacon Tea – 12<sup>th</sup> December**

At the next Beacon Tea (Today) we shall also be singing Christmas carols, so do come! All are welcome.

Please would two or three able-bodied people help at the end of the morning service to move some chairs and move some tables into place? We need to set up the tables near to the piano (carol singing) so 3 chairs from each row on the south side need to be moved out of the way. And I am a bit feeble! Thank you.

*Mary Gilbert*

#### **Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> December**

- 10.00am – Holy Communion – led by Nick Parish

## **FUTURE SERVICES**

### **Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> December – Fourth Sunday of Advent**

9.30am – Morning Praise at St Stephen's – led by Howard Bluett

10.00am – Holy Communion at St Martin's, in Church and live streamed – led by Nick Parish

6.30pm – Nine Lessons and Carols at St Martin's, in Church and live streamed – led by Nick Parish

### **Tuesdays in Church**

I shall *not* be available on 28<sup>th</sup> December and 4<sup>th</sup> January, but will be back in Church as usual on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> January, 9.00 – 12.00 am.

*Mary Gilbert*

### **CENTERING PRAYER FOLLOW-UP SESSIONS - STARTING JANUARY 18th**

The Centering Prayer Taster Day presented by Lynne Scholefield was well-attended and much enjoyed. Participants came from across the Borough and further afield. The Taster Day was an introduction to the work of Fr Thomas Keating and an experience of the inner prayer method he began. The Taster Day has led to six follow-up sessions in which to establish the practice of Centering Prayer on an individual basis. In essence, Centering Prayer follows Jesus's direction to "Go to your room,,,,,,,"



The six follow-up one hour sessions will be held at St Martin's weekly on Tuesdays, beginning on January 18th and then January 25th, February 1st, 8th, 15th and 22nd. Lynne Scholefield has agreed to present both an afternoon session (at 4pm to 5pm) and an evening session (7.30pm to 8.30pm) on each day. Even if you missed the Taster Day, anyone can attend these Centering Prayer learner sessions. It will be good to know how many we shall be, so please speak with Lynne Scholefield or Judith Mitchell or email [stmcenteringprayer@gmail.com](mailto:stmcenteringprayer@gmail.com) to make a booking.

## **STEWARDSHIP**

### **Giving to St Martin's and St Stephen on the Downs**

For general and stewardship giving you can give online giving via the Charities Aid Foundation. Donations can be either a one-off donation or a regular donation using direct debit. To make a donation either:

1. Click on the following link:

<https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/13377>

OR

2. Use your Smart Phone and Scan the QR Code below

There is also a "Donate" button on our website.



### **Cheques to St Martin's**

If give a cheque donation to St Martin's Church, please can it payable to:

'The PCC of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Epsom'

### **Donation Station**

If you wish to give via contactless payment, please us the donation station in Church.

You can give a pre-set amount or choose one. You can also gift aid your donation.

## **OTHER NOTICES**

You are invited to come to one of the Evening of Lights when St Martin's will be lit with candles and the Christmas tree lights. These evenings offer a quiet space for remembering people close to you, and the opportunity to light a candle in their memory. We hope to be able to offer you a hot drink (tea, coffee or hot chocolate) before you leave. The dates are

- Monday 13 December 6.00 p.m. – 8.00 p.m.
- Tuesday 14 December 6.00 p.m. – 8.00 p.m.

There will also be an Evening of Lights at St Stephen's, Langley Vale, on

- Wednesday 15 December 6.00 p.m. – 8.00 p.m

***Mary Gilbert and Elaine Snook, Pastoral Team***

### **Beacon Lunch**

A festive lunch will be held on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> December in Church House at 12.00pm for 12.30pm. All are welcome. If you think you are likely to join us it would be helpful if you would sign the list at the back of the Church TODAY to help us to cater effectively.

### **Peter and Mary Lalle**

Peter has contacted the parish office to let us know that he and Mary are both well and are now resident in the Rosebery Manor Care Home, Reigate Road, Epsom, KT18 5AX

### **Parish Administrator**

Gina, who has held this post for over seven years, is moving on to a new job in the new year. Her last working day will be December 23<sup>rd</sup>. I'm sure everyone will join me in expressing our thanks for her hard work for us and wishing her well in her new role. If you would like to contribute to a gift, then please do this through me in the first instance.

