

January 2021

**ST JOHN'S LOCKS HEATH**  
Life • Hope • Joy

# HAPPY NEW YEAR

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## Welcome

*Welcome to St John's Locks Heath. As we look forward with expectancy to the coming year, we hope you will join with us as we look for and experience God's life, hope and joy for 2021*

## Church Services

While life looks a little different, the expectation that God meets with us as we gather in his church does not change

We hold two short services on Sundays with a focus on being in God's presence, reading his written Word and hearing a talk or sermon, both include music to help us frame our thoughts to worship.

Join us online at 9am (for a more structured, liturgical service), or 11am (for a more informal service) either service on our YouTube channel.

## Outside these four walls...

The Church is not only about Sunday services. We have a lot going on! There's Messy Church, Toddlers, prayer meetings, small groups, choir, & Alpha -all online - to name but a few

We aren't meeting together in person exactly as we would like but we firmly believe that we use whatever means we can to encourage, chat to and connect with each other.

Please remember that we each have a part to play in being 'the church'. Pray for, connect with, encourage and reach out to as many people as you can at this time.

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## GET IN TOUCH

[www.sjlh.org.uk](http://www.sjlh.org.uk)

[office@sjlh.org.uk](mailto:office@sjlh.org.uk)

01489 578 082

## Important - Please Read

Whilst the more stringent measures put in place by the government last Tuesday do still permit acts of public worship, the leadership team have taken the tough decision to only offer Sunday services online until our local area sees significant improvements in terms of CV.

Our ability to do this has been confirmed by further guidance received from our bishop, who has given permission for parishes to 'make decisions for the coming six weeks according to local circumstances'. The reasoning for this decision has become even clearer since the measures we took on 23 Dec.

1. The new CV mutation is clearly far more transmissible. Government data for the Fareham post code area indicates that 656 have tested positive for CV in the last 7 days, a 50% increase on the prior period. One of the key risk reducers in a confined space is to increase circulation of fresh air, but this measure is not practicable in church in our current weather conditions.

2. Many of those who enable us to run our services in church are considered by the NHS to be more vulnerable, due to their age, pre-existing medical conditions or because they live with someone in those categories. We do not feel it is right to expect them to place themselves at risk in this way, given the latest, unequivocal medical advice.



3. The two principal hospitals that serve our community, Portsmouth and Southampton, are under ever-increasing strain. Portsmouth Hospitals reported 242 admissions over the last 7 days, a 20% increase on the prior period. University Hospital Southampton reported a 55% increase for the same period

4. The government advice is clear 'It is recommended that, where possible, places of worship continue to stream worship or other events to avoid large gatherings'.

We aim to retain 2 distinctive services on Sunday, at 9am (liturgical morning worship) and 11am (contemporary worship), which will be live streamed from church, with just 3 people actually in the building.

Some of the content, such as sermons & music, may be pre-recorded and we are delighted that we have guest preachers for the next three services.

Continued on next page

## Important - Please Read



This coming Sunday, we welcome Rev Dr Richard Wyld (pictured above), the Director of the 'Portsmouth Pathway', our diocese's course for training licensed lay ministers and ordinands.

For the 11am service, we are going to incorporate a Zoom session, allowing some interaction and group prayer and will develop that over the coming weeks.

These services will be available on our YouTube channel at [www.bit.ly/SJLHYouTube](http://www.bit.ly/SJLHYouTube)

We are also reintroducing our 'social' ZOOM at 10.15am on Sunday – at <https://bit.ly/CoffeewithZOOM>

The church will continue to be open for personal prayer Monday to Friday, from 9am – midday; please do sanitise on entry and observe 2m distancing if others are present.

We are very grateful for the many messages of support and affirmation for the decision we made before Christmas, but we do understand that some will be disappointed by our sticking with this.

We shall continue to do our utmost to offer an engaging range of services online and hope that you are able to join in with this worship as best you can.

Our primary concern remains the health and welfare of all who visit our church and all who work in it.

We shall review our situation at the end of this month and please keep a look out for weekly news in the meantime.

