

ST JAMES' CHURCH
Brownhills



Following Jesus

THE MUSTARD SEED

www.stjameschurchbrownhills.co.uk



*Our mission is to worship God
and to serve the community by sharing the love of Jesus*

November 2020

November 2020: A month of Remembering

At the very start of November, we recognise that God's Church isn't only made up of all who trust in Jesus in this life, but also all those who are now in eternity. We also remember that as people who place our trust in Jesus, we're each sinners who have been made new and



so saved by grace. This means that we're saints!

Why not celebrate that God delights in you?

Why not celebrate that even though these are challenging times, we have the forgiveness Jesus died to bring us?

This year we're also focussing on remembering our loss and bereavement. Those who've received Christian funerals from us since March at St James' have been invited to receive from the Lord's care through attending a Service of Remembering. For members of our church family an opportunity will come (we pray) in December to gather to remember our loss of loved ones.



We'd never normally make such a distinction pre-Covid 19. We'd welcome all to attend in-person memorial services who would like to do so. The idea of remembering our loss online, too, would have been unknown to most of us. Thus we're reminded again of the ways Covid 19 has changed our lives in 2020.

Who do you love who you see no

longer and are missing at this time?

Make time to remember them by finding a stone and writing their name on it in chalk or with a marker pen.

You can place these before the cross in the chancel area after a Sunday service and receive socially distanced prayer ministry, as a sign or you offering your loved one to God and inviting God in to be with you in your remembering of them.

Next in November comes Remembrance Sunday – this year on 8th. This year, just like every year before it, we'll take time to ascribe worth to this occasion, recognising the sacrifices made by those who serve in wars. This occasion, too, has been made different this year but we'll nonetheless remember wars before the Lord and commit to work for peace, justice and freedom for those oppressed.



Last, as November comes to a close we remember that Advent will be here really soon and then Christmas. We start looking forward to remembering that Jesus came, that He is the greatest gift and that the Light He is will never be made dull. I'd encourage us all to actively start looking forward to the hope that was made real for all of humanity that first Christmas.

Let's each pray this prayer during November as we await the comfort and joy of Christmas: *God of hope, who brought love into this world, be the love that dwells between us. God of hope, who brought peace into this world, be the peace that dwells between us. God of hope,*

who brought joy into this world, be the joy that dwells between us. God of hope, the rock we stand upon, be the centre, the focus of our lives always, and particularly this time of the continued virus crisis. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

May we all remember that we're forgiven, that our loss matters to God, that people have sacrificed their lives fighting in wars, and that because of Jesus we can look to Advent and Christmas celebrating His Light that the darkness can't ever overcome.

With love and prayer, Rev'd Gayle

A Gayle



The tragedy of war is that it uses man's best to do man's worst – Harry Emerson Fosdick

Why should you bother to pray?

The great preacher C.H. Spurgeon once said this of prayer: 'God says to His own son: "Ask of Me and I will give you the nation for your inheritance." [Psalm 2:7-8] *If the royal and divine Son cannot be exempt from the rule of asking, that He may have; you and I cannot expect that rule to be relaxed in our favour. God will bless Elijah and send rain - but Elijah must pray for it.*' And God promises us that if we really seek Him, He will make sure that we find Him.

Church online

Among the number of new concepts introduced to us by the coronavirus pandemic is the idea of 'church online,' both among the Christian population and those less familiar with 'church.' Many ministers have commented that, while they may initially have struggled, the new format has worked, and has drawn in people who would not normally go to church; theirs or anyone else's.

One Church of England Diocese carried out a survey across its many benefices, receiving some 180 replies to its questions. Five-sixths, 84%, had made some kind of online provision for its work, with three-quarters, 76%, providing worship services. Over half did such more than once a week!

In total, the online church respondents had almost 1,300 participants on a Sunday, but these were augmented by a further almost 800 who tuned in subsequently. Normally, if you aren't at a church service, you've missed it. Not now! To have so many who followed the service subsequently, an increase of over three-fifths, 62%, of the original Sunday watchers, must say something about the usefulness of this format, popularity, and the convenience of being able to worship at an alternative time.

Do online services 'work'? For many, the overall answer is positive. "Although online services have (a number) of limitations, people can meet with God. Two people have come to faith through online services," wrote one minister. It enables the church to re-connect with those who have moved away, and not found another church to attend. "It's easier for people to come than to walk through a church door," said another.

"We have overcome being a physically dispersed rural church. We are now a church built on a praying community across 30 different people praying together morning and evening," was the testimony of another. Housebound people, providing they have the necessary facilities and technological 'know-how,' can also participate.