***Nick Parish***

### **Vacancies in Church life**

We are currently praying for a new Treasurer to join our leadership team. John Flower also reaches the end of his term of office as a churchwarden in May, and I urge everyone to pray about this, and if anyone feels either of these vital roles in Church life might be for them, do please speak to myself, or the wardens.

***Nick Parish***

### **12 Days - Movement for good**

'Could you spare 5 minutes for 12 days to help St Martins?

Ecclesiastical Insurance are donating £1,000 to 10 charities for 12 days from 6<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> December.

Just click on [12 Days - Movement for good – Nominate a charity to receive £1000 from Ecclesiastical](#) and complete the simple form starting with our Charity No: 1134149.

Everyone who enters, each day from 5<sup>th</sup>, will increase St Martin's opportunity to receive £1,000. Thank you!

## **MISSION FOR THE MONTH**

### **HOME MISSION**

The Church Army - Activating positive change through faith, words and action. A mission focused community within the Anglican Church, positively affecting lives prayerfully. They are expectant—risk taking and generous

The Children's Society - is a national society that seeks to help thousands of children who desperately need support and practical help. They also campaign to change laws.

***Jill Chapman***

### **ABROAD MISSION**

Founded in December 2006 by Ruthie Marcus, in memory of her only child Alex, AMECA is committed to healthcare delivery, training healthcare professionals and to healthcare education in sub-Saharan African countries, through sustainable initiatives. AMECA is a small but growing charitable trust.

In Malawi the last project to be completed is the building of a maternity unit and training personnel to administer healthcare.

***Meg Topley***

### **CHRISTMAS CARDS – STOCK SELLING FAST!**

If you have not yet purchased your Christmas cards, please consider supporting the Church by buying from the Church card stall. Please note that my entire stock is now out on the tables at the back of church. Once an item has gone, it's gone and I have no further stock! Payment may be made in a variety of ways:



- Cheque: made payable to “The PCC of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Epsom” (please either hand in to the office or place in the wall safe in church)
- Donation Station: contactless payments – please use the “Cards” button
- Cash: via the wall safe in church.

Every packet sold helps the church. Thank you to everyone who has already bought from my stall.

***Mary Holloway-Neville***



# Epsom Rotary

# Christmas Collections

This year the good news is that Santa is back and will be visiting Epsom this Christmas! Epsom Rotary Club and Tilly the Train will be helping Santa collect money for local charities. If you have been good, Santa may have something for you in his sack! All children in the areas below will need to keep an ear open for Christmas carols and Tilly lit up like a Christmas tree. Just look out of the window, give Santa a wave and see whether he has a gift for you.



We will be visiting:

- Monday 6th Dec.                      Langley Vale
- Tuesday 7th Dec.                    Woodcote Side
- Wednesday 8th Dec.                College Ward
- Friday 10th Dec.                     Hookfield
- Monday 13th Dec.                    Mospey Crescent
- Wednesday 15th Dec.                The Wells
- Friday 17th Dec.                    Livingstone and Horton Park

Santa will start his visits at 4.30-5.00 pm

Watch him on his round at [sleightracker.co.uk](http://sleightracker.co.uk)

This year Epsom Rotary is collecting for local good causes in Epsom and Ewell and we'd be grateful for your support. You can see who we help on our web site [epsomrotary.uk](http://epsomrotary.uk). Gifts can be made on-line or text at any time, and by card or cash on the collection night.



If you are a wiz with your mobile then use the QR code to make a donation

Just go to [justgiving.com/campaign/tilly21](http://justgiving.com/campaign/tilly21) and give us a few pounds and we will help local charities to survive in these difficult times  
or Text TILLY to 70450 to donate £5

Texts will cost the donation amount plus one standard network rate message.



