



St Paul's Church



Dear all

As we stand on the threshold of a new year, we have the opportunity to paint a fresh canvas filled with a vision of a fairer world and a better version of ourselves. For Christians, this canvas is not one on which we paint the future alone; we are called instead to co-create with the divine. In the embrace of God's forgiveness, we have the opportunity to shed the weight of past grievances and mistakes, and to create the space for grace where healing can occur, and a brighter tomorrow can be made real. All of us have the potential to be the agents of positive change when we are guided by the God of infinite possibilities.

This new year is certainly going to bring change for us as a community. We very much hope at St. Paul's that we will be welcoming a new Priest-in-charge in around six months, and this is a very exciting time for us. Along with St. Nic's, we'll be setting up dedicated prayer time to pray for our new, shared incumbent and to pray for one another. The leadership teams of both churches are mindful that our congregations also deserve to be prepared well to receive their new leader. This is in everyone's interests; we don't want to burden our new priest with the weight of overwhelming expectation but of course we *do* want them to feel as welcome as we possibly can as they prepare to lead us towards a flourishing and sustainable future.

March 2024 also sees the launch of Bubble Church which the team are very excited about. We truly believe that this is such a rich, missional opportunity for St. Paul's, and we're going to give it everything we have in order to bless our community, especially young families. The team are busy preparing and practising so that by the time we start, we will be confident both in our delivery and in the underpinning principles of this new initiative. We have some really fun social activities planned too, kicking off with the Pudding and Dancing evening at the end of January. We have more Celtic worship in the diary and another 'Music and Memories' service which went down very well last time. We also have a very eminent guest speaker on the third week in March, the ornithologist, ecologist, lecturer and professional photographer John Buckingham. Easter promises to be a little different this year too (I'm not giving any spoilers!) and we even have ambitions to host a community Seder meal in Holy Week.

So have a happy new year, whatever you have planned and let's hope 2024 proves to be another step forwards in building the kingdom of God in our community.

Rev Anthea

FORTHCOMING SERVICES

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

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

10 am All-Age Communion – Rev Anthea

SUNDAY 7th JANUARY – Baptism of Christ

10 am Café Worship – Gwyn

SUNDAY 14th JANUARY – Epiphany

10 am All-Age Worship – Rev Anthea

SUNDAY 21st JANUARY – Epiphany 2

10 am All-Age Worship – Rev Anthea

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.