

St Mary's Church Newsletter

December 2018



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From Black Friday to Christmas

By Canon Simon Butler | December 2018



“Black Friday” is upon us once again, marking the beginning of the secular celebration of Christmas. Coming as it does from the traditional shopping day after the American celebration of Thanksgiving, this is fast proving a popular marketing tool – although it would appear that the benefits to the consumer are less than they appear.

It would be very easy to sneer at the hijacking of the Christmas by the forces of global capitalism, which have seen the creeping anticipation of the season earlier and earlier into the year. But I’m not sure we should be humiliating the secular world for not being au fait with the Christian year. It is a gift to the People of God first and foremost. So, with the virtual tills of “Black Friday” and “Cyber Monday” alerting us to the rapid approach of the Christian Season of Advent, how can we approach the coming weeks?

Let me offer you another familiar motif of the modern world – the motif of journey. I’m grateful to James, our Director of Music, for reminding me of this as he is preparing our Carol Service on 16th December around this theme. It has prompted me to ask three urgent Advent questions as we each make our own journey towards the Crib once again?

Where are you going? What direction is your life heading? I don’t mean by this whether you are fulfilling your personal ambitions or even (hard to imagine I know) whether you’ve managed to keep those New Year Resolutions going until the beginning of December? Rather this: the question is whether our lives are heading *towards* God or *away from* God. Even if the answer to that question is the latter, Advent invites to stop and to turn around, literally the meaning of repent. The great gift of

the Christian faith is that our ever-patient God asks us again and again to turn towards him and to journey deeper into God's love. Where are you headed?

What are you carrying with you? Anyone who watches a family go on a journey these days knows how much stuff gets packed into the car (or people carrier) or into the suitcases. Even the airlines how have to restrict the amount of hand luggage as people board, so wedded to things we have become. Another Advent question is "do you really need all this stuff?" Personal belongings apart - and we probably have far more of that than we truly need - what personal baggage do we continue to hold? Truth be told, there are probably things that we could let go of in our lives - unhealthy habits, self-destructive patterns of behaviour and even one or two damaging relationships - and if we can't quite let go of these things, then maybe we could allow these burdens to be carried by God in Jesus alongside us. "Come to me all who are burdened and heavy laden, and I will give you rest", says the Lord. What burdens you?

How much time is there to go? Pondering our mortality is a very sobering Advent theme. Much of the world's obsession is living for as long as possible, whereas it might well be the quality of life rather than its quantity that truly counts. That, at least, is the Advent message: be prepared. Should our lives end sooner rather than later, what would we be remembered for? What would you like to bequeath to others?

In all of these Advent questions, the truth of Christmas is already present, which is partly why we shouldn't be too hard on the world. Christmas is already here and Christ in his love is already incarnate in the world, present not in his human body but in his spiritual body, the People of God. So, as we journey on, and as we mull over the provocative questions of Advent, we can be assured of God's love in Jesus already, which can give us confidence to address the direction of our life and our priorities.

Where are you going?

What are you carrying with you?

How much time is there to go?

Have a great Advent and a rewarding, enriching Christmas.

Your brother and priest,

Simon

What's On in Advent this Year?

By Canon Simon Butler | December 2018



There are a number of different ways you can join in this Advent, in prayer, study, worship and service.

An **Early Morning Meditation Group** is beginning this month, aimed at those on their way to work. Aaron Kennedy will be leading this on a Wednesday morning at 7.45am beginning on Wednesday 5th December. Find out more from Aaron: aaron@stmarysbattersea.org.uk

An **Advent Study Group** has begun already on a Thursday afternoon at 1.30pm in Church. If you would like to join this group, it's not too late. The theme is *Watching & Waiting* and you can find out more from Leslie Spatt: les@lesliespatt.co.uk

Carols in the Square is always a popular community event, in which St Mary's Choir will be taking part. This year it is on Tuesday 4th December at 6.30pm in Battersea Square. The Christmas Tree will be lit at this event.

