

Dear Friends,

The last e-news of the year! Ruth and I pray that you will have a peaceful and joyful Christmas, despite all that we have lost and all those we are unable to be with. God is with us, and may He fill your hearts and homes with His presence and His love. /'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it'/. Despite the terrible news about the virus in recent days, I keep hearing of church members who have had their first dose of the vaccine, it feels like there is an end coming, though there are still grim times to come before we get there. I pray that the light of Jesus will shine all the more brightly for you when darkness is deeper around us.

Christmas Services: We're looking forward to seeing many of you on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. The 5pm Nativity service has been cancelled due to low bookings, and hopefully everyone else has booked in for the service you would like to attend. If you are following from home, the 3pm Nativity service on Christmas Eve, 9.30pm 'Midnight Mass' on Christmas Eve, and 10.30am Christmas Day service will all be streamed on Youtube. Christmas morning will be a communion. The service on Sunday 27th will not be live streamed, but you will have plenty of services and reflections to catch up on from the channel! It's here, in case you've not already got the link:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCS_rhJBAJTiXz3kIXLMN_Xw. Please do share this around family and friends, its so much easier to invite people to click on a link than for them to brave going to a new church for the first time!

New on the Youtube channel this week: the 4th and last of our Advent Reflections <https://youtu.be/Fk7N8nNqI-g> and a Christmas message from the Vicar <https://youtu.be/ZRKYe2PGEfs>. Yes I know it was Noah in the ark and not Moses, it's been a long year...! The 9 lessons and carols service is available to view, as well as the piano concert.

A very big ***thankyou ***to our musicians, tech crew, worship leaders, churchwardens, and others who are contributing to our Christmas services - every single one has been a challenge, but people have responded magnificently. God even kept the worst of the rain off during 'Carols by Torchlight' on Monday evening, and we hope everyone enjoyed the chance to sing.

A few other thankyou's: I'd like to thank Ruth, who has been an absolute Godsend this year, and is probably fed up of reminding me of the things I've forgotten, or setting straight some of my stranger ideas. Her work with schools and with the new all-age services has been fantastic, I don't know how church leaders cope who are trying to navigate all this on their own. Thankyou to the fantastic staff team at both churches, the wardens and Readers, prayer leaders, musicians, PCC and church committees, and our two Treasurers Rob and Frances, who have had more than their fair share of stresses! And I'd like to thank Becky, Lily and Chris for letting their home be turned into 'church' once a week, and for just being awesome. And thankyou to all of you for your prayers, encouragement, and your ministry to one another and our community. It feels our churches have grown stronger as we've faced this together.

One final thought. In November we gave £4000 away, £1000 to each of our mission partners. Which seems like a bizarre thing to do in a year when St James income was down £20,000, and we faced the prospect of running out of cash by next summer. 3 weeks later, on the same day, St James recieved a £4024 rebate on Parish Share from the diocese, and St Peters recieved a gift of £5000. What we give to God, He gives back with interest. We can trust Him.

May God bless you all this Christmas, and into the new year.

David and Ruth

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St James and St Peters on

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