

*The world in solemn stillness lay  
to hear the angels sing*



[www.smsj.finchampstead.co.uk](http://www.smsj.finchampstead.co.uk)  
[www.st-james.finchampstead.co.uk](http://www.st-james.finchampstead.co.uk)

Dear Friends,

Despite all the hustle and bustle, stress and commercialisation, Advent and Christmas are my favourite seasons in the church's year. Advent is the season of preparation when we make ready not just for the coming of Jesus as a baby but also for his return at the end of time. Although, as people keep on reminding me, this is my 'busy' season, I always ensure that I set aside extra time to make peace with my maker!

Sometimes I use an Advent book to trigger my devotions, but often I reflect upon poetry and carols and simply ask God that in the stillness I too may hear the angels sing.

Angels are such a familiar part of Christmas that we often fail to appreciate their wider significance. For many people they fly in for the Christmas nativity play and then disappear until the following year. And yet Jews, Christians and Muslims recognise angels as the agents and servants of God, and their depiction in architecture, paintings, stained glass and cemetery sculpture testifies to their enduring fascination. So who or what are they?

The word 'angel' in Hebrew and Greek alike means messenger, and in the Bible as a whole angels are agents of God who communicate between God and humankind. In the Old Testament they are not just messengers but also bring God's help and protection to his people. In the New Testament angels appear at important times of Jesus' life. They announce his birth; minister to him in the desert; strengthen him in his agony; are ready to defend him when he is captured; and witness to his resurrection.

But the crucial thing to realise is that they are a lot more than the comforting presence of popular perception, for they so often lay a challenge before the people to whom they appear. So when Gabriel appeared to Mary to ask her to bear God's Son, we too easily forget that the news he delivered was to turn her life upside down and bring both sorrow and joy beyond her imagining. Similarly challenging is the angel who warns Joseph to take his new family into exile in Egypt to avoid the wrath of King Herod.

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Amidst the pressures that December brings do please at this Advent, Christmastide and Epiphany take a little time to try to hear what the angels are saying to you. Most of all, take on board the notion that like Jesus Himself, angels may bring comfort, but they are equally likely to present a challenge, turning lives upside down and pointing people in unexpected directions.

Wishing you all  
an 'angelic' Christmas and New Year,

*Julie Ramsbottom*





## **First and Third Thursday evenings of each month**

From December through to the beginning of Lent we will be studying a series of DVD recordings of interviews with famous people, which J. John has made for broadcasting.

The programme is:

1 December 2011 - J. John's interview of Andrew White (The Vicar of Baghdad)

There will be mince pies and wine at this meeting to give it a seasonal touch.

19 January 2012 - J. John's interview of Wm. Paul Young (Author of 'The Shack')

2 February 2012 - J. John's interview of Jackie Pullinger (Author of 'Chasing the Dragon')

16 February 2012 - A visiting speaker

You are very welcome to attend any or all of our meetings. We are an informal, ecumenical and self-administered housegroup, which usually meets at 8pm on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursdays of the month. *Francis Moore*



## **Weekly term-time Tuesday evenings**

Our Bible study group meets at Rectory Farm, Fleet Hill. Everybody is welcome from whatever background with whatever questions or thoughts they might bring.

We exist to serve our whole community—helping individuals to investigate the Christian faith, to explore the Bible for themselves and to live out their faith.

