



**PARISH OF HAWLEY**  
*Holy Trinity – All Saints*  
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Dear friends

Well, given how close our parish sits to the triple boundary of three counties, we have inevitably a rather mixed picture as a result of the review of the “tiers” earlier this week. Those of you living on the Surrey/Berkshire side of the River Blackwater have alas been plunged into Tier 3; those on the Hampshire side (which includes both our churches) remain, for the time being at any rate, in Tier 2. I shan’t reiterate the Government advice – and it is *only* advice – about travel between Tiers 2 and 3; as far as I am concerned that is a judgement for the individual to make. You will be welcome in church and I have not the slightest intention of inquiring as to your address!

But of course all of this is suspended for five days over the immediate Christmas period. So all of our services on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day remain as previously advertised, unaffected by the most recent changes. They are as follows:

**Christmas Eve**

St Andrew’s, Minley: 8:00 pm, Christmas Communion

Holy Trinity, Hawley: 11:30 pm, Midnight Mass

**Christmas Day**

All Saints, Hawley: 9:15 am, Mass of Christmas Day

Holy Trinity, Hawley: 11:00 am, Mass of Christmas Day

Please can I ask everyone who has internet access to register via our website if they intend coming to any of the three services at Hawley (including Midnight Mass). This is the time of year when people who we don’t otherwise generally see attend church services, and the clearer picture we have of likely attendance the better!

By way of compensation, you *don’t* need to register for next Sunday (27th) as we’re not expecting there to be too much pressure on space that day.

If you would like to attend the service at Minley, please contact Fr Peter King, Chaplain to the Royal Engineers, by email at [peter.king522@mod.gov.uk](mailto:peter.king522@mod.gov.uk) or by texting him on 07795246166.

The HAMS carol service is well in hand, and we hope to have it posted online on Wednesday 23rd. I intend to email you the link when it becomes available. Many thanks to all who volunteered to help with this, to Darren Neve for co-ordinating it, and to Emily Brown for putting it all together!

Among those formerly of our congregations who have been in touch at this time, I have been asked to pass on love and good wishes from Jean Courtney and Cathie Mansell. I’m sure all of those who knew them will join in returning those sentiments.

With my blessing and very best wishes to you all, and to those dear to you, this Christmas.

William .

### The Great O Antiphons

As Christmas approaches, feast days – though they are still there – disappear from the Calendar of the Church, as this advanced period of anticipation begins. At the Alleluia at Mass, and the Magnificat antiphon at Evening Prayer, we encounter seven distinctive acclamations known as the ‘Great O’ antiphons. Each of them (O wisdom, O Lord, O Root of Jesse, O Key of David, O Dayspring, O King of the Nations, and O Emmanuel) speaks to a title of Christ, whose coming is revealed in the Nativity of Jesus. They make clear the vulnerabilities of the human condition and order, and illustrate Christ’s loving healing and reconciliation, and the self-sacrificing intention of the Father in sending us the Son. In a period marked with frenetic shopping, cleaning, and premature celebration, we are asked, again (for most of us have done this many times in our life), to wait patiently for the day of the Lord to dawn in splendid humility. O Emmanuel, our king and our lawgiver, the hope of the nations and their Saviour: Come and save us, O Lord our God. (Antiphon from 23rd December.)

#### Prayers to Remember

Almighty and everlasting God, the Light of the faithful and Ruler of souls, who hast hallowed us by the incarnation of thy Word, and the child-bearing of the Blessed Virgin Mary; we beseech thee, let the power of thy Holy Spirit come also upon us, and the mercy of the Highest overshadow us. Amen.

*From The Mozarabic Missal*

#### From the Fathers

‘Heaven and earth and men are to join in one concert; Heaven and earth first; Heaven on high, earth beneath to take up one hymn; both in honour of His birth – both are better by it. Heaven has glory, earth peace, by means of it... Warranted by this song, at thy nativity, O Lord, let the heavens rejoice for the glory, let the earth be glad for the peace that come to them by it. And men, though they rest and come in last after both, yet they to do it as much... for God’s good-will toward them which brought all this to pass in heaven and earth both; restoring men to God’s favour and grace, and all by means of this Child.’

