

Advent Greetings from all at St Mary's - especially from the Ministry Team!



There has been a lot of discussion and speculation on Christmas being different this year.

Many of the comments tend to err to the negative about what we have lost and what we won't be able to do.

However, I hope we can also reflect on how Christmas can be different in positive ways as well and especially for us as a Church how Advent can be different.

As I write this we have just heard the Government's proposals for what will happen after December 2nd.

It is still not certain which tier we will be in, and the full implications of what has been announced, but it is clear that we will be able to resume public worship.

I am very grateful for the support of colleagues who have been part of our discussions about what we will do to help everyone 'keep Advent' and prepare to welcome Christ at Christmas.

As always our aim in all that we are doing is to seek to provide as safe a space as possible for everyone to be able to be with God, be with others and be with the rest of creation.

We are trying to ensure we support everyone, whatever they are able, or not able, to do.

If we can help or support, you further please do let us know. Please see the list attached on possible events and activities- and consider if you wish to join us.



I would normally start by sharing with you much of what has been happening – but as we wish to share our thoughts for Advent I will limit it to a short summary.

Thank you to Verger Rosie and those who have helped her, St Mary's has remained open for private prayer every day from 9am to Noon – this has been highly valued by many who have called in for some stillness and space.

Thank you also to Brian our Director of Music and Matt our Assistant Organist, who have enabled us to continue to share music in our Sunday streamed services and to Grant and the small group from the Choir who have been part of that.

We have been fortunate that despite the restrictions the organ builders were able to continue their work and it has been fascinating to see how much was hidden behind the Organ console and screens.

There is a good photographic record of the whole process much of which has been shared on [facebook.com/theorganproject](https://www.facebook.com/theorganproject) and theorganproject.org. We hope that by the time we reopen for public worship the scaffolding and organ contents will have left the church.



So, looking forward we would like to invite you to join in an Advent journey with us. At St Mary's this year it will be different as we will not be juggling numerous carol services and events, but can for one year focus on the Advent season and prepare ourselves for Christmas

We hope you will have a good advent ... and to help there are booklets 'A Good Advent' by the Bishop of London available to collect from St Mary's. If you want some further reading Revd Sam has suggested the following :

At Home in Advent: a domestic journey from Advent to Epiphany, by Gordon Giles. BRF: £8.99.

Described in the Church Times as the 'perfect present for someone on Lockdown'. Further information available at:

<https://www.brfonline.org.uk/collections/group-reading/products/at-home-in-advent-a-domestic-journey-from-advent-to-epiphany>

Frequencies of God: Walking though Advent with R.S. Thomas, by Carys Walsh. Canterbury Press: £12.99.

The poetry of R.S. Thomas is interpreted, in 28 reflections, through Advent prisms of waiting, accepting, journeying, birthing, and seeing. Further information available at:

<https://canterburypress.hymnsam.co.uk/books/9781786220882/frequencies-of-god>

Into the Heart of Advent: twenty-five conversations with Jesus, by Penelope Wilcock. SPCK: £9.99.

An advent book dealing with themes such as families, gifts, angels, homes and hospitality. Further information available at:

<https://spckpublishing.co.uk/into-the-heart-of-advent>

If you would like help getting a copy – or further ideas, then please contact us. Or search here :

<https://adventonline.faith/?fbclid=IwAR2nuY4z2md128IDrFudq1XQJYMNEaPbd9lXg4bFTsG-fl3R-QapgV5FVmk>



For those who would like a little more ‘activity;’ then you can download a [colouring Advent Calendar](#) and an [Advent Calendar with actions](#).

We will also continue to invite you to pause and pray with us at 9am and 5pm.

There will also be streamed celebrations of Christ in our lives at Noon Monday to Friday and 10am on Sunday. **There are details about how to pick up live streams and obtaining service sheets in the "Worship after the 2nd Lockdown" section below.**

On Saturdays at Noon we will be sharing an Advent Reflection with talks from Canon Bruce as well as the daily reflections from the Ministry Team.