EPSOM CHORAL SOCIETY

# Christmas Concert

**Festive music**  
**Carols old and new**  
**Sing along to traditional favourites**

Julian Collings | Conductor  
London Metropolitan Brass  
James Bower | Percussion  
Marion Lea | Piano  
Benedict Lewis-Smith | Organ

**Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> December**  
**at 7.30pm**

St Martin's Parish Church,  
Church Street Epsom KT17 4PX

Tickets: £16, £8 (students or under 18s)  
[www.epsomchoral.org.uk/tickets](http://www.epsomchoral.org.uk/tickets)  
Box Office: 07522 111219



Registered charity number 273757

## Latest message from Food Bank

We are so grateful to all of our wonderful supporters, every donation makes a difference! Booking a supermarket delivery? Let us know when to expect it.

This week we need:

- Custard
- Longlife fruit juice and sponge puddings
- UHT milk (full fat and semi skimmed only please)
- Instant mash
- Tinned spaghetti in sauce
- Nappies 4+ & 6+
- Christmas Bags for Life

You can donate at the usual supermarket points, or bring donations to our car park (please wear a mask);

Epsom & Ewell Foodbank  
Generation Resource Centre  
(Behind West Ewell Primary School)  
Ruxley Lane  
Ewell, KT19 0JG

Normal donation drop off times: Monday to Friday 9am – 2pm. We are closed on Bank Holidays.

\* Please make sure all donations are sealed, in date and do not contain alcohol\*

We are fundraising for:

🎄 Christmas meat vouchers. Once again we are working with local butchers, we want to give our clients vouchers to enable them to choose their meat for Christmas.

🎄 Funds for seasonal fresh fruit and vegetables to add to our Christmas meat voucher and goodie bags.

🎄 Energy top up funds for our clients' gas/electricity to cook their Christmas dinner.

🎁 Gift cards of £10 each for parents to choose a present for their children from Argos, Wilkos, Superdrug, Boots, or TK Maxx.

You can donate funds here via our website, make a small donation by text (details below), or contact us if you want to make a BACs transfer.

Donations can also be made if you prefer by texting any amount between £1 and £20 Christmas Gift followed by your chosen amount to 70450. If you wish to donate a larger amount please e-mail us.

Kind regards

Chris Shortt





**Only 40p**

# Send your cards by Scout Community Christmas Post

Delivery in Epsom, Ewell and Ashtead in postal areas KT17, KT18, KT19 and KT21

Final collection: Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> December 7pm

Full details of collection points and delivery times:  
[www.7thepsom.org.uk/activities/christmas-post](http://www.7thepsom.org.uk/activities/christmas-post)

Payment (in cash) should be included with the cards and posted into one of the Scout post boxes

All proceeds to:  
**7TH EPSOM (METHODIST) SCOUT GROUP**

Official sponsors:




## Scout Community Christmas Post 2021 Post Box Locations



Epsom		
Clarks (outside)	The Ashley Centre	KT18 5AB
Hotel Chocolat (outside)		
Superdrug (outside)		
W H Smith (outside)		
Ebbisham Centre (by library)	High Street	KT19 8AG
Michael Everett	High Street	KT19 8DP
Tesco Express	Chantilly Way	KT19 8SP
Costcutter	Manor Green Road	KT19 8RA
Ajits Local	Sefton Road	KT19 9HG
Epsom Methodist Church	Ashley Road	KT18 5AQ
Save 'n Smile	Wells Estate	KT18 7LG
Dorking Road Stores	Dorking Road	KT18 7JZ
Corner Shop 4U	Burgh Heath Road	KT17 4LU
Sainsbury's	Kiln Lane	KT17 1EQ
Ewell / Stoneleigh / Cuddington		
Sainsbury's Local	Cheam Road	KT17 1SN
KMM Convenience	166 Ruxley Lane, West Ewell	KT19 9HA
Smiths Mail Shop	12 Ruxley Lane	KT19 0JA
Ballards	Chessington Road, West	KT19 9UR
Sainsbury	65 The Broadway, Stoneleigh	KT17 2HP
Vale Road Post Office	173 Vale Road, Cuddington	KT19 0PJ
Bourne Hall	Spring Street, Ewell	KT17 1UF
Epsom Downs		
The Shop on the Corner	Langley Vale	KT18 6AW
McColls	Tattenham Corner	KT18 5QG
Ashtead		
Marks and Spencer	The Street	KT21 1AA
McColls	The Street	KT21 1AW
Tesco Express	Craddocks Parade	KT21 1QJ
Gary's Greengrocers	Barnett Wood Lane	KT21 2DB

