



St Paul's Church



Dear all

Having lit the previous three candles on our Advent wreath, the flickering flames of HOPE, PEACE, and JOY, we prepare to light the fourth candle this Sunday, the candle of LOVE which casts its radiant light across the entire tapestry of the Advent season. In a world often riven by division, hatred and discord, LOVE is not a mere sentimental notion but a radical force that can dismantle barriers, challenge injustice, and call us into transformative relationships. As we read in 1 John 4.18, 'There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.' LOVE is the driving force that underpins our faith and fuels our hope. It is the unifying thread that stitches together our friendships, our families and our communities.

The Christmas season invites us to widen the scope of our love, breaking down the artificial boundaries that society often imposes. It beckons us to love not just those who are like us but to extend our hearts to the marginalised, the oppressed, and even to those we consider our enemies. And these are not empty words; this week especially, in the Church, we are challenged to love one another in the face of our differences. *In a historic departure from tradition, a selection of readings and prayers of blessing for same-sex couples became available to be used legally for the first time in the Church of England.* I know that some of us will be delighted by this, others will struggle to come to terms with it but either way, let's never forget the imperative to LOVE one another whatever our differences. We need to find a way to make room for one another's deeply held beliefs with respect, dignity, and LOVE. (Whether we go ahead with these blessings at St. Paul's will be for the new incumbent to decide when he/she arrives, estimated to be around the middle of next year.)

In the narrative of Jesus' birth, we witness the embodiment of LOVE, a LOVE which is accessible to all regardless of status or circumstance. So this Advent and Christmas season, let the flame of LOVE burn brightly in our hearts and our homes, and in our church let's create a welcoming space for all who seek refuge in the transformative power of God's unending and inclusive LOVE.

Rev Anthea

FORTHCOMING SERVICES

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

SUNDAY 24th DECEMBER –Advent 3 (ZOOM)

10 am Holy Communion – Rev Anthea

SUNDAY 24th DECEMBER – Christmas Eve

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

MONDAY 25th DECEMBER – Christmas Day (ZOOM)

10 am All-Age Communion – Rev Anthea

SUNDAY 31st DECEMBER – First Sunday of Christmas (ZOOM)

10 am All-Age Communion – Rev Anthea

NOTICES

Please note we no longer have a landline. If you require assistance please email, send a text or leave a voicemail on the church mobile 07516 159879 and I will come back to you as soon as I can.

Wishing you all a happy Christmas and new year.

Regards
Tracey

PRAYER RESOURCE

'The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light...' (Isaiah 9: 1a)

We thank God for:

- The birth of His Son that first Christmas, and for the people who He sent into our life as a gift, to show us something of himself.
- 2023, and as we look back, we give thanks for the good times and leave with God the struggles and worries of the world.

Please pray for:

- The peace and joy of Jesus to touch each person's heart this Christmas.
- God's love, peace and hope to reach every corner of our world.
- All who are missing family members this Christmas: for the bereaved or those who are separated from loved ones; for people who are lonely and are having to spend this festive time on their own; and we pray for our homes and for all whom we treasure.
- The homeless, hungry and frightened, and may God's loving presence fill every night shelter and warm space this winter.
- Our Church family: all who are struggling at this time; and for Edith, Pat, Alice, Jill, Trevor, Maureen, Sandra and Brenda; and for Ruth, Helen and Meaghan.
- We leave with God this year's struggles, worries and uncertainties, and hopes dashed. We look ahead, and ask God to lift our eyes, renew our minds, soften our hearts, transform our lives and give us hope for the future.

Hope. Peace. Joy. Love.

It is about the light of the world that broke our fear.

An Emmanuel. A God who is here.