



# St Paul's Church



Dear all

As we journey together through the liturgical season of Advent, we reach the third Sunday this weekend known as Gaudete Sunday (Gaudete derived from the Latin word for 'rejoice') and this day of JOY stands as a moment of respite and celebration amidst the anticipatory (and somewhat penitential) character of Advent. We shift our focus from 'The Lord is coming' to 'The Lord is near'.

Gaudete Sunday has been woven in to the rich tapestry of Christian tradition for many centuries, having originated around the same time as Advent itself, in around the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> century. The colour associated with this day is rose or pink and so we will be lighting the pink candle on the Advent wreath. This change of colour from the usual purple of Advent is a visual clue to the faithful; it signals that we have reached a time when our reflection and repentance is balanced by the anticipation and rejoicing in the promise of redemption.

As Christians, we know that our JOY is not contingent on our circumstances but is anchored in the hope and promise of Christ's coming. It is not the same thing as happiness because happiness is typically influenced by external things. JOY is internal; it can be present even in the midst of great sadness. As the theologian Henri Nouwen said, 'joy is the experience of knowing that you are unconditionally loved...it does not simply happen to us. We have to choose joy and keep choosing it every day.'

Gwyn will be leading the service this Sunday but if you do spot me lurking in the pews, look out for my pink, glittery dog collar, in homage to Gaudete Sunday. I have a collection of these sparkly collars in all different colours, and I wear them pretty much all the time unless I'm actually leading, preaching or presiding (when I revert to a plain white one). The collars are made and sold to raise money for the Rainbow Trust Children's Charity which supports families who have a child with a life-threatening or terminal illness, so my sparkly collars bring me JOY when I wear them, but they also help a very good cause.

Rev Anthea

## **FORTHCOMING SERVICES**

***All services are in church, zoom is available for some services.***

**SUNDAY 17<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER –Advent 3 (ZOOM)**

10 am Experimental Worship - Gwyn

**SUNDAY 24<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER –Advent 3 (ZOOM)**

10 am Holy Communion – Rev Anthea

**SUNDAY 24<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER – Christmas Eve (ZOOM)**

4 pm Crib/Christingle Service – Rev Anthea & Robin F

**MONDAY 25<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER – Christmas Day (ZOOM)**

10 am All-Age Communion – Rev Anthea

**SUNDAY 31<sup>st</sup> DECEMBER – First Sunday of Christmas (ZOOM)**

10 am All-Age Communion – Rev Anthea

## **FOOD BANK**

The next collection will be on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> December.

## **PRAYER RESOURCE**

**week beginning Sunday, 17<sup>th</sup> December 2023**

*'We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.'*  
(John 1: 14)

This week we give thanks:

- For the wonder of the incarnation – that Jesus came to us and lives in us by the Spirit.
- For all the treasures we have – food, clothes, clean water: may we show our gratitude by offering back our lives in God's service.

Please pray for:

- All who grieve, remembering our own loved ones who we see no more but who are always in our hearts.
- All who feel threatened and have no one to turn to.
- Continue to pray for our world, that all in authority show wisdom and integrity and uphold the Christian values of truth, humility, love and peace.
- Our town and neighbourhood, and, in this busy season, let each of us share God's love and reach out to others in His name.
- Our Church family: all who are struggling; and for Trevor as he settles into a Care Home near to his daughter, Edith, Pat, Alice, Jill, Maureen, Sandra and Brenda; and for Ruth, Helen and Meaghan and for all the residents and carers at Maidstone Care Centre.
- Advent is a time to remember that Jesus not only came, but that He is coming again; make this a time of personal preparation in readiness for His return.

**You may like to use this prayer during the week:**

***Lord God, make me watchful and keep me faithful as I wait for the coming of your Son; that when He shall appear, he may find me not sleeping in sin, but active in his service and joyful in his praise. Amen.***