

St. Matt's Midweek Update – 29th November 2024



Thank you to Mark for giving us a reflection this week as we look to Advent this weekend...

Last Sunday two of the testimonies shared related to difficult events that were happening in people's lives, but with reflection both were able to see that God brought good from those situations.

The verse that Jen shared was from Romans 8 and goes..." we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

So often when we think of "the good," our minds naturally lead us to hope for positive experiences, however this does not fit with what Paul wrote about in the rest of the paragraph. At the end of that verse Paul reminds us that we have been called according to God's purpose - God's goal is to make us more like Jesus and ready for heaven.

God doesn't keep our lives free from pain or struggle or frustration, and we know that we all have weaknesses and areas in our lives where God needs to shape us and help us grow to become more like him. Often it's the struggle and the pain in our lives that leads us to become stronger and to change.

And often when we are going through tough times, the only thing that keeps us going is the HOPE that the end goal will be worth all the struggles and hardships.

This week is the first Sunday in Advent and the candle we will be lighting represents HOPE. HOPE that was born in Bethlehem, HOPE that lives inside us and encourages us to keep going through the tough times, and HOPE in the future promise that the groaning, frustration, and suffering will be worth it as we become more like Jesus and ready for the second Advent.

Notices

As Mark said, it is the first Sunday of Advent this Sunday!

The church will be decorated, and we will be lighting our first Advent candle, so do come and join us.

We have two services this Sunday...

8am Book of Common Prayer communion service. A quiet small communion service in church, which anyone is welcome to come along to.

10am advent family service. Mike will be speaking to us and we will all be in church together. The Bible passage is Luke 1:28-43.

Next Sunday, we also have two services...

10am service with groups for our children and youth. We will also share communion together.

5pm service with communion.

Advent resources

I get quite a few emails through from charities and organisations, so I thought I'd share some of their advent resources and devotionals with you.

Tearfund have a series of short emails through advent that you can sign up to. Starting on 1 December, their *A Living Hope* emails will arrive in your inbox each Sunday, Monday, Wednesday and Friday during Advent. Through each email, you'll hear stories directly from their global teams, as well as Bible verses, videos and prayer points for places and situations where transformation is still needed. You can sign up here <https://www.tearfund.org/forms/advent-email-sign-up-form>

New Wine are launching the New Wine Advent Calendar this year. Download the New Wine App to join in with lots of treats and surprises during December. Each day, you'll uncover a new gift—whether it's a thoughtful message, a challenge to deepen your faith, or a special giveaway to brighten your day. Go to your app store to download the app.

There is an **Advent Quiet Day** on Saturday 14th December at St Benedict's Centre in West Malling. Advent has themes of darkness and light, of calamity and judgement, but also images of roads being made straight, of rivers in the desert, of hope and re-creation. At its heart is the story of Mary and her willingness to accept God's call despite her confusion and fears as she hears the angel's words – for nothing will be impossible with God.

On this Quiet day, spend time considering hearing those words for ourselves in our own times of darkness and light.

This event is organised in association with Rochester Diocese Spirituality Network. Please bring your own lunch. Suggested donation of £15-£25.

To book email: bookings@stbenedictscentre.org

The Church of England have produced a children's colouring page for each day of advent with a challenge and a prayer. Here is the file of them all [Advent 4.pdf](#)



Our **Christmas Event** for ladies is next week, so last push to buy your tickets and invite your friends! It's on Friday 6th December 7.30pm - 9.45pm.

Come and make some Christmas crafts & decorations, with mulled wine and Christmas nibbles throughout the evening. Tickets are £12 per person - which includes refreshments and anything you make.

This event is for women aged 14 and over.

You can buy your tickets

here <https://stmatts.churchsuite.com/events/add1rshq> or email me on office@stmattschurch.org.uk

Don't forget that men can meet up at Kevin's house while the ladies are doing crafts...

Men's meet up at Kevin's House, Friday 6th December from 6.30pm.

Beer, mulled wine and sausages round the fire in their wooded garden. Bring wellies and a drink of your choice and if you are musical perhaps an instrument so we can have a sing song of festive tunes if the evening pans out that way!!

(Subject to weather - if raining may need to postpone)

It would be helpful if you could sign up for this so Kevin has an idea of how many people are coming. You can sign up here <https://stmatts.churchsuite.com/events/dtkzm6xe>



Choir for the carol service - Rehearsals started this week but I'm sure you can still join in! The rest of the rehearsals are on Monday 2nd December, Tuesday 10th December, and Thursday 19th December (all 6pm - 7pm in church).

Hand bells for the nativity and carol service - rehearsals are after the morning service on the following Sundays (subject to confirmation): **8th December, 15th December.**

Children need to be age 9+ and must be accompanied by a parent or guardian at all practices and services for the hand bell ringing.



Christmas Services

As we get into the busy period and the diaries fill up, make sure you add our Christmas Services to your calendars...

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| Wednesday 18 th December 8pm | A Reflective Christmas (this is a quiet service for those who find the noise and chaos of other Christmas services hard) |
| Sunday 22 nd December 10am | Christmas Nativity |
| Sunday 22 nd December 7pm | Christmas Carols |
| Christmas Eve 4pm | Christingle Service |
| Christmas Eve 11.15pm | Midnight Communion |
| Christmas Day 10am | Family Christmas Celebration |

We will have flyers with all this information on in church from this Sunday, so please do take some and give them out to family, friends and neighbours.

I will also get this on social media and on our website next week, so you can share from there too!

Christmas offering and giant Christmas card!

Every year at Christmas we collect money for one of our mission partners, and this year it will be for MAF Uganda (the Bagumas). More details will follow about what they are raising money for at the moment.

One of the ways you can give is by signing our giant Christmas card instead of giving individual cards to people in church, and donating the money you would have spent. Jen is designing the front of the card and it will be unveiled on Christmas morning! We will have the inside of the card available in church soon for you to sign.

Parking

Please can I just remind you to park considerately (and legally!) when you come to church, especially if you use the disabled bay at the end of Gordon Road. A local resident got blocked in last week, so just a reminder to leave other cars enough space to get out, to not park too close to the corner of Gordon Road, and to display a disabled badge if you have one.

There are several local residents who use that disabled bay, so you may have to go further up Gordon Road or park outside the shop on High Brooms Road if it is in use.

Thank you.

Please do be in touch if you need any help or support at the moment.

We hope to see you on Sunday.