From Dec 3rd we hope that those who wish to will be able to join us for the Eucharist at St Mary’s at Noon and on Sundays we will resume our Sunday services at 8am & 10am at St Mary’s; 9am at St Faith’s and 4pm at St Wilfrid’s .

If you would like to block book, or simply attend a particular service it would help if you could contact me in advance.



In addition, we will share on You Tube and Facebook at **4pm on Nov 29th a service of Advent Music and Readings.**

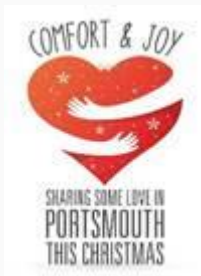
Then at **6pm On Dec 20th we will share a service of Lessons and Carols** – you will also be able to attend this service at St Mary's – but numbers will have to be limited so please book in advance by emailing vicar@portseaparish.co.uk.



We will send another mailing before Christmas –

but on **Christmas Eve** we are expecting to hold a **Nativity Service at 5pm and a Midnight Mass at 11.30pm at St Mary's** (please apply for a place); and **Masses of the Night at St Faith's and St Wilfrid's** (earlier in the evening at a time to be arranged).

Then on **Christmas Day** there will be a **10am Mass at St Mary's** which will also be streamed.



Many of you have asked about the voucher scheme and I am delighted to announce that this year we have expanded it

and this week are launching 'Comfort and joy' in Portsmouth. You are invited to make donations of vouchers as in past years – by Dec 18th if possible – and in addition to send a card (or cards) to your neighbours, particularly those who you think may be alone this

Christmas.

There are fuller details [here](#).

One of the highlights of the last few years has been our sharing in the Festival of Lights.



This year we are supporting Fratton Big Local inviting you to 'Light Up Fratton'. We would like you to make a lantern or a stained-glass window to decorate your window with.

There are packs you can pick up to help do this either at St Mary's or Fratton Community Centre.

There is a chance to enter a competition and we will be hosting a series of events in St Mary's from 5th - 12th December - watch out for details..



As in previous years, we will be inviting people to place stars on our Christmas Trees to remember those they have loved who have died.

The Church will continue to be open from 9am - Noon for anyone to come and pray, place stars on the tree and light a candle.

If you would like us to send you stars please let us know.



You may also want to help us to decorate churches for Christmas (and for our streamed services) with flowers.

We are grateful for those who have been providing flowers for our 3 churches over the last months - **and would like to invite you to make donations in thanksgiving or in memory of loved ones (contact me if you are interested).**

At St Mary's we hope to raise £300 to cover the cost of flowers over the coming weeks.

Finally, a small group have been working with the Hope into Action charity: they will be supporting a family who will be housed in the Parish.

We will share fuller details of this when we have them, but to help cover the costs of welcoming the family we are launching **The Great St Mary's Bake Book** (to help raise funds for Hope into action). Marie writes :

You will have heard that the Parish will be supporting the house run by the charity 'Hope Into Action.

As part of our commitment, we need to provide small, basic household items. Fundraising will be needed and we plan to produce a book of cake and pudding recipes.

We would like to invite you to submit one of your own favourite recipes for inclusion.

You don't need to be an expert baker and if you would like to include brief details such as: 'This is the cake I make to cheer myself up!', that would be great.

We look forward to receiving your recipes.....and trying them!

Please send your recipes and stories c/o Revd Sam assocvicar@portseaparish.co.uk



Once again I will end the newsletter on financial matters.

Thank you to everyone who has already generously made extra donations and supported us in many ways.

Thank you especially to all who took part in the Raffle which raised an amazing £1020! Congratulations to the winners.

Likewise if you would like to support us in continuing to do all we are doing (including help to cover the cost of mailings to over 60 people vulnerable and isolating people) and **would like to make a donation, either send a cheque payable to 'St Mary's PCC' to the Vicarage** or please contact me for details on how best to do this.