With thanks,

**Trevor Pritchard & Linda Miatt**  
**Your Churchwardens**

## Sunday Services

Each week you can view the service live on our YouTube channel at 9am or 11am  
<https://bit.ly/SJLHYouTube>

You can always catch up with weeks you've missed too, as there have been some great and encouraging messages over the previous months.

Our services continue to live stream at **9am & 11am.**

You can host a 'watch party' on Facebook with the service and watch at the same time as friends and family. This facility has the added option of allowing real-time comments to help us feel connected to each other.

We're also adding a Zoom session to our 11am service. It will be part of the service so watch out for the instructions during the live stream.

We are also reintroducing our 'social' ZOOM at 10.15am on Sunday – at <https://bit.ly/CoffeewithZOOM>



## Not techy? Don't worry

If you don't have the tech, or aren't able to use it, we have some other options.

If you don't have internet access, book in to services by phoning the office.

You can still dial-in and listen to the reading and talk from the comfort of your home. they will be available from Monday. Simply dial 01489 665885; the cost is whatever you would normally pay for a local call.

We know that there are many who are feeling quite isolated at this time so we would encourage you to get in touch with each other by whatever means you can. Pick up the phone and call people.

We also have a Pastoral Care Team who can help.

Our Pastoral Co-ordinator, Mike S, can always be contacted at [pastoral.care@sjlh.org.uk](mailto:pastoral.care@sjlh.org.uk)





## Children & Young People

Children's Sunday morning groups will continue to meet via Zoom during lockdown.

Connect Groups are running Sunday evenings on Zoom from 7pm (1st & 3rd Sundays)

## Weekday Activities

Messy Church is still running. Collect an activity pack from church then join the Zoom call at 4pm, second Wednesday of each month.

Toddler group has a video story and singing available on <https://bit.ly/SJLHYouTube> each week or you can join a 30 min live session on a Thurs morning on Zoom.

For all children's groups and activities contact Hazel Foster for links or for more information email. ([hazel@sjlh.org.uk](mailto:hazel@sjlh.org.uk))

## Alpha at St John's

Despite the challenges in our world at present, we know that God is active and working in our lives, and in drawing people to Himself, as they look for the meaning of life in such difficult days.

We are going to run the Alpha course, beginning on the **13th Jan (7.30pm)/14th January (12.30pm)**. We will start on Zoom but hope to meet in person when we are allowed.

Alpha is a 10 week course, with a week off during half-term.

For more information or to register, please contact the office:  
01489 578082 or [office@sjlh.org.uk](mailto:office@sjlh.org.uk)

## December – What a month!

Wow, what an amazing month for the Children and Young people of St John's as they got together in many different ways to celebrate Christmas.

Right at the beginning of the month, there were many people cutting things out for the Messy Church Activity bags. We had a great session looking at how the shepherds' lives were changed forever on that first Christmas night and how our lives can also be changed by Jesus too. The children joined us for a Zoom session and then made their Jesus-in-a-manger biscuits, cards and trees at home.

Toddler group have had the Christmas story sent to them by video in their own home and each week they have been encouraged to make a toilet roll Nativity scene of their own.

It was lovely to see some of them in person, with other younger members of the community and their families for our Nativity Experience. This was an opportunity to hear the Nativity story, have a photo with our own Nativity scene and have some fun all by candle light in the church. It was great to see new faces and some that we hadn't seen for a while.



There was plenty of fresh air and exercise on offer too with the advent windows and a follow the QR code trail around the local area, both of which opened up the biblical story of Christmas to all.

Connect had Activity packs delivered to their door, followed by a Zoom Christmas party. Not quite the same as previous years, but still fun with lots of giggles.