*Lancelot Andrewes, Sermons of the Nativity: Preached Upon Christmas Day 1619 Before King James*

20th December  
2020

The Fourth Sunday  
of Advent

### The Blessed Virgin Mary



*In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin’s name was Mary. (Luke 1.26-27)*

Elizabeth has been pregnant for six months when Gabriel is dispatched again from God’s presence to bring news of another birth. He’s sent to Nazareth, a rather out of the way place, and to the simple dwelling in which Mary is living. What’s clear from the opening verses of the meeting of angel and girl is that she has plans: Mary is engaged, and plans are advanced for her – the formalities of the betrothal have taken place, though Joseph has yet to complete the marriage by taking her to his home. Perhaps Mary had clear expectations of what her life would look like with Joseph, and it’s difficult for us to understand the depth and cost of her calling.

But maybe we can understand something about plans and expectations that have to be set aside because of a dramatic change in our circumstances. We’ve all experienced something of that recently, but on a deeper level our own plans can be turned upside down: A new job comes our way and new possibilities open up; a new relationship alters our lives; an illness sets us on a different course. We often find unexpected blessings in these times, and that like Mary we can go on trusting God. Looking back, can you think of times in your life when your plans changed, and can you see how God was with you in those times?.



## Psalm 96

As this special night is finally upon us, the Psalm helps us to understand the song of the Angels, proclaiming the birth of the King of Kings. The sheer joy of the words in this Psalm is set against the context that the Lord of the whole earth is indeed worthy to be praised – and so we should do exactly that on this of all nights, when our salvation enters the world. That all nations are called to praise God in this Psalm is echoed in the host of Angels praising God to the astonishment of the Shepherds. It is all too easy for us to become parochial and defensive regarding the Faith, almost as if it is something we own simply for ourselves. This Psalm, and this night, remind us that God is the Lord of the whole world. Rejoice and be glad!

## Elements of the Mass

### Bambini

The Bambino is the image of the Christ Child that is placed in the crib. Very often at the beginning of Midnight Mass this small image is carried by the priest so that people can see it and adore their Saviour. The priest might wear a humeral veil as a sign that what he carries is special and holy. Traditionally the image is placed upon the altar during the Mass as a reminder that in each and every Mass the Lord is present with us in the Blessed Sacrament. At the end of Mass the image is taken to the crib where it is honoured with incense and will remain for Christmastide. Very often the priest will follow the Franciscan tradition of genuflecting to the crib. When you return home from Midnight Mass why not place your own Bambino in your home crib and say a prayer. Perhaps you might sing a verse of a well-known carol. The crib should be at the centre of our homes in this Christmas time – it is a good way to tell people about God's love for them.

### From the Fathers

Awake, mankind! For your sake God has become man. Awake, you who sleep, rise up from the dead, and Christ will enlighten you. I tell you again: for your sake, God became man. You would have suffered eternal death, had he not been born in time. Never would you have been freed from sinful flesh, had he not taken on himself the likeness of sinful flesh. You would have suffered everlasting unhappiness, had it not been for this mercy. You would never have returned to life, had he not shared your death. You would have been lost if he had not hastened to your aid. You would have perished, had he not come. Let us then joyfully celebrate the coming of our salvation and redemption. Let us celebrate the festive day on which he who is the great and eternal day came from the great and endless day of eternity into our own short day of time.