## CONTACT US

### Parish Office:

**Church House, Church Street, Epsom,  
KT17 4PX Phone: 01372 722567**

**E-mail: [smartinsepsom@btconnect.com](mailto:smartinsepsom@btconnect.com)**

**Website: [www.stmartinsepsom.org](http://www.stmartinsepsom.org)**

**Opening hours are Mondays, Wednesday, Thursdays & Fridays  
9.30am to 12.30pm**

**The Revd Nick Parish – Vicar – 01372 743336**

**Email: [vicar@stmartinsepsom.org](mailto:vicar@stmartinsepsom.org)**

**The Revd Canon Adrian Esdaile - Priest in Retirement - 01372 723770**

**Email: [esdaileadrian@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:esdaileadrian@yahoo.co.uk)**

**(available for Contemplative Prayer, Counsel,  
Spiritual Direction and the Healing Ministry)**

## COLLECT

O Lord Jesus Christ,  
who at your first coming sent your  
messenger  
to prepare your way before you:  
grant that the ministers and  
stewards of your mysteries  
may likewise so prepare and make  
ready your way  
by turning the hearts of the  
disobedient to the wisdom of  
the just,  
that at your second coming to  
judge the world  
we may be found an acceptable  
people in your sight;  
for you are alive and reign with  
the Father  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

## FIRST READING

### Zephaniah 3:14-end

*A reading from the book of the prophet Zephaniah.*

Sing aloud, O daughter Zion;  
shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult  
with all your heart, O daughter  
Jerusalem! The LORD has taken  
away the judgements against you,  
he has turned away your enemies.  
The king of Israel, the LORD, is in  
your midst; you shall fear disaster  
no more. On that day it shall be  
said to Jerusalem: Do not fear, O  
Zion; do not let your hands grow  
weak. The LORD, your God, is in  
your midst, a warrior who gives  
victory; he will rejoice over you  
with gladness, he will renew you  
in his love; he will exult over you  
with loud singing as on a day of  
festival. I will remove disaster from  
you, so that you will not bear  
reproach for it. I will deal with all  
your oppressors at that time. And  
I will save the lame and gather the  
outcast, and I will change their  
shame into praise and renown in  
all the earth. At that time I will  
bring you home, at the time when  
I gather you; for I will make you  
renowned and praised among all  
the peoples of the earth, when I

restore your fortunes before your  
eyes, says the LORD.

## CANTICLE Isaiah 12:2-end

**R** *Shout aloud and sing for joy,  
for great in your midst is the  
Holy One of Israel.*

Surely God is my salvation;  
I will trust, and will not be afraid,  
for the LORD God is my strength  
and my might;  
he has become my salvation.  
With joy you will draw water  
from the wells of salvation. **R**

And you will say on that day:  
Give thanks to the LORD,  
call on his name;  
make known his deeds among the  
nations;  
proclaim that his name is exalted.  
Sing praises to the LORD,  
for he has done gloriously;  
let this be known in all the earth. **R**

*[Shout aloud and sing for joy, O  
royal Zion,  
for great in your midst is the Holy  
One of Israel.]*

## Or Psalm 146.4-end

## SECOND READING

### Philippians 4:4-7

*A reading from the letter of Paul  
to the Philippians.*

Rejoice in the Lord always; again  
I will say, Rejoice. Let your  
gentleness be known to everyone.  
The Lord is near. Do not worry  
about anything, but in everything  
by prayer and supplication with  
thanksgiving let your requests be  
made known to God. And the  
peace of God, which surpasses  
all understanding, will guard your  
hearts and your minds in Christ  
Jesus.