Is it worth all the bother? Evidently so, as over half, 55%, of the churches

Continued on next page

aim to continue online services once lockdown is over. Only 7% said they wouldn't, with the remaining 38% uncertain.

Two-fifths of the churches, 41%, found that their numbers watching the service had increased over the weeks of lockdown, but this was offset by the 45% who found their numbers decreased. The remaining 14% said they had stayed the same.

Overall, have online services been beneficial? In the technical sense, yes, as "we are more capable than we thought at first," said one respondent, but spoke for many. So new technical skills *have* been learned. "Planning online is very different it needs to be engaging and concise," said one person, so teaching skills presumably need to be sharpened also.

Faith-wise, as mentioned above, some have come to faith. Some have 'come back' to church. Many have watched for the first time. Some have watched services from other churches. Others, though, will have been put off by the format. "Online services are no substitute for a church service," wrote one leader, and another said, "There is opportunity to reach wider, but more difficult to go deeper."

The Soldier's Prayer

I asked God for strength, that I might achieve,
I was made weak, that I might learn humbly to obey.
I asked for health, that I might do greater things,
I was given infirmity, that I might do better things.
I asked for riches, that I might be happy,
I was given poverty, that I might be wise.
I asked for power, that I might have the praise of men,
I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God.
I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life,
I was given life, that I might enjoy all things.
I got nothing that I asked for
But everything that I had hoped for,
Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered.
I am among all men most richly blessed.

Soldier in American Civil War

Food Bank

Please note that the food Bank has changed its distribution day from Thursday to Tuesday. The opening times remain the same, and we are still open to receiving food donations from our congregation. More details from Mel or Roger.

Grace, Truth & Life Groups

There are now five GTL Groups which are now meeting on a regular basis. It would be good to think we could increase the number meeting, so if you would like to be involved, please speak to Revd Gayle in the first instance.

Telephone Prayer

If you would like any prayer ministry via the telephone, please contact Gayle on 07545 657 636, or a member of the Prayer Team.

Magazine Articles

If, in your reading, you find an article that you think bears repeating in the parish magazine, please let us know and we will try our best to include it in future issues.

Do more, learn more and be more.

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Historically, the Church of England has had its share of eccentric clergy. Even nowadays, hiding away in remote parishes, there are still some colourful clergy about. Clergy such as the elderly, Anglo-Catholic Uncle Eustace, who is incumbent in the small parish of St James-the-Least-of All, somewhere in Very Rural England. Eustace despairs of his nephew, Darren, who has become an Evangelical curate in a busy urban parish... and so he writes letters, to try and properly 'educate' Darren in parish life.

On the ferocity of the church's Bridge drive

The Rectory
St. James the Least

My dear Nephew Darren

Your suggestion that we should hold a sponsored hymn-singing bicycle ride through the village as a way of raising money was well-meant, but I am not wholly convinced it would suit our clientele here at StJames the Least of All.

You may have musical bike rides, but we have Bridge drives, although socially distanced at the moment, of course. But even at two metres apart, our Bridge games are generally as amiable and peaceful as bear baiting. Half of those attending will see the afternoon as an opportunity to catch up on local gossip and to exchange knitting patterns, the game of cards being a minor hindrance to these other activities. The other half arrive primed for a battle to the death, reluctantly conceding that eye-gouging is not allowed. They will demand total silence – which is wholly ignored by those at the tables discovering what Mrs Trumpington confided to Lady Driver halfway through 'Onward Christian Soldiers' at last Sunday's Mattins. The congregation is eternally grateful to Mrs Mitchell, who as a former

mill worker is able to lip read.

Refreshments have been hit hard by Covid-19 of course, and the fact that everyone has to bring their own sandwich and drink has rather spoiled the fun. Usually half our players regard lunchtime as an opportunity to put jam on the cards, spill tea on the score cards and make sure that the other tables get the egg and cress sandwiches while they corner the boiled ham; the others usually see it as an unwelcome interruption to the serious business of slaughtering their opponents. It is so sad that Covid-19 has halted this merry comradery.

As for drawing the raffle, it is the adult equivalent of ringing the school bell at going-home time. Half the players will immediately dash off to relay newly-mined seams of gossip throughout the village, leaving the others holding reproachful post-mortems with their partners over their bidding mistakes.

Reproaches are never too violent, however, since the chances are that they will all be meeting again the following afternoon round a socially distanced card table at another location, for yet another re-enactment of the slaughter at Agincourt. The only difference will be that the French and English were not entertained with tea and sandwiches at half time.