Diverse topics this year included the path to spiritual growth, the fascinating life of King David, Paul's letter to the Ephesians, whilst in 2012 we shall be studying one of the gospels. The meeting starts at 7.45pm with coffee, cake and chat, followed at 8pm by our study. Tuesday evenings can provide a real oasis in our busy lives— please do feel free to come and try us out, or get in touch for a chat if you are not sure. *Neil Bidston*

## **Weekly term-time Wednesday afternoons**

An opportunity for mums and dads to join in a study group, with no child-sitting worries. There are toys a-plenty for the children to play with, and we will take turns to supervise them so the study is not too disturbed. Please do feel free to come along and give it a go, even if you've not been before. We meet from 2pm until 3pm. Most sessions stand alone so there is no need to commit to the whole half of a term. *Emmie Bidston*

## **Fourth Wednesday of each month**

### **Prayertime**



An opportunity to get together in prayer once a month. The variety of prayers includes thanksgivings, personal requests, the needs of the church, our community and the wider world. Meetings are held on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the month at 8pm. The next meeting will be on Wednesday 25 January. *Paula Vicary*

*If you have not found what you are looking for or need more information about times, venues, etc please contact the Church Office on 0118 9730133*

## Christmas Hamper Raffle

Tickets now on sale and available to buy after most St James' Sunday Services.

Proceeds to St James' Flower Fund.

Draw takes place on 18 December at St James' Church after the 11am Service.

## Epiphany Party

Friday 6 January 8-10pm  
Parish Centre, Billing Avenue



Round off your seasonal celebrations by joining St Mary & St John's Church for an Epiphany Party including games and quizzes. All ages welcome. Light refreshments provided. Tickets available from Church Office until 18 December.

## Tea & Chat



**Tea & Chat** afternoons are held from 2 to 3.30pm on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of the month as a social occasion for anyone living locally to pop in, sit down and relax over a cup of tea, some cake and friendly chat.

Everyone, all ages, welcome. No charge and you won't even have to wash-up!

*Next meetings:* 10 and 24 January; 14 and 28 February, in St Mary & St John's Parish Centre, Billing Avenue.

Every other month, the Finchampstead Older People's Forum (FINE) meets at **Tea & Chat**. The next meeting with FINE is on 28 February, when a member of the local Fire Service will be talking about Fire Safety in the Home and the services they offer to elderly and disabled people.

## 50s' Musical Evening

Saturday 4 February 2012, 7.30pm  
at the Finchampstead Memorial Hall.

Tickets, £12 each including Fish and chip supper, available from the Church Office in the New Year.



## Barn Dance

Saturday 11 February 2012  
7-10pm at the California  
Ratepayers Hall



Tickets £7 each  
(Fish & chip supper optional extra)  
Tickets available from the Church Office in the New Year.



St James' and St Mary & St John's are Fairtrade Churches.

We use Fairtrade products for refreshments and promote Fairtrade throughout the year. Traidcraft stalls are occasionally held at St Mary & St John's Church.



## The Green Team at St Mary & St John's Church

aims to encourage and sustain interest in Green issues by involving and working within the congregation and the wider community.

They hope to renew the Eco-congregation Award gained in 2009 next year.

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**Crèche** for babies and toddlers is available during the 9:45am Sunday Service at St Mary & St John's Church (2<sup>nd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> Sundays of the month), and during the 11am Service at St James' Church (2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays of the month, but 3<sup>rd</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> in January)

**Fledgelings Baby & Toddler Group** meets every Tuesday during term time 1:45-4pm at St James' Church Centre.



### Fledgelings Nativity and Christmas Party

**Tuesday 13 December from 11:45am, St James' Church and Church Centre**



*To ensure your child will be fully involved, please contact Karen Remmington at the Church Office by Friday 9 December for full details.*

**Contrast Youth Group** meets at St James' Church Centre on Sunday evenings in term time, 7-8:30pm, and welcomes those attending secondary school. Youngsters have an opportunity to play games, munch tuck and have a discussion/guest speaker around a topic. A different social activity is arranged every term, with a visit to the John Nike Centre planned in the New Year.

**See back page for details of our panto.**

**Sunday Club/Kids Café** is for children up to the age of 11 years. Its aim is to learn about and share the love of Jesus and the Christian faith, making it enjoyable and fun through a range of art, craft, music and drama activities and to make children feel an important part of the church community.