## GOSPEL Luke 3:7-18

*Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus  
Christ according to Luke.*

John said to the crowds that  
came out to be baptised by  
him, "You brood of vipers! Who

warned you to flee from the wrath  
to come? Bear fruits worthy of  
repentance. Do not begin to say  
to yourselves, 'We have Abraham  
as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God  
is able from these stones to raise  
up children to Abraham. Even now  
the axe is lying at the root of the  
trees; every tree therefore that  
does not bear good fruit is cut  
down and thrown into the fire."  
And the crowds asked him, "What  
then should we do?" In reply he  
said to them, "Whoever has two  
coats must share with anyone  
who has none; and whoever has  
food must do likewise." Even tax-  
collectors came to be baptised,  
and they asked him, "Teacher,  
what should we do?" He said  
to them, "Collect no more than  
the amount prescribed for you."  
Soldiers also asked him, "And  
we, what should we do?" He said  
to them, "Do not extort money  
from anyone by threats or false  
accusation, and be satisfied with  
your wages." As the people were  
filled with expectation, and all  
were questioning in their hearts  
concerning John, whether he might  
be the Messiah, John answered  
all of them by saying, "I baptise  
you with water; but one who is  
more powerful than I is coming; I  
am not worthy to untie the thong  
of his sandals. He will baptise you  
with the Holy Spirit and fire. His  
winnowing-fork is in his hand, to  
clear his threshing-floor and to  
gather the wheat into his granary;  
but the chaff he will burn with  
unquenchable fire." So, with many  
other exhortations, he proclaimed  
the good news to the people.

## POST COMMUNION

We give you thanks, O Lord, for  
these heavenly gifts;  
kindle in us the fire of your Spirit  
that when your Christ comes again  
we may shine as lights before his  
face;  
who is alive and reigns now and  
for ever.

# Sunday Homily

## THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

12 DECEMBER 2021

YEAR C

“One who is more powerful than I is coming;  
I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals.  
He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”

Luke 3:16

### Illustration

The book *Letters for Aunty Flo: Journal of a Reluctant Disciple*, by Graham Young, is humorous and challenging, daring its readers to let their lives be opened to the possibility of radical changes in their attitudes, values and activities. David, a young man who takes a job in a new town, writes of his experiences in regular letters to his Aunty Flo back home. His new church teaches him about a repentance that is more than the negative act of saying sorry; it is also the positive process of changing our minds, of going against the tide, the normal flow, of going “anti-flow” (which is where his Aunty comes in).

He is challenged about where he chooses to live, the kind of car he thinks he should be driving, how he spends his free time and his salary, the friends he identifies with, his reactions to injustice overseas and on his street, what peacemaking, racism and sexism mean, what he celebrates and prays for – in short, his life is turned upside down, the premises of his Christian faith radically exposed and his discipleship of Christ challenged. Personal repentance becomes radically life-changing for David and for the society around him. In short, David learns that to live out the salvation of God is to live life as an anti-flow person, a radical disciple.

### Gospel Teaching

The salvation of God may not look like the salvation that the world tells us is our right, where external cleansing ceremonies are considered enough and sufficient to welcome home the Messiah. John the Baptist characteristically says it as it is – the Saviour is nigh, the crowds are not ready for him, and the need for repentance is urgent. For those unprepared, the coming kingdom will seem like wrathful judgement.

John sternly warns the people of the need for their unreal and sinful lives to be remade and restored. What is demanded is an internal repentance, a revolution of the inner nature, and, though he could point them to the urgency of their situation, and make it felt in his anger and in his baptism by water, John also knew that he was not the one who could bring deep change. He was not the one who was

able to reach down to the inmost secret sin and bring freedom. John's baptism by water, then, is a symbol, an outward ceremony, a preparation for the reception of Christ's life within. It is not sufficient. John prepared his listeners for the coming fire of Christ's baptism with the Holy Spirit, a powerful fire to be unquenchably warming, searching and regenerating to those who are ready and open.