Our **Annual Christingle Service** takes place on Sunday 9th December at 3.00pm and is a special service for children, with a focus on fundraising for the work of the Children's Society. This is a special 50th anniversary year of this service and you can find out more - including how to involve your children in supporting the work of the Society - from Libby Bradshaw: libby.bradshaw@ursa.me.uk

The **Royal College of Art** on Battersea Bridge Road will be holding their first **Battersea Bridge Christmas Tree** Event on Monday 10th December at 6.30pm, followed by mulled wine and mince pies in the Dyson Building, 1 Hester Road. We are warmly invited.

Our **Junior Church Nativity Play** begins its rehearsals on 2nd December at 11am. The play itself will be performed, with music, in the sermon slot on Sunday 16th December at 11am.

The **Parish Carol Service** this year is very early, on Sunday 16th December at 6.00pm, and will be followed by traditional mulled wine and mince pies. The theme this year will be 'Journeys' and we have a special guest preacher, Fr Tom Williams, the Rector of the Salesians in Battersea, who will join us for this service, along with members of Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church.

St Mary's Choir will be Carol Singing in the week after the Carol Service. Look out for more details soon.

We will be celebrating the baptism of **Gabriel Kennedy**, son of Grace and Revd. Aaron Kennedy on Sunday 23rd December at 11am.

Christmas isn't always an easy time for people, especially for those who find the jollity difficult because of the life challenges they have faced or still struggle with. We honour those people and pray for them and with them at our special **Blue Christmas Service**, led by Simon Butler, on Sunday 23rd December at 6.00pm

Please invite your friends and family to any or all of these events.

Details of Christmas Services are on a separate poster

Junior Church

By Cal Alphonse | December 2018

CHRISTINGLE SERVICE: This is the 50th anniversary of the Children's Society Christingle Service and our special service for children and adults will take place on Sunday 9th December at 3.00pm. Everyone is welcome. Fundraising envelopes and other items are available from Libby Bradshaw (libby.bradshaw@ursa.me.uk)

JUNIOR CHURCH TEA PARTY: as it is the 50th anniversary of the Christingle service, we thought it would be lovely to have a tea party to celebrate this milestone after the service on Sunday 9th December. There will be cakes, refreshments and even party games! All are welcome. Please email Cal Alphonse to let her know you are coming so that we can get numbers accurate for catering cal@learningdifferences.co.uk

Christmas Services 2018

By Canon Simon Butler | December 2018



Christmas Poster 2018

Mince Pies!

By Roz Massouras | December 2018



The Parish Carol Service on Sunday 16 December at 6.00 pm will be followed by the traditional mincepies and mulled wine.