At *St James' Church*, it runs during term-time on 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays of the month (3<sup>rd</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> in January) starting at 10:45am and finishing when the children are taken into church just before Communion. Children of all ages meet together in a "Kids Café", with break-out groups providing older children the opportunity for discussion and activities suitable for them. At *St Mary and St John's Church* it runs every Sunday, except the first Sunday in the month when there is an all-age Alive@11 Service or when there are Family Communion Services at Christmas and Easter.

**Junior Pathfinders** meet at Gorse Ride Junior School on Sunday mornings at 9:45am in one of the classrooms while St Mary & St John's Church worships in the main hall, and welcomes 11-14 year olds. The sessions, which include opportunities for discussion and craft activities, end by joining the congregation for Communion. Junior Pathfinders also have the opportunity to grow in their Christian faith by helping in Church Services, serving refreshments and holding fund-raising activities, as well as enjoying an occasional social activity.

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## **Carols in the Community Monday 12 December**

Candle-lit procession led by Gorse Ride Junior School Choir starting 6.15pm at the Parish Centre, Billing Avenue. Followed by festive refreshments (incl. hot soup, mince pies & mulled wine), and a performance from Gorse Ride Performing Arts Group also in the Parish Centre. Everyone welcome.

### **Carol Singing**



Share the Christmas spirit with our elderly residents on **Thursday 15 December 6pm** at Wild Acres (Finchampstead Road) & on **19 December at 11.30am** at Cockayne Court (Arnett Avenue). All ages welcome to join in. Singing led by members of St Mary & St John's Church.

## **Nine Lessons and Carols Service**

Starts at 4pm on Sunday 18 December in The Chapel, Wellington College, Crowthorne. Singing will be led by the combined choirs of St James' and St Mary & St John's Churches.  
*Director of Music:* Andrew Bosley, St James' Church.  
*Organist:* John Purver, from Holy Trinity, Winchester.

## **Interested in joining a choir?**

St Mary & St John's choir practises at the Parish Centre, Billing Avenue, on Tuesdays at 8pm.



Practice for St James' choir is on Thursday evenings - juniors from 6.30pm and seniors from 8pm—in the Church & Church Centre. If you would like to find out more, please telephone the Church Office.

## **Watch out for us! Come and join with our Festive songs and carols.**

The choir of St James will be out and about in Finchampstead on Thursday evening, 22 December. Their carol singing will finish at the Tally Ho about 7.30pm.

## **Finchampstead Handbell**



**Ringers** practise from 5.45pm on Monday evenings in St James' Church Centre. Beginners and experienced ringers most welcome. *The ability to read music is helpful but not essential.* If you are an experienced ringer and can spare an hour or two (generally midweek afternoons) to brighten the lives of the elderly in care homes, please call Meg, Team Leader, 0118 973 1569.

## **Hear the choir of St James' Church**

at Warbrook House, Eversley.  
Wednesday 21 December, starts at 7pm. Entry is by ticket only. Please apply to Sarah Shirley, telephone 0118 973 2174 before 5 December.

## **St James' Finchampstead Tower Bell Ringers**

Practice times are from 8pm until 9pm on Wednesdays. We would love to welcome more ringers—both novice and experienced. Do come along and join us. Please telephone Tricia (0118 973 3747) in advance if you would like someone to meet you outside. On Sundays, we ring from 10.30am for the 11am Service.

**St Mary & St John's Church and St James' Church support many UK and overseas charities through the year. This Christmas our focus is on two:**



St Mary & St John's Advent Charity is Parents and Children Together (PACT), an Oxford-based charity which supports families throughout the Diocese through community projects and as a voluntary adoption agency. It celebrates its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. Envelopes for donations will be available in church throughout Advent with Gift Aid forms also available.

St James' Church have a 'gift' Sunday on 4 December. This is an opportunity for everyone to bring unwrapped presents for children and young people to church and then PACT will distribute them to families in their care; families who might otherwise have little or nothing. A great way of sharing Christmas!