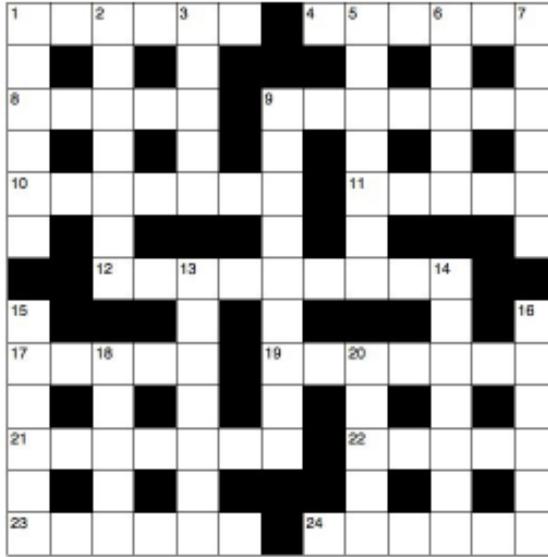
Your loving uncle,

Eustace

Always remember . . .

There are no strangers in our church –
just friends you haven't met

November



Crossword

Across

- 1 'The Lord Jesus... took bread, and when He had given – , he broke it' (1 Corinthians 11:24) (6)
- 4 'He has taken me to the banquet hall, and His – over me is love' (Song of Songs 2:4) (6)
- 8 Surrey town that hosts the National Christian Resources Exhibition (5)
- 9 Also known as Abednego (Daniel 1:7) (7)
- 10 Liken (Isaiah 40:18) (7)
- 11 A son of Etam, descendant of Judah (1 Chronicles 4:3) (5)
- 12 A part of the temple where the blood of a young bull was to be smeared (Ezekiel 45:19) (9)
- 17 'They make many promises, take false – and make agreements' (Hosea 10:4) (5)
- 19 Roman province to which Paul returned after evangelizing it on his first missionary journey (Acts 16:6) (7)
- 21 Material used to make baby Moses' basket (Exodus 2:3) (7)
- 22 'And feeble as – , in thee do we trust, nor find thee to fail' (5)
- 23 'The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep – to his voice' (John 10:3) (6)
- 24 Stalk carrying the sponge of wine vinegar given to Christ on the cross (John 19:29) (6)

Down

- 1 Elijah dug one round the altar he built on Mount Carmel and filled it with water (1 Kings 18:32) (6)
- 2 'I am not – of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes' (Romans 1:16) (7)
- 3 Buddhist term relating to belief in reincarnation (5)
- 5 Damascus disciple who, at God's command, restored the sight of the blinded Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:12) (7)
- 6 and 16 Horses: their sound (Jeremiah 50:11) (5) and their gait (Joel 2:4) (6)
- 7 A three (anag.) (6)
- 9 Athenian council addressed memorably by Paul (Acts 17:22) (9)
- 13 Abide by (Galatians 3:5) (7)
- 14 Persian princes (Daniel 3:2) (7)
- 15 Force (Galatians 6:12) (6)
- 16 See 6 Down (6)
- 18 Paste (anag.) (5)
- 20 How the cedars of Lebanon are described (Isaiah 2:13) (5)

Readings for November

The readings are the ones we will use in church and online.

1st November 2020 – Morning Service -
Ephesians 1 v 11–end & Luke 6 v 20–31

1st November 2020 – Evening Service -
Hebrews 11 v 32–ch 12 v 2

8th November 2020 – Morning Service -
Psalm 91 & John 15 v 9–17

8th November 2020 – Evening Service -
Revelation 21 v 1–7 (online)

15th November 2020 – Morning Service -
Psalm 147 v 1–11 & Matthew 8 v 5–9

15th November 2020 – Evening Service -
Psalm 98 & Luke 9 v 1–6

22nd November 2020 – Morning Service -
Psalm 95 & Matthew 25 v 31–end

22nd November 2020 – Evening Service -
Psalm 93 (online)

29th November 2020 – Morning Service -
John 14 v 1–8

29th November 2020 – Evening Service -
Luke 12 v 35–48 (online)

ACROSS: 1, Thanks. 4, Banner. 8, Esber. 9, Azariah. 10, Compare. 11, Ishma. 12, Doorposts. 17, Oaths. 19, Galatia. 21, Papyrus. 22, Fraitl. 23, Listen. 24, Hyssop.