## Application

To preach the Gospel of salvation is so much more than telling people of their sins, whether to wrap them up in guilt or to comfort them with the conformity of their lives to socially acceptable norms. We are encouraged into a one-sided view of the coming Lord Jesus in all the social events of Advent – the manger services with children dressed up as sparkling angels, cuddly sheep, caring shepherds, and cute Marys and Josephs; the cosiness of scenes of mulled wine, log fires and warm mince pies; the sentimental indulgence of present giving, especially to children. A complete picture of Advent must include the call to discipleship, the radical challenge of the prophets to the salvation of God, the turning we need in order to be restored, renewed and remade in the love and forgiveness of God, and so to turn our world upside down in his otherness, and with his saving power.

This year, let's not jump ahead too quickly to Christmas and the baby in the manger, but hear and respond to the challenge of the prophets in Advent. The voice of the world in Advent tells us extravagantly to multiply what we and our loved ones have; the voice of the Lord in John the Baptist tells us to divide what we all have and share with those who have not. The voice of the world encourages us into over-indulgence and over-satisfaction of our hunger; the voice of the Lord tells us to satisfy our neighbours' hunger. Why not consider some radical ways in which you and your family can give and share with the poor, whether in your neighbourhood or overseas, this Advent?

**MONDAY****13 DECEMBER**

Numbers 24:2-7.

15-17

Psalm 25:3-8

Matthew 21:23-27

**TUESDAY****14 DECEMBER**

Zephaniah 3:1-2.

9-13

Psalm 34:1-6.

21-22

Matthew 21:28-32

**WEDNESDAY****15 DECEMBER**

Isaiah 45:6b-8. 18.

21b-end

Psalm 85:7-end

Luke 7:18b-23

**THURSDAY****16 DECEMBER**

Isaiah 54:1-10

Psalm 30:1-5.

11-end

Luke 7:24-30

**FRIDAY****17 DECEMBER**

Genesis 49:2.

8-10

Psalm 72:1-5.

18-19

Matthew 1:1-17

**SATURDAY****18 DECEMBER**

Jeremiah 23:5-8

Psalm 72:1-2.

12-13. 18-end

Matthew 1:18-24

**REFLECTION**

**W**e are getting close now, and our readings look back for hints that will help us understand what is about to happen.



The Marriage of Ruth, nave ceiling of Ely Cathedral.  
Angelina Dimitrova / Shutterstock.com

Isaiah reminds us again that

there is only one God in the

universe. Zephaniah tells us that this God makes allowances and rescues people from the consequences of their failings. Genesis, Jeremiah and Numbers explore the long-cherished dream of a ruler like King David, from the house of Judah. It is all leading to a long-planned but still unexpected birth.

In Friday's Gospel reading we turn to Matthew and his long list of names. Among the distinguished men we find some surprising women: Tamar, who bore children to her father-in-law; Rahab, the Canaanite prostitute; Ruth the Moabite; and finally an unmarried mother – "Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah".

God's plan does not take the obvious route, or use the obvious people. We are nearly ready for the birth of the king in the stable.

**PRAYER**

God for whom we watch and wait,  
you sent John the Baptist to prepare the way of your Son:  
give us courage to speak the truth,  
to hunger for justice,  
and to suffer for the cause of right,  
with Jesus Christ our Lord.

PART III – CELEBRATION  
AND SONG

**G**audete (meaning “rejoice”) Sunday is the third Sunday of Advent, and is when Christians focus on celebration rather than penitence. Rose-coloured vestments may be worn, the pink candle lit on the Advent wreath and the readings emphasise the joyful anticipation of God With Us.

This year 17 December falls on Friday, and is when we move into the Late Advent Weekdays – the final countdown to Christmas. Traditionally on these days the O Antiphons or Greater Antiphons are sung. An antiphon is a response, usually sung in plainsong (a traditional style of music dating from the Middle Ages, sometimes known as Gregorian chant). The response is sung to a psalm or other sung part of a service, and in the Anglican Communion during Advent the O Antiphons are usually sung to the Magnificat at Evensong.

Each of the *O Antiphons* is a name for Jesus, one of the attributes prophesied by Isaiah and others. They start on 17 December with *O Sapientia* (O Wisdom – Isaiah 11:2; 28:29), followed by *O Adonai* (*Adonai* – the Hebrew word for Lord – Isaiah 33:22); *O Radix Jesse* (Root of Jesse – Isaiah 11:1. 10); *O Clavis David* (Key of David – Isaiah 22:22); *O Oriens* (Sunrise – Isaiah 9:2); *O Rex Gentium* (King of the nations – Isaiah 2:4); and *O Emmanuel* (Emmanuel – Isaiah 7:14).

