



Bulletin 23

Dear Church!

*“Stir up, O Lord,
the wills of your faithful people;
that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works,
may by you be plenteously rewarded;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

So runs the post communion prayer from the Common Worship Prayer Book!

Preparations for Christmas are upon us this last Sunday before Advent in the Church's year! Have you ever done one of those word association tests? Someone says a word and you reply immediately without conscious thought with whatever word comes into your mind! So how about the word, 'Christmas'? Presents? Turkey? Jesus? Family? Father Christmas?!

It's a battle isn't it, to keep Jesus at the centre! So, here's what we're offering in the parish this year! It'll be a different Christmas this year but the object, as always, is to keep Jesus as the centre of our gatherings and rejoice together in His fellowship!

Christmas will see us reaching out to the whole parish of 19,000 population to which we will have delivered every household a glossy invitation to join us in various activities over the festive season! It will also have messages from our clergy, proclaiming the 'Good News of Great Joy!'

[OUR MAIN ACTIVITY WILL BE ON-LINE](#) either via our 'Emmanuel with St. Paul's' Facebook page live and recorded feeds afterwards or on Zoom:

[On Christmas Eve](#) there will be a 5.30pm 'Carols round the family tree' **Zoom** carol service. We hope that approaching 500 people will be present as a result of our invitation. It will be sent live from Emmanuel Church. The carols will be played variously by band and organ and piano with each household singing amongst themselves before coming back together for further introduction / message / prayers etc., interspersing them!

[On Christmas Day](#), our main service will be the online 10.30 gathering for half an hour on Facebook as usual. There will be a zoom room afterwards to wish each other Christmas greetings!

WE WILL ALSO BE MEETING IN OUR BUILDINGS AT BOTH CHURCHES

Christmas Eve There will be a 'Midnight Service' at St Paul's (time to be announced) but NOT at Emmanuel. The reason behind the latter is because although many might like to come, it would inevitably be restricted to very few because of social distancing and the whole beauty of late night carols, etc would be lost.

Christmas Day (*Confirmation of these times and booking details to follow*)

We plan to have short 30 minute services:

9am, 10am and possibly 11am at Emmanuel for people to book into in advance.

And a 10am service at St Pauls

IN ADDITION, WE SHALL BE OFFERING THE FOLLOWING IN THE PARISH:

- ***An Emmanuel 'Front Window Advent Trail'*** Details of this are already online at the Web and on Facebook. People paint a Christmas verse, Carol or line from a carol onto their window. We are after 24 participant households which will eventually form an Advent walk between homes in the parish! Contact Becky Bale for further details or look up on web/Facebook page.
- ***As well as the 'Front Window Advent Trail' we also hope to build a crib under the lamppost*** in Emmanuel grounds and encourage the children (as directed through Facebook) to bring things to decorate it.
- ***Both churches will be decorating their*** grounds with lighting and cribs to put out the message that we're still operational!
- ***I will be inviting you to 'An Hour in The Stable' (via Facebook)*** sometime in the week leading up to Christmas where, in a similar manner to Good Friday Services, I intend to lead us through some prayerful, biblical Christ centred reflections on the coming of our Saviour. I've also challenged the clergy team each to offer something similar themselves! More on that as they rise to the call!
- ***Emmanuel will also be seeking to send a Christmas Gift*** to those who might otherwise feel isolated from their church and other families at this time of year.

More detail will follow – and possibly more ideas too – in the meantime, how about this for a leader into the joy of the approaching season?

When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.¹

The 'wise men' had made a very long and arduous journey convicted by the prompting that they had someone very important to encounter, before who they needed to bow down and pay homage. As they approached Jesus they were simply overjoyed!

We saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.²

May all our Advent preparations and Christmas celebrations enable us to bow down afresh before the one born to be our King and Saviour! May there be true Christian joy among us, even amidst current circumstances, as we rejoice again at his coming!

Every blessing in Christ be upon you this Advent season!

The light is on at the end of the tunnel...!

Rev Karl

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¹ Matthew 2:10

² Mathew 2:2