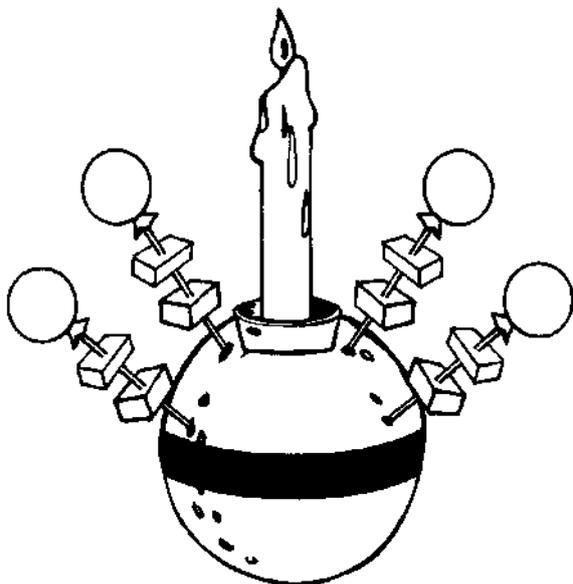
The Children's Society is a children's charity which wants to create a world where all children and young people are respected, valued and happy.

**Christingle Services** - *supporting The Children's Society*

St Mary & St John's Service is 11am, 4 December, at Gorse Ride Junior School.

St James' Service is 4pm, 24 December, at Wellington College Chapel - by ticket only (application forms from the Church Office).

**What is a Christingle?** It is made up of an orange symbolizing the world, with a red ribbon around it representing the blood of Jesus. Fruits and sweets are



skewered on four cocktail sticks, which are pushed into the orange and symbolize the fruits of the earth and the four seasons. Finally a candle or glow-stick is pushed into the orange centre, representing Christ, the Light of the World. Here's a sketch to copy and colour.

### CHRISTMAS WORDSEARCH

*Find the hidden words:* Jesus, Manger, Star, Wisemen, Shepherds, Bethlehem, Donkey, Mary, Joseph, Angel, Celebration, Worship, Carols, Christmas, Epiphany

S	J	M	X	X	T	P	X	C	B	Y	B
U	O	A	R	Y	E	K	N	O	D	N	C
S	S	N	M	L	E	G	N	A	H	A	E
E	E	G	D	T	Y	Z	N	N	B	H	L
J	P	E	E	L	N	D	E	M	E	P	E
C	H	R	I	S	T	M	A	S	T	I	B
Y	R	A	M	G	E	T	J	J	H	P	R
G	M	V	J	S	L	J	G	J	L	E	A
R	C	W	I	G	F	X	I	X	E	K	T
A	P	W	C	A	R	O	L	S	H	A	I
T	E	W	O	R	S	H	I	P	E	N	O
S	H	E	P	H	E	R	D	S	M	A	N

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**Men's Group** - The aim of the Group is to enable men from within and outside our church congregations to meet together both spiritually and socially. In addition, we seek to play our part in the broader life of the Church and the community in Finchampstead.

Evening gatherings are generally of a social nature, and cover a variety of activities. We also attend Saturday Breakfast Meetings, organised by the Reading Men's Group, where they have guest speakers. These are normally held three times a year at the Blue Coat School in Sonning. The next social meeting is at "The Queens Oak" on Thursday 8 December at 8pm, for 2012 programme-planning. The next breakfast meeting is on Saturday 11 February. Newcomers will be made very welcome. Contact Church Office for further information.

**Mothers' Union and Women's Fellowship** - *An international Christian charity that seeks to support families worldwide. Local meetings for women and men are held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month at 2pm in St James' Church Centre, usually with a speaker and afternoon tea.*

From January 2012, the branches at St James' and St Mary & St John's Churches will be combining and we look forward to joining and working together in the future.

