

St John's

St John's Church Pew Sheet 10th January 2021

Prayers:

Gracious God, you are the light that lightens all darkness, the One who calls us by name to serve you. As your adopted children, may we be faithful to our calling and live in your light all the days of our life. Amen.

We lift to you all who are sick among them: Peggy Aris, Scott Bradley, Susan Khazoom, Ruth Gillespie, Brenda Hunt, Susan Jones, Bridie O'Shea and Christine Prentice. Also, those who have died recently, among them Kathleen Atwell, Joan Fearn and John Mudway. May they rest in peace and rise in glory.

Lord Jesus, Beloved Son of God and the pattern of our calling, may we faithfully love and serve you, as we love and serve our neighbour, particularly those who need your care. Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

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The Parish Office is closed.

On 5th January 2021, the Prime Minister announced that the UK would enter another lockdown. Whilst places of worship are allowed to remain open (this time), the PCC had already taken the decision to close the church for physical services during the month of January. We will remain closed.

This is to play our part in ensuring we are not contributing to the spread of Covid-19 and adding any pressure to the NHS.

'... as Jesus was coming out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."'
(Mark 1:10-11)

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

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

Please do check our website for future updates

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The Baptism of Christ

Collect:

Eternal Father, who at the baptism of Jesus revealed him to be your Son, anointing him with the Holy Spirit: grant to us, who are born again by water and the Spirit, that we may be faithful to our calling as your adopted children; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Readings:

Genesis 1:1-5

Acts 19:1-7

Mark 1:4-11

Short Sermon from Lydia McLean, Licensed Lay Minister

Once, a priest was visiting a family who had been blessed with a new baby and wanted to have the child baptised. They said to the priest, 'We chose a good biblical name too!' 'And which one is that?' said the priest. 'Pislimciv', replied the mother. Puzzled by this, the priest asked, 'And which book is that in again?' The father found the battered family Bible and turned to Psalms. There in words and in Roman numerals was PSALM CIV.

Today we focus on the story which tells us of Jesus' own baptism and the divine declaration which served as his 'call' to a life of teaching, healing, and proclamation that God's kingdom was near! We do this to reflect on our shared identity as baptised people and the call that comes as an essential part of our baptism and identity. Jesus' call came in the form of opened heavens, a dove and a divine voice. Although our own call may not come as dramatically, each of us does have a call, to which we, like Jesus, must seek to be faithful!

Reading today's Gospel, Jesus must have received an immense sense of being loved during his baptism as he came out of the water; a dove descending from the heavens and God's voice speaking as if to him alone, 'You are my Son, the Belovèd, with you I am well pleased'. At our baptism God says to each one of us, 'You are my belovèd Child; I am pleased with you!' In what seems like a paradox, God loves us, as if each ONE of us were the only child.

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We know very little about Jesus' early life, apart from the birth stories, visiting Magi and Jesus at 12 in Jerusalem talking to the teachers in the temple. The next event we hear about is Jesus asking to be baptised by John. We don't know which events in his life led him to this place. However, Jesus' baptism was quickly followed by a call. The Holy Spirit came upon him and Jesus responded by embarking on a life of service. He struggled with temptation in the wilderness as he prayed about the shape of his ministry; Jesus' baptism was the beginning of a journey.

Whenever we were baptised, baptism is symbolic of a beginning. In baptism we are named as Christ's and we, or parents on our behalf, agree to grow in understanding of the Christian call on our future lives.

The question that is given to us to struggle with is, 'Who does God want me to be?' We wrestle with it in our youth looking towards the future and we continue to strive with it as we pray about the direction of our lives. The call to be Christian is a call to a 24/7 life lived in the knowledge of the new name given us. Our parents gave us names when we were born; at baptism, we were given the name of Christian, and God did that! The presence of the Holy Spirit is called upon us at our baptism so that this Spirit of God may be with us, as it was with Jesus, at all times in our lives.

As Christians, we are called to live our lives after the pattern of Christ and the will of God, as it is presented to us. We can do this no matter what our life experience or our family background! We may feel that we are being washed with forces beyond our control in the midst of the pandemic. In these dark times, Christ's guiding light gives us blessing and hope; hope that began with our baptism with water and the Holy Spirit.

The promise of God in baptism is the same as it is in Christ; that God has acted to give us life in all its abundance; that God's unconditional love is extended to us; and that God calls us to live in the light of this love and promise all our days. Amen.