

Parish of Great Chesham: Moving Forward Together in Prayer

Now we're in the middle of our sermon series on how Jesus prepared (and was prepared by God) for his ministry on earth and seeing what we can learn about preparing to bring the Good News to those in the village and those we meet in our daily lives. And on a very practical front we're looking to improve the car park which has become increasingly muddy in the recent heavy rain! We're also starting to look forward to spring and to Easter and the next village edition of 'The Tin Tabernacle Times' which we take to all the houses in the village and which is a great opportunity to meet people and talk to them.

St. Mary's Church

We thank God for the gospel going out through preaching and books given away over Christmas, as a large team of dedicated gospel servants helped to make sure all ran smoothly. Life Explored is now two weeks in, with several guests eager to look into life with Jesus from a wide variety of current positions. We give thanks that several people have come forward to serve in key district and parish roles from the congregation. **Please pray** for them in their service, for our continued witness to newcomers, for people to receive a warm welcome every Sunday, for preparations for Easter and for the continued growth of our resumed 7pm service. **Pray** particularly for Paul Brooks and Ruth Brown in their demanding service to know the peace and equipping of the Spirit. The church continues to grieve the loss of Betty James and John Brackley, and several others are grieving for family members. There is resurrection hope, but also mourning: pray we would rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn.

Dear friends across the Parish,

We are now well into the New Year, but memories of the joy of the advent season and Christmas services still linger, with the many opportunities taken to invite friends and to welcome visitors into all our churches across the Parish. What a privilege to have the freedom to worship Christ and to share our faith openly, a privilege that many of our brothers and sisters across the world don't have.

We were reminded by Matt Searles, at the Parish wide prayer gathering, of Psalm 96:3 – *“Declare his glory among the nations, his marvellous deeds among all peoples.”* Our Christian faith is not something to be kept to ourselves within the walls of the church, but to be lived out and shared in both word and deed. It is so encouraging to see that happening in the Parish through regular groups for seniors, teenagers & young families, through Foodbank and CAP debt counselling and the life skills course, and through the bereavement course, and Life Explored and Christianity Explored courses (and in countless other ways).

I expect you will already have heard something about the “Real Lives” Mission week, from October 11th-18th, with the visit of Roger Carswell and others, and the Elgiva theatre booked for a series of invitation events. It promises to be a wonderful week for the town and will require much prayer and participation from across all the districts. Do put the dates in your diary now, and look out for more information of how to be involved.

As I write, the Team Rector post has been advertised, and we are praying for good applications to come in. By the time you read this, the deadline will be past, and we will be praying for wisdom in shortlisting and interviewing, which will take place on March 4th. Please pray that the Patronage Board who select the Team Rector may be full of wisdom and grace from God's Spirit in their decision making, as we trust that God will faithfully provide the right person to lead the Parish and St Mary's into the future.

It has been a joy to welcome Simon Winn to the staff team as interim minister for Christ Church and St George's, and we continue to pray for Jonathan Berry who is unwell. In all things we are dependent upon God, and so all we do must be saturated in prayer. Let's be encouraged in what we hear from around the districts in the rest of this bulletin, and be committed in prayer for one another...

With love in Christ,

John Shepherd

Christ Church

Bishop Alan licensed Rev Simon Winn as our interim team vicar on December 18th - thank you to all who came to show support. A few days later our Christmas Carol Service, which brought together the popular Waterside Christmas Community Choir for another year, was packed. Locals enjoyed carols, special choir items, readings and a talk from Rev Tim Yates, followed by mulled wine and mince pies. Simon was involved in leading the Christmas services and now, as we've journeyed through Epiphany and Candlemas, our focus turns to Lent. During Lent we are planning to meet, on five Tuesday evenings to follow a course together with St George's, based on a book by Simon Reed called 'Followers of the Way: ancient discipleship for modern Christians'. Thirty of us enjoyed a 'big breakfast' on a Saturday morning in January. Youth on Mondays, Tots on Thursdays continue, and on Saturday February 22nd we host a pancake party for the community. Please pray for us as we seek to discern more clearly how we should be serving the Waterside community and for our ministry among families and children.