<b>Diary Dates</b>		<i>Branch Leader: Sarah Owen</i>
8 December	2pm	Carol Service (in Church) and Christmas Tea (in Church Centre) with a Bring-and-Buy and Raffle for the "Wheels Appeal" which provides distribution transport for MU development and aid projects. Visitors very welcome.
14 December	10am	Church Communion Service with emphasis on Mothers' Union.
12 January	2pm	Branch Meeting, speaker Lt. Nicola Muir of the Wokingham Salvation Army, telling us about the organisation's work in Wokingham and Reading. Monetary collection for their local homeless projects.
18 January	10am	Church Communion (as above).

### Ladies Breakfasts

We meet half termly for fellowship, prayer, contemplation, chat and continental breakfast. A very sociable bunch, we welcome newcomers of all ages. In 2012 we will meet in each other's houses. Dates: Sat 28 January & 17 March, 8.45–10.15am. Venue details from Church Office.

### Flower Arranging

Both churches have a team who arrange flowers for the church each week. If this is something you might like to do, please contact the Church Office for details.



*That's just fine. You geniuses can do whatever you want—I'm sticking with the star.*

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# “Who’s Who” in the Parish – The Ministry Team

Priest in Charge	Rev Julie Ramsbottom	Tel: 0118 973 2102
Assistant Priest	Rev Hugh Wakeling	Tel: 0118 973 4078
Associate Priest	Rev John Edwards	Tel: 01344 774586
Curate	Rev Brynn Bayman	
Licensed Lay Minister	Dr Keith Atton	
Lay Eucharistic Minister	Mr Paul Arscott	

Communion at Home – If you or anyone you know is unable to get to St James’ or St Mary & St John’s Church for a period of time and would like to receive communion at home or in hospital, please call the Church Office. Thank you

## Would you like company and lunch on Christmas Day?

Churches Together in Wokingham and a number of charities are working with a local hotel to give a memorable Christmas lunch this year. This lunch is intended for individuals, couples or families who face the possibility of being alone for Christmas.

If you or somebody you know would be interested, please contact Sharon Elliott from Faith in the Community on 07843 091950, or email [sharon.elliott@mac.com](mailto:sharon.elliott@mac.com) for more information.

**Christmas Fairs** Bring the family for an afternoon of fun and some early Christmas shopping. Seasonal crafts and gifts, games, cakes, raffle, Father Christmas, food and refreshments.

*Gorse Ride Schools* - Saturday  
3 December, 11am - 2pm.



*Finchampstead CE Primary School* -  
Saturday 3 December, 12 – 4pm.

## Contrast Panto: “Robin Hood”

at Finchampstead Memorial Hall

Saturday 3 December

Performances: 2pm & 6pm

Tickets free, available from the Church Office.  
Refreshments in the interval. Donations raised on the day to be used to support St James’ youth work. Everyone welcome.

We hope to see you there!



## Sunday Church Services at St James’ (SJ) and St Mary & St John’s (SMSJ)

SERVICE	4 Dec	11 Dec	18 Dec	25 Dec	1 Jan	8 Jan	15 Jan	22 Jan	29 Jan
8am Communion	SJ	SJ	SJ	SJ		SJ	SJ	SJ	SJ
9.30am Family Service	SJ		SJ	SJ		SJ	SJ	SJ	SJ
9.30am Matins		SJ					SJ		SJ
9.45 am Communion	SMSJ	SMSJ	SMSJ	SMSJ (10am)		SMSJ	SMSJ	SMSJ	SMSJ
11am Family Communion	SJ			SJ	SJ	SJ			
11am Alive at 11	SMSJ					SMSJ			
11am Parish Communion		SJ	SJ				SJ	SJ	SJ
4pm Special			*						
6pm Evensong	SJ					SJ			

\* = Nine Lessons & Carols at Wellington College Chapel. For Christmas Eve Services see separate Christmas card

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