

# St John's

## Prayers:

Lord of the past and the future: we thank you for the last Church Year. We thank you for the fellowship and joy of our worship as a community both gathered and scattered. We pray for the coming year, that we may open our hearts to your voice of love and grow in faith and knowledge of you, our King. In our prayers we lift to you:

**Sick:** Lolita Alvira, Peggy Aris, Scott Bradley, Mavis Deluce, Ruth Gillespie, Susan Jones and Sue Ralfe.

**RIP:** Eric Edwards and Sian Harries.

Lord hear us. Lord graciously hear us.

## Contacts

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The Parish Office is closed.

**Matthew and Jonny are continuing to say Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer at home. Join them [here](#).**

# St John's Church

## Pew Sheet

### 22nd November 2020

## Lockdown 2

A new lockdown began on 5th November and included places of worship. Whilst the church building is closed until 2nd December, the church is very much alive and active.

A new online service will be available every Sunday.

Please contact Matthew or Jonny if you need any help or support.

**And the king will answer them,  
'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least  
of these who are members of my family,  
you did it to me.'  
Matthew 25:40**

## **ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST - MISSION STATEMENT**

Drawn together by Christ's love, we seek by his grace to live out his commandments to love the Lord our God with all of our being; and to love everyone we come across as we love ourselves.

**[www.stjohnschurchstanmore.org.uk](http://www.stjohnschurchstanmore.org.uk)**

Please do check our website for future updates

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## Christ the King

### **Collect:**

God the Father, help us to hear the call of Christ the King and to follow in his service, whose kingdom has no end; for he reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, one glory. Amen.

### **Readings:**

[Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24](#)

[Ephesians 1:15-23](#)

[Matthew 25:31-46](#)

### **Short Sermon by Becky Stone**

Who gets nervous before an interview? Or an exam? Or when you have to submit an essay, or give a presentation? We all know that anxious feeling of 'have I met the criteria?', 'have I covered the right details?', 'will they approve what I've done?', 'will I make the grade?'

In our modern world, assessments start young and never seem to cease, so we may meet the reminder that at the end of all things Jesus himself will assess our whole lives with something of a groan! We start analysing our every action with similar questions to the ones above: will I meet Jesus' criteria? Will I make the grade? What if I missed an opportunity to feed Jesus when I walked passed that homeless man last week in a rush, or did I fail to "clothe the naked" when I binned my old clothes instead of giving them to a charity shop or a refuge?

I confess I didn't rejoice when I looked up the Gospel reading for today: how, I wondered, am I to make something uplifting for the celebration of Christ the King out of the threat of judgement? So I turned to some reading, and I found debates and arguments all focused on the question of who are the 'least of these who are members of my family'? Who is it we have to care for? Some say it is the remnant of the people of Israel, God's chosen people, and the world will be judged on how it treats the Jews; others argue that it is Christ's new family, the Christians, who are to be the focus of this care because the world will be judged on its response to Christ; still others say it is the poor and needy of the world, irrespective of creed, because the world will be judged on its compassion.

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So how are we supposed to 'meet the criteria' if we can't even agree on what they are? Well, I wonder if that ambiguity is actually deliberate, because I wonder if asking who it is we should be caring for is asking the wrong question. It's like reaching the end of a lecture in which a professor has shared what they passionately consider to be the most important and fascinating aspect of their subject, and the student asks, "will this be on the test?" Any teacher will know how infuriating that is!

The 'sheep' whom Jesus invites to 'inherit the kingdom prepared for you' were just as surprised and bewildered by Jesus' description of what they had done for him as the 'goats' were by his accusation of failure. Neither party had been operating with a checklist of necessary deeds, or a knowledge of what would 'be on the test'. They were simply living their lives and, like all of us, their actions showed the attitudes of their hearts. The caring showed Christlike love in their daily actions, the selfish did not. This does not mean the caring were perfect. And this does not mean they 'earned' they way to heaven either – we believe in salvation by grace through Christ's death. It simply means their faith, true faith, had allowed Christ to change their hearts for the better.

I doubt Jesus wants us to identify a bare-minimum checklist of necessary deeds, let alone an exclusive category of those for whom we should care. I think He wants us to examine the attitudes of our hearts and invite him as our shepherd to guide us; ask him through his spirit to give us wisdom; and allow him through his example to teach us to be more like him. Then we can simply live our lives, allowing our actions to flow naturally from an ever-more Christlike heart.

Jonny told us last week that we can listen to the voice of fear, or we can listen to the voice of love, and the voice we listen to most is the one which will shape our hearts while the other will fade away. I think the message of today's Gospel reinforces this, because what shapes our hearts will in turn shape also our actions, and ultimately it is our hearts that Christ, our King who identifies himself not with triumph and might but with the hungry, the sick and the prisoner, will see and will judge. Amen.