DOWN: 1, Trench. 2, Ashamed. 3, Karma. 5, Ananias. 6, Neigh. 7, Reheat. 9, Areopagus. 13, Observe. 14, Satraps. 15, Compel. 16, Gallop. 18, Tapes. 20, Lofty.

Prayers & Poems

War and Peace

War is not a new thing
It's been here from the start,
When Cain slew brother Abel
And their lives were torn apart.

Brother still fights brother
And nations go to war,
It seems these things will never end
Perhaps we need to ask 'what for?'

Man has chosen his own path
Where might and power tell,
But God desires a better way
Where harmony and peace can dwell.

And so a time will come at last
When all man's rule will cease,
Emmanuel will come to reign,
Our Lord and Saviour, Prince of Peace.

By Megan Carter

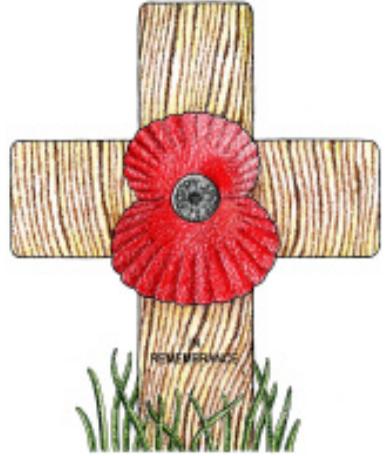
The Promise of Advent

Stir up our hearts, we beseech you,
to prepare ourselves to receive your Son.
When He comes and knocks, may He find us not sleeping in sin,
But awake to righteousness,
Ceaselessly rejoicing in His love.
May our hearts and minds be so purified,
That we may be ready to receive His promise of eternal life.

from The Gelasian Sacramentary, c. 500 (the oldest official prayer book of the Western Church)

We Will Remember – 80 years on

This year we've been remembering the Battle of Britain, described by Winston Churchill in August 1940 as *'one of the decisive battles of the war... never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few.'* It was a dramatic turning point in the history of the Second World War. The occasions for Remembrance this month will provide us times of gratitude for what was achieved in the darkest moments of war.



However, this year we are very aware of our own struggles with the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic. We face an unseen enemy, but the effects on our lives and society are almost as devastating as world war.

Remembering is not just about focusing on past events. It is also about making present past events, as we give thanks for all that took place. The Battle of Britain was fought by the Few and won in the skies over the Channel. In our battle with the virus, we can call to mind the victory of Jesus: *'Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David.'* (2 Timothy 2:8). Jesus secured the victory of death by His cross and resurrection, so that we don't need to fear death, but trust in His loving purposes for our lives.

Currently we can't see clearly what the future holds for us; it may be very different from what we might expect. However, we can pray for God's will to be done and that we will play our part, just as each of those airmen did so many years ago.

'They shall grow not old as we that are left grow old: Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning we will remember them.'

*Some cause happiness wherever they go;
others, whenever they go. – Oscar Wilde*

Welcome to All!

As I write this, the majority of churches (in the UK) are holding services again in their church buildings or wherever they normally worship together. But things are looking somewhat different.

In my local church you need to ring a Churchwarden to book a place to come to Sunday or mid-week worship. So far, no-one's been turned down or away at the door for not booking.

People are being told where to sit, rather than choosing their favourite spot, so the two-metre gap is maintained.

And, in most services, face masks are required.

So how does all this affect our 'worship'?

There are two key elements to gathered worship for me.

My first is that the welcome is for everyone, regardless of how they look, or dress, their faith or their behaviour.

Many years ago I recall being on a caravan holiday with my Primary-aged children in Scotland. There was to be a raft race and fun by the river, starting immediately after the church service, so we dressed appropriately for a messy time! I was in a fluorescent pink tee-shirt and matching striped summer trousers (they were wow at the time!).

Although we had never been there before and knew no-one, you would have thought we were royalty from the way the congregation treated us. It was wonderful.

We'd come home. We were family. The Christian family.

Brothers and sisters in Christ.

Co-heirs with Jesus.

It's part of our job as Christians to be welcoming. There's no one specific person or role for this. It's down to all of us.

This month: Have a think about how you can express a welcome to the others in your congregation where you worship. Perhaps turn that around and think about how you would be encouraged and welcomed. Would that work for others?

I know it's a tough one if your smile is covered by a mask and you can't shake hands or hug. But what *could* you do?

Also, as you think about the essentials of gathered worship, ask yourself the question – *what else would be an essential for me?* There's no single right answer, but it's worth thinking and worth talking to others about.

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THE PARISH OF BROWNHILLS WITH OGLEY HAY

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by sharing the love of Jesus

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Jenny Judson