From 'Sermon 185' by St Augustine of Hippo (354-430, bishop, theologian)

24th December  
2020

Christmas Day  
(Midnight Mass)

## At the appointed time



St Luke's account of the Nativity of Our Lord is very orderly: Jesus comes, as it were, at the appointed time, when, as the great Christmas Proclamation puts it: 'the whole world was at peace'. And yet peace is exactly what the world does not have. Around us, men, women and children are hurt, injured and killed by their fellows; and indeed in each of our hearts a war rages on, where the forces that would lure us into sin and division try to lure the will away from doing what our conscience tells us is right. There is so little peace. But in that stable, 2018 years ago (or thereabouts) a boy was born, a boy heralded as the 'Prince of Peace'. He came to show mankind a different way, and actually to bring it about, inaugurating a new age, the age of the church, the Body of Christ, where love becomes the fundamental and guiding principle in all we do. In this little boy, this baby, laid in a manger, is all the hope in the world, all the hope in the world for a better world. But in order for him to make the biggest difference, we have to invite him into our lives and hearts. This Christmas, let's do just that, that the whole world may indeed be at peace, and that peace may begin in and with me.

## Isaiah 52.7-10

The Good News announced to the Shepherds on the hillside is an echo of this hymn-like piece of prophecy from Isaiah. Those watching the sheep receive a song from those watching for the coming of the Lord. Isaiah's language here is stunning in its triumphalism – the great understanding of what is coming into the world and the redemption of Israel at hand. For all of us at Christmas, the entry into the world of this child is a source of great joy. But we must never forget that the redemption of the world is completed not by what this child does today, but by the Passion and the Cross. Rejoice for our redemption is here, but keep your eyes on Jerusalem, on the Way of the Cross, and of a tomb which will stand empty.

## Saints & Heroes

### St Anastasia

Following on from our last article about a 'minor' saint, today of all days is perhaps the day when other saints are indeed forgotten, and yet today is the feast of St Anastasia of Sirmium. Anastasia died this day in 304 in the persecutions of Christians under the Emperor Diocletian. One legend says she was the daughter of Praetextatus; another the pupil of St Chrysogonus (who appears in the Roman Canon); a third, that she was the daughter of St Fausta of Sirmium. Anastasia herself is commemorated in the Canon (Eucharistic Prayer) and has been so since the end of the 5th century, when she clearly occupied a unique position among the saints venerated in Rome. In the East, Anastasia is even entitled 'the Deliverer from Potions', 'the Healer' or 'the Deliverer from Bonds', in testimony of the fact that she was known in her life for being a healer and exorcist. Just as in her life, today Anastasia gives way liturgically to our greater celebration of the Nativity of the Lord: the saint is one who says with John the Baptist, 'He must increase; I must decrease'. We are reminded of this example of humility and intercession today.

You gave us so many gifts on the day of your birth:  
A treasure chest of spiritual medicines for the sick;  
Spiritual light for the blind;  
The cup of salvation for the thirsty;  
The bread of life for the hungry.  
In the winter when trees are bare,  
You give us the most succulent spiritual fruit.  
In the frost when the earth is barren,  
You bring new hope to our souls.  
In December when seeds are hidden in the soil,  
The staff of life springs forth from the virgin womb

From 'Nativity Prayer' by St Ephraim (306-373, theologian)

25th December  
2020

Christmas Day

## Indwelling



So much about Christmas is about receiving. 'To those who receive him he gives power to become the children of God.' We can receive him because he has come close to us – he is now closer to us than we are to ourselves. This is the message of the Christmas Gospel. The birth of Jesus means that God is never 'out there', God is 'Emmanuel'; he is with us. In Jesus, God dwells to partake fully in our life. In our Holy Communion we do indeed receive Jesus that we may 'dwell in him and he is us'. We know to that we have become brothers and sisters with him and children of the same Heavenly Father for he teaches and inspires us to call God 'Our Father.' As we prepare to make our Christmas Communion 'let us adore him' – come to dwell for us, come to dwell with us, come to dwell in us – and let us receive him with gladness and make the joy of this marvellous time complete.

### From the Fathers

The feast day of your birth resembles You, Lord  
Because it brings joy to all humanity.  
Old people and infants alike enjoy your day.  
Your day is celebrated  
from generation to generation.  
Kings and emperors may pass away,  
And the festivals to commemorate them soon lapse.  
But your festival will be remembered until the end of time.  
Your day is a means and a pledge of peace.  
At your birth heaven and earth were reconciled,  
Since you came from heaven to earth on that day  
You forgave our sins and wiped away our guilt.

*continued over*