Please don't wait for us to contact you, or hesitate to ask, and we will happily help you in any way we can.

Also, if you are worried, or uncertain about anything, then just send us a message – contact details are at the end of this email.

As always, I end by thanking all who are helping us as the community of faith (including you for your prayers and support) – and to reassure you of our thoughts and prayers at this time



*With best wishes
Father Bob*

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A good Advent ... Events in December

We continue to seek to enable our events to resume as far as possible **(please be aware these may change – we will try to keep you informed!)**

Sunday Nov 29th Advent Sunday

10am Live streamed service from St Mary's

4pm Live streamed Advent 'Carol' Service at St Mary's

Monday to Friday

Noon Eucharist at St Mary's (from Dec 3rd)

Saturday Dec 5th

5pm Fratton Awards at St Mary's presented by FBL and Stephen Morgan MP

Sunday Dec 6th

8am BCP Eucharist at St Mary's

9am Eucharist at St Faith's

10am Streamed Eucharist at St Mary's

4pm Eucharist at St Wilfrid's

Dec 7th to 11th

5pm FBL host a streamed performance each day linked to Festival of Lights

Sunday Dec 13th

8am BCP Eucharist at St Mary's

9am Eucharist at St Faith's

10am Streamed Eucharist at St Mary's

4pm Eucharist at St Wilfrid's

Friday Dec 18th

To be arranged– the sharing of Comfort and Joy Vouchers with agencies

Sunday Dec 20th

8am BCP Eucharist at St Mary's

9am Eucharist at St Faith's

10am Streamed Eucharist at St Mary's

4pm Eucharist at St Wilfrid's

6pm Streamed Lessons and Music for Christmas from St Mary's

Christmas Eve (no Noon service)

5pm Streamed Nativity from St Mary's – led by young families

Early evening Mass of the Night for Christmas at St Faith's & St Wilfrid's

11.30pm Live streamed Midnight Mass from St Mary's

Christmas Day

10am Streamed Mass for Christmas Day from St Mary's

Saturday Dec 26th

Daily Noon Mass continues

Sunday Dec 27th

Only service – a 10am streamed Eucharist at St Mary's

Worship after the 2nd Lockdown

Streamed Services

- Sunday Eucharist 10am
- Said Eucharist Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday at Noon
- Saturday at noon is Advent Reflections with music, a reading and prayers by the clergy and a reflection by Fr Bruce.

You can pick up live streams on our portseaparish.co.uk/live-services, our [Youtube Channel](#), or if you have a facebook account on the St Mary's Facebook page at facebook.com/PortseaParish. There is a Daily Reflection available at portseaparish.co.uk/daily-reflections each day.

The service sheet for Sundays is "[Looking for Light – Sundry Advent in our Homes](#)" ..

The service sheet for the Daily Eucharist is available at "[Looking for Light – Advent in our Homes](#)".

Worship in Church

Until 3rd December: There will be no services nor public worship during the lockdown, but St Mary's church will be open for private prayer from 9am to noon every day including weekends. If visiting St Mary's please enter by the West Door (or if needed via the ramp at the side door). Please wear a face mask (unless you are in an exempt group), sanitise your hands and go straight to a seat and observe safe distancing from other people.

From 3rd December: There will be public worship allowed in Church.

- Sunday 8am Book of Common Prayer Communion St Mary's Church

- **Sunday 9am said Eucharist at St Faith's Church**
- **Sunday 10am Eucharist with choir at St Mary's Church**
- **Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday at Noon said Eucharist at St Mary's Church**
- **Sunday 4pm said Eucharist at St Wilfrid's Church**

For those wishing to attend the service in Church, as guidance on safety reduces the number of seats available it will help our planning for each service if you could email vicar@portseaparish.co.uk to indicate you wish to attend, and observe instructions on social distancing and hygiene when you arrive. We request that all who attend public worship in our Churches wear a face covering unless they are in a group which is exempt from wearing them (see Government guidance or contact one of the Ministry team for details).