The O Antiphons date back to the eighth century, but you may be more familiar with them in the form of a popular Advent carol. Originally written in Latin by an unknown author, “Veni, veni, Emmanuel” translates as “O come, O come, Emmanuel”, and is based on the O Antiphons. The familiar melody is believed to be of French origin and was probably added a hundred years later, while the Latin was translated into English by John Mason Neale in the mid nineteenth century.

The O Antiphons also form a rather quirky little puzzle. If you read the first letters of the Latin titles backwards you’ll read “Ero Cras”, which translates as: “Tomorrow, I will come”.

Edited by  
Caroline Hodgson  
and  
Heather Smith



Third week of Advent

Monday 13 December to  
Saturday 18 December  
2021

# Called to be generous

Katharine Smith *reflects on* Luke 3:7-18

**W**e've heard John's call for repentance in preparation for the coming of the Lord. We've been excited by the prophetic words of Isaiah, promising justice, peace and freedom. We've been warned about wars, earthquakes and other natural disasters. These are all big ideas encompassing nations, governments and creation itself. So how do we relate them to our everyday life?

In today's Gospel reading John addresses smaller groups of people and individuals who ask what they should do, specifically, to prepare the way of the Lord. They speak for us, who also wait and wonder. John could just as well be talking directly to us, his voice fresh, clear and resounding across the centuries. He calls us to be

generous – to give from what we have to those who lack the basics. He calls us to be honest and to act with integrity in our employment and business affairs. We're not to take advantage of those weaker than ourselves and to accept with thanksgiving what we do have.

When his message gets personal like this, John is not a comforting and reassuring presence. He's challenging, speaking out against the values of too many of us in this world. If John demands so much of us, what will be required by the one who is more powerful than him?

John speaks with "many other exhortations", and in doing so proclaims the good news to the people. It seems you can't have the good news without the challenge. 🍊



**Lord Jesus, you call us to lives of loving generosity, honesty, integrity and humility. With the baptism of your Holy Spirit we pray that you will walk alongside us to protect and guide us, as we seek to obey that call and to live in fellowship with you. Amen.**

## Keeping Christ in Christmas

### Part 6 – Christmas lights

by Heather Cooke

In our city streets and homes the lights have been switched on long ago. Indeed, in every town, it seems, there is at least one house that is a riot of flashing lights – Santas, reindeer, fir trees and snowmen.

For Christians, as well as for those celebrating a secular Christmas, lights are an integral part of the season – we have been lighting Advent candles in our churches,

the third one today, to remind us of the light of Christ. And today is Gaudete Sunday, when the penitential theme of the season is suspended, and in many churches the rose-coloured candle is lit, to symbolise the joy that is inherent in the story of salvation.

Through him we have been brought out of the darkness of sin and death. This week we can keep the Christ in Christmas if we see every Christmas light as a faint reflection of his glorious light.

*"Jesus, Light of the world, shine upon us!"* 🍊

“ **I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth.**”

Zephaniah 3:19

## Books of the Old Testament – Deuteronomy

by Gillian Cooper

Its name means “second law”, a reference to Deuteronomy as a revision and expansion of the laws of Exodus. But in fact it is not a book not about law, but about grace.

The Israelites have nearly made it. They can see their new home across the Jordan. But before they move in, they need to be reminded who

they are and how they got there. Deuteronomy tells of the covenant between God and the people. God promises to guide and protect; the people promise to be loyal to the rules of the treaty that will make them the people God wants. Everyone wins. There are many rules, but they are sensible, creating a peaceful and prosperous society. Importantly, they are only there because God rescued people from slavery. Grace came first: unearned, undeserved salvation.

They are not saved and protected because they keep God's Law – they keep God's Law because they have been saved and protected. They are given a creed to recite in Deuteronomy 26 and they retell the story down the generations, so that they can never forget. 🍊