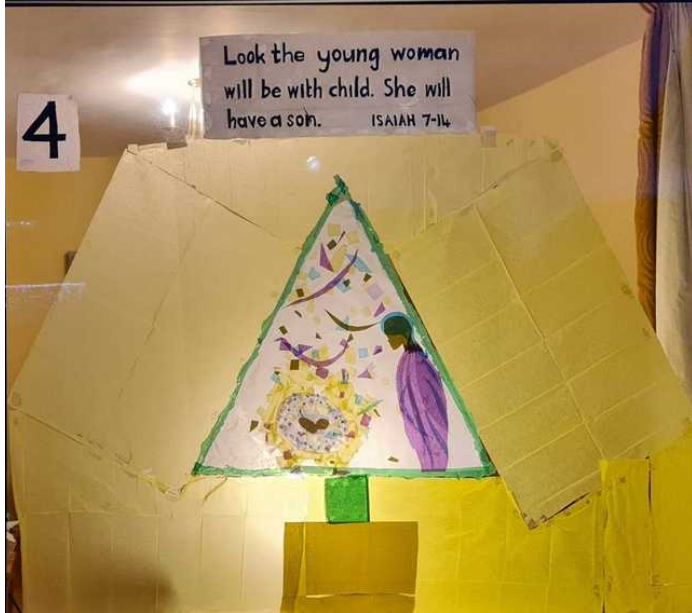
Thank you so much to all the amazing volunteers that help right across the board and for all your prayers that have helped to bring light into the darkness not only in December but during the whole of 2020 too.





# Advent Windows.

For those of you who weren't able to see the windows, here's just a few of the works of art we had around the Parish. Thank you to all who took part



# What's next?

Very many thanks to all who responded to our questionnaire, giving feedback that we can use in preparing our Parish Profile, which is the key document in our discernment process for appointing our next vicar.

We have prepared a document that summarises the key findings from this feedback and it will be sent to all on our electoral roll after it has been reviewed by the PCC on 11 Jan.

Our work on the Parish Profile is being done in the context of potentially big future changes in the size and shape of our deanery and diocese. The illustrative biblical references being used (Acts 27 & 28) compare St Paul's shipwreck in a violent storm with the impact of CV on the Church of England and also the rebuilding of the Temple, after exile, described in Ezra 3. We are encouraged to respond to our current challenges with both joy, for the new possibilities and lament, for what shall be lost.

The Church of England is facing an unprecedented challenge, as it seeks to restructure for the future. Our diocese is forecasting a deficit of £2.5m - £2.7m this year, out of a budget of some £7m. This translates into about 17 stipendiary posts that cannot be financed, out of approximately 82 in the diocese.



However, we are also facing a huge opportunity, to restructure in a way that is not constrained by current parochial boundaries.

The diocesan vision is to reduce burdens on stipendiary ministers, freeing them to be primarily leaders and for us all to be more missional, outwards facing and pastoral. Parishes are being encouraged to think about working in very close partnership with their neighbours, each specialising in different forms of ministry – ‘we cannot be all things to all people, so what can we stop doing?’ How can we transform the church, nationally and for us, in this locality, from maintenance to mission?

We consider this initiative to be an amazing and timely opportunity, with huge potential for us to prepare a Parish Profile which puts St John's forward as a ‘resourcing church’ for the western wards parishes of our deanery. As the PCC deliberates our proposals, we shall work with our Area Dean and Archdeacon, to determine how best to fold this into our Parish Profile. We shall do our best to keep you all posted and ask you to keep this/us in your prayers . **The Churchwardens**



# Personal Announcements

We would like to share the news that our little girl, Lana, has now been officially adopted into our family. Thank you to everyone who has supported and prayed for us throughout the adoption process, it is very much appreciated. We are very blessed. **Charlene, John and Joshua.**

For those who haven't yet heard, John Ganley & David Young died just before Christmas.

Our prayers are with his family at this time.

Their funerals were held in the church and will be available to watch for a time on our special YouTube Channel

<http://bit.ly/SJLHLifeEvents>

Thank you for all the beautiful cards and words of encouragement I have received from my church family.

I am overwhelmed by the kindness I and my family have been shown.

**Val Y**

## Your notices here!

Do you have some good news! Please share it with us if you let Abi know by the 20th of the month we can include it.

[office@sjlh.org.uk](mailto:office@sjlh.org.uk)

A big thank you to Shanti for organising the delivery of a small Christmas cake treats for all the Fellowship members, many of whom can't get to church at the current time.

The Bible reading plans produced by the Bible Reading Fellowship are used by a number of the congregation.

