

St John's

Prayers:

Come upon us Holy Spirit of God, that you may send us out in your power. Fill us with your grace that we may proclaim the Good News to the oppressed, comfort the broken-hearted and bring freedom to your people.

We pray for healing and wholeness for those who are sick: Peggy Aris, Scott Bradley, Susan Khazoom, Ruth Gillespie, Susan Jones, Bridie O'Shea and Barbara Shotlander.

We also remember with thanksgiving those who have recently died: Lolita Alvira. We pray for their families at this sad time.

Be with us, Lord, at this time, that we may be a people of hope.

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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

13th December 2020

Welcome!

The Government has allowed places of worship to open for services and individual prayer.

Physical Services

Sunday 9.30am - Parish Communion.

Wednesday 10.30am - Holy Communion.

Online Service

Our weekly online service is available [here](#).

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light (John 1:6-8)

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

Please do check our website for future updates

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The Third Sunday of Advent (Year B)

Collect:

God for whom we watch and wait, you sent John the Baptist to prepare the way of your Son: give us courage to speak the truth, to hunger for justice, and to suffer for the cause of right, with Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Readings:

[Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11](#)

[1 Thessalonians 5:16-24](#)

[John 1:6-8, 19-28](#)

Short Sermon from Lydia McLean, Licensed Lay Minister

If you have ever stood on the brink of a canyon, you will have seen immense space and emptiness; a hidden world, battered by the elements; the fragile ecosystem home to unseen creatures living precarious lives in an inclement environment. Layers of rocks are built up over time, the oldest layers at the bottom, being carved by water to reveal hidden depths in the river below; we see as if into the heart of creation. As the layers are peeled back; emptiness springs into life.

Perhaps it is in just such a wilderness place that we might imagine John the Baptist, his voice crying out, echoing and mingling with dust and birdsong, proclaiming 'a coming' that pierces through the brokenness of humanity. A coming that strips us bare of falsehood and pretence. A coming that will literally turn our inner worlds up-side-down.

'Who are you?' John is asked. A voice crying out into emptiness, 'I am not the Messiah,' he says. Are you Elijah? 'I am not.' The prophet? 'No.'

Denying these false identities, John knows that he must name the roles to which he is not called before he can affirm who he is. And so must we.

How often we wish that we were the Messiah, the long-expected sovereign of our own devised fiefdoms. How often we take on the titles offered to us, not because they fit, but because they make us feel good and more real, and we readily assign these roles to others in order to suit our purposes.

Just as the canyon only becomes itself in emptiness, so too we, refusing

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visions of grandeur, get closer to the spare, unvarnished truth of ourselves. 'I am,' John admits, 'the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord.'" An invisible resonance piercing the air. Nothing more and nothing less than this, crying out God's purpose.

John, the man of the wilderness, embodies the canyon, representing space and depth rather than self-promotion. He is the archetype of how our lives become Christ-like—the Way to become filled with the fullness of God.

There is much for us to learn from John, in the watery depths of the canyon, especially in this pandemic year. Faced with the multiplying needs of our families, our communities, and our planet, we attempt to squeeze into a few days, since the end of lockdown, all our Christmas preparation. For many, as it seems impossible to slow down and be more attentive during frenetic busyness; the oblivious world continues to crowd in and shout, "Who are you? Who are you?"

Like John, if we are to find a God-shaped space within to accomplish God's work, then we too must say: I am not the Messiah... I am not... No.

For John, his purpose is clear: he announces of God's incarnate promise. He baptises, as Shaun was baptised last week, inviting others to be purged by the river's cleansing waters—stripping away layers of defensiveness and duplicity, to prepare their hearts for, 'the One who is coming after', the Christ; the One who is making all things new.

And here, in another time and wilderness, in pandemic pandemonium, John's invitation remains open, as urgent as ever because we are still learning who we are and who we are not.

Like the canyon, we are still being shaped, still being laid bare to the wind, light and rain, becoming carved as deep, open and vast as God imagines we can become. And, like John, it is only in the search for holy emptiness that we will, at last, become the fulfilment for God's future purpose:

to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the broken-hearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour. Amen.