Emmanuel Church

We enjoyed the buzz of Christmas, kicked off by having a presence in town at the Christmas in Chesham event, and with the TYPE teenagers leading an Advent Sunday celebration. We've started the New Year on Sundays and homegroups by focussing on our "frontlines" – being encouraged to live for God and make a difference wherever we are and whatever we do. The message of Amos has been a sobering challenge to the evening congregation. Our seniors enjoyed a New Year tea party, and the women of Emmanuel were encouraged to "delight in God" at an excellent breakfast. Our verse for 2020 is "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news" and our desire is to keep looking outwards to make Jesus known. **Please Pray for:** those doing the Christianity Explored course; a DCC day away on March 7th to refresh our vision; wisdom to know what to do with a small building that is often full on a Sunday morning; Messy Church to reach local families in the district.

Hope Church

It is now a full year since Hope Church began to form and grow. The headlines from the recent months are very mixed. The church was benefitting greatly from Jonathan Berry's Bible teaching particularly, before he had to take sick leave. We pray for him daily as a congregation, for his recovery and future ministry. We had a blessed Christmas period, with well attended Christingle and Carol services. Worshipping numbers have held steady in recent months, with 60-70 gathered including the children, who regularly number 15 or so. Highlights have included a new year congregational breakfast, and a family Dedication service, with visitors boosting the congregation beyond 100. Currently we are focussed on establishing our purpose, vision and values so we can decide our priorities in community ministry. Plans include Messy Church, developing our relationship with Ivingswood School, CAP Lifeskills, a possible Café, and reflecting the Emmanuel emphasis this year on personal witness. We are particularly grateful for our partnership with Emmanuel, and the availability of preachers from the Parish team to support us through this period whilst Jonathan is unwell.

St George's

The congregation at St George's received a 'double whammy' with the news last year that Revd. Simon Cansdale and our own much-loved vicar, Sylvester, were moving on. We prayed, carried on and continued praying. We have been blessed by the arrival of Revd. Simon Winn as our locum vicar. We have seen new folk at services since Simon's arrival, and St George's have great plans for the future.

We continue to pray for St Mary's, that they may be blessed with a new Rector -the post has been advertised, so we await developments. Evidence of the power of prayer runs through this report. We at St George's would like to suggest a couple of pointers for prayer:-

We should pray for the parish, for its growth spiritually and that the best Rector available feels called to the parish.

We should pray for Revd. Simon Winn and his wife, Lizzi, who have re-energised St George's and Christ Church.

St John's Ashley Green

'It can be easy to jump straight into a new year, and skip over taking the time to look back, with God, and notice all that God has been doing. Although it has been a tough year, as I reflect on the past twelve months there is much to be thankful for, and I praise God for his faithfulness and steadfast love towards us as a Church family. Having decided as a DCC that in this season we want to engage more with the families, children and young people in our community, it has been really encouraging to welcome several new families into the church and be able offer some children's ministry, having launched Sunday school/ children's church, in the Autumn. Please do pray for us as we seek to partner with God in his mission in this area of ministry, in particular for the establishing of a children's church team, and for wisdom as we seek to grow this ministry. Over Advent and Christmas it was wonderful to celebrate Christ's birth with many from our wider community, be that through Christingle, the Village Carol Service, our fancy dress nativity, along with our usual Christmas services, and I thank each and every member of our church family for the many ways in which they served, supported and upheld in prayer all of this, with the many missional opportunities that the season brings. As we seek God in this next year, please do pray for us as a church family: that we will become more aware of God's presence in our everyday lives and have the courage to join in with God in his mission.'

St John's Bellingdon

After a busy autumn we were onto a busy Advent and Christmas. We started by delivering our specially printed Bellingdon Christmas cards to all the houses in the village and to Asheridge. Then onto our Christmas special craft time for children and parents (and grandparents!), our service of 'Nine Lessons and Carols' at church and the village carols at Huge Farm before celebrating Christmas Day.