There are four different plans to suit different interests. Most pay an annual sub of £14.10 and the book comes every four months.

We are shortly to submit the annual order.

If you are interested and would like to know more please contact

Howard Mowbray 01489 573037

## Wise Words

If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is thank you, it will be enough.

Meister Eckhart

# Stewardship

*'For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.'* (Matthew 6:21)

Do you see the word 'stewardship' and instantly relate it to being asked for more money? If so, then you are probably in company with many others, but what exactly is the biblical meaning of 'stewardship'

The first principle is that God owns everything (see Ps 24:1) and we are simply managers or administrators, acting for Him.

The second principle is that we assume responsibility for taking good care of all that we are entrusted with. This applies to our world, our own possessions and resources and our unique personal gifts.

Thirdly, we are held accountable by God for how we have used what has been given to us.

This principle is illustrated most clearly, by Jesus, in the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30)

Then, finally, the bible makes it clear that good stewards will be richly rewarded by our heavenly Father.



We are raising this subject at the start of the year, because the events of last year have highlighted, with stark clarity, how important it is for our church. Due to a 70% shortfall (about £29,000) in our income from lettings in 2020, we have consumed virtually all of our reserves. We met all of our commitments, including a 10% tithe to charities, but many parishes in our diocese have not been able to do so. Our diocese is forecasting a deficit in this year's budget of up to £2.7million (almost 40% of their budget); this equates to about 17 stipendiary posts that cannot be funded, out of approximately 82 in the diocese. So, yes, we are asking everyone to prayerfully review their giving and to consider whether it could be increased. We are also urging all regular givers to do this through the Parish Giving Scheme (PGS), which has huge advantages for us, in terms of administration, forecasting and cash flow. It also ensures that we can benefit from the government's 25% uplift, through the Gift Aid scheme. So if you are not giving through the PGS, please see the back page for more information or contact the church office – it is very simple to do.

'Stewardship is not just about giving money though. It is about giving of ourselves and our God-given time and talents. Last year also highlighted how much we depend on an ever-diminishing band of volunteers, to deliver all that we offer to our church family and our community.

Many of our willing helpers are of a 'certain age' and are amongst the more CV vulnerable. This dependency on our more senior volunteers became very clear last year. So as well as asking for increased giving, we are asking that we may all consider where our gifts lie and how we may use these to help build God's kingdom in Locks Heath.

This could be in many areas, such as: helping to run our worship (we are particularly in need of those with expertise in audio visual systems); as an Alpha course helper; being part of the children's and youth ministry team; part of the buildings and grounds maintenance team; offering hospitality such as Sunday morning refreshments and other events; IT and website skills; leading community projects etc.

The list goes on, and there is sure to be a vacancy that matches your skills and personality; please contact the office or speak with us if you can help (recognising that some of these things won't be done till we are through this pandemic).



We have heard it said that Jesus did not ask for volunteers, he called people to be disciples. Let's try and view stewardship in that context!

*'Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving' (Col 3:23-24)*

**Trevor & Linda**





## Parish Giving Scheme

The Parish Giving Scheme (PGS) is an established service for managing Direct Debit donations, designed to support churches to fund their mission and ministry.

It reduces the burden of work on church volunteers and provides a simple and secure service to donors.

The service is freely available to this church and makes it possible for donors to:

- Donate monthly, quarterly or annually by Direct Debit
- Sign up to inflation-linked giving annually
- Enhance your gift to your church by having Gift Aid at 25% added to your giving
- Give securely and donate anonymously, if you prefer

If you'd like to know more please contact the office



## Generous People

With all that said, we can only say, what a blessing it is to be part of a generous church. While we hope you will join in increasing monthly giving, we are very good at giving to one-off projects, and for this we are thankful!

During December we gave out over £775 in supermarket gift cards for families with Children from St John's School.

Although we are still working out the exact totals, we know our Christingle, collections for the Children's Society came to around £500

We raised over £700 for our Christmas Charities (AOK & Young Minds) and we delivered a huge number of gift boxes to Hawthorne Court residents.

Thank you so much for all those who contributed