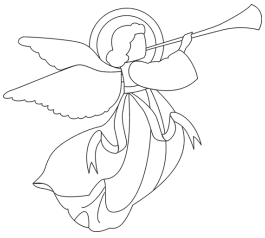




Merry Christmas from your Local Anglican Churches!

There is something for everyone in our three churches. This special Christmas newsletter gives a flavour of services, events and groups.



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

Dear Friends,

I've never forgotten how a previous parishioner once told me that I had appeared to her in a dream as a 'tubby little angel with stubby little wings'. I was happy to be likened to an angel, but not so keen on the 'tubby' and 'stubby' references! Thankfully it's never put me off appreciating the part that angels play, not just in the Bible as a whole, but particularly in the Christmas story.

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.

Amidst the pressures that December brings do please 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.

May you hear what the angels are saying to you this Christmastide

Revd Canon Julie Ramsbottom, Rector



For information on all of our Christmas services, including Christingle and Midnight Mass, please look inside your Christmas card!

Other regular groups & activities:

Families and children

Fledgelings Baby & Toddler Group - runs every Tuesday in term time 1:45-3:30pm in St James' Church Centre. The



Fledgelings Nativity & Party are on Tuesday 18th December from 12 till 2pm.

Fun, Friends&Fellowship@11 is a family service held at 11am at St Mary and St John's Church which meets in Gorse Ride Junior School hall about 6 times a year. Join us for Epiphany@11 on 6th Jan, Lent@11 on 3rd March, Good Friday@11 on 19th April, Harvest@11 on 6th Oct.

We also have family communion at 9:30am on 3rd Sunday of each month and children's activities during the 9.30 services on other Sundays.



Our Youth Group meets in St James' Church Centre every Sunday evening in term time.

Open to all in school years 6-13, 6-7.30pm. Come along for the opportunity to chill out, make some new friends, play some sport & get creative.



Messtival happens several times a year at St

James' Church. Come along for food, fun, craft and games. Check our website for details of dates. Christmas Special on 15 Dec 'Nativity on the Loose' (see back page)

We also have a family service every week at St James' at 9:30am, and offer Sunday clubs for children at our 11am Parish Communion service.



This will meet at St Eligius' Community Church at 9.30am on 6th January. **From February it moves to Arborfield Green Community Centre and to the first Tuesday of each month at 3.30pm (5th Feb, 5th March, 2nd April etc)** A different way of 'doing church' especially for families
Come along and be messy



Church News

Lent Lectures 2019 will be held at St James' Church Centre on 12th, 19th and 26th March and 2nd, 9th, 16th April. Look out for posters in the community nearer the time, for times and list of speakers.

Opportunities to get together:

The **Simple Lunch** runs on the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of each month at St Mary & St John's Parish Centre on Billing Avenue. 12-1.30pm. Open to all. Suggested donation £1.50 per person.

Tea & Chat continues on 2nd and 4th Tuesday afternoons 2-3:30pm at St Mary & St John's Parish Centre on Billing Avenue. Drop in for a chat, a cuppa and cake.



We run monthly meetings for women and men on 2nd Thursday of each month with a speaker & tea in St James' Church Centre.

Carol service & Christmas Tea - Thursday 13th Dec 2pm at St James'.

Tuesday Fellowship Bible Study & Lunch takes place at St Eligius' Church, Tope Rd, Arborfield Green each week at 12.15pm

Also at St Eligius', a series of quarterly **Lunchtime Concerts** on Thursdays at 12.30 (7 Feb, 2 May, 1 Aug and 7 Nov) with buffet lunch. To book your Lunch, please, contact Rita Le Var (Tel. 01252 372320, E-mail: rita_le_var@ntlworld.com)

We put on **courses like Alpha, Christianity Explored and others** – contact the Church Office for details or check out the website.

Like to be active? Why not join:

Tuesday Working Party (10am – 12 each Tuesday) for DIY in and around St James' Church and Church Centre

St James' Gardening Club – (Thursday mornings) working in the churchyard & around the Manor House Church Centre. Also, occasional Saturday morning **Green Team Working Parties**, uncovering the Lost Liddell Gardens.

Striders Running Group meets at St Eligius' Community Church each Wednesday 7pm – for beginners & more experienced.



'Nativity on the Loose' – Sat 15 Dec 10.30am –12.30pm * Booking

required. Journey with us this Christmas through our Outdoor Living Nativity. Join the shepherds, find the donkey on his trek to Bethlehem and search for Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus. Then join us for carols and a warming lunch. Tickets £2.50 per person or £10.00 per family in aid of the local charity Just Around the Corner (JAC).

Book online at <https://katemeads.wufoo.com/forms/nativity-on-the-loose/>

St Eligius' Community Church presents '**Nativity on the Green**', an outdoor drama performed on Tope Green by the pupils of Bohunt School. Special guest appearance of Mary and Josephs' little donkey and other animals from Basil and Crew's mobile farm. **Thursday 20th December, 3.30pm**

Contact details

If you would like more details of any of the groups or events mentioned in this newsletter, or information about our regular services, baptisms, weddings, funerals, please contact the Church office or visit our website

www.parish.finchampstead.co.uk

Church Office	Open weekdays 10-12noon	01189730133
Rector	Revd Canon Julie Ramsbottom	01189732102
Associate Priest	Revd Julian McAllen	01189735876
Associate Priest	Revd Canon John Edwards	01344774586
Curate	Revd Gemma Wilkinson	

If you or anyone you know is unable to get to church for a period of time and would like to receive Communion at home or in hospital, or be visited by a member of the clergy, please do get in touch with us.

How to find us

St James' Church and Church Centre are located on Church Lane, RG40 4LU
St Mary and St John's Church meets in Gorse Ride Junior School, RG40 4JJ
St Mary and St John's Parish Centre is at the end of Billing Avenue, RG40 4JW
St Eligius' Church is on Tope Rd, Arborfield Green, RG2 9NB

To view this newsletter in colour please visit our website

www.parish.finchampstead.co.uk