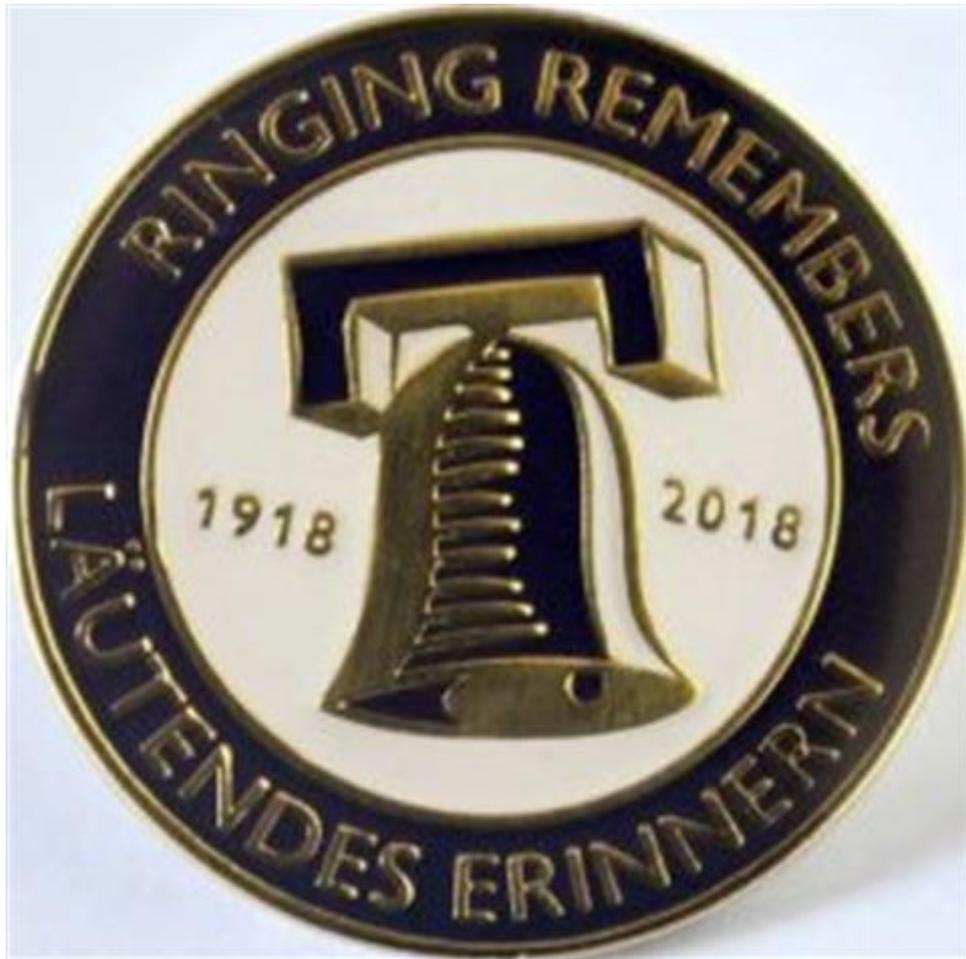
To make this happen, we need your help, baking mincepies, brewing the mulled wine, serving the goodies and washing up - please sign up at the back of church. No experience necessary and newcomers to St Mary's especially welcome!

Enquiries to Roz Massouras

rozmassouras@gmail.com, 020 7228 6039 / 07779 306 805

Ringling for the Armistice

By Caroline Prescott | December 2018



Ringling for the Armistice this year was extra special for us up in the tower. About one year ago, there was a National Campaign to recruit 1400 new bell ringers to acknowledge those ringers who lost their lives in World War 1, including Harrison for those who follow the Archers!

We know about this figure due to the work undertaken by Alan Regin MBE. He is keeper of the Rolls of Honour compiled initially in 1918, but have since been found to be short of more than 300 names. He has researched tirelessly to update the books to include all the names.

The ringing of bells at 11am on the 11th November 1918 was a very poignant moment to mark the end of hostilities. Interestingly, reports of the quality of the ringing on this day were that it was certainly not perfect as many of the experienced ringers were away at war still or had lost their lives.



Ringling for the Armistice this year was extra special for us up in the tower

Churches and ringing teachers up and down the country have worked hard to recruit and train new ringers. At St. Mary's we had 3 new recruits, and 1 returner. All were given a commemorative badge by the Central Council of Church bellringers to mark the occasion. On the day we had 14 ringers in the tower.

This year to mark the 100th anniversary of the end of WW1, ringers were encouraged, along with the new recruits, to take part in ringing at certain parts of the day. Here at St. Mary's we rang half muffled before and after the 11am service on the 11th November. Across the country hundreds of churches took part, including some that had been silent due to lack of ringers.

It was truly a special day for us up in the tower.

Caroline Prescott

People are Living in Fear - Are You Different?

By Gladys Ikeme | December 2018

Before I went back home to Nigeria in March 2017, I had lots of mixed feelings because of horrible news I had heard about Nigeria. There had been kidnappings of babies, teenagers and married women to be used for rituals and a way of getting rich quickly. There was news of hardship and hunger. I also had tachycardia, which is a fastness of heart beat. I had fears, but I was not deterred from travelling because I had prayed fervently for protection.

Two days before my flight I was completely exhausted. Normally, I am usually packed by that time, but in this case, I was still packing the morning of my departure.

Even the day of my flight there was the Westminster Bridge killings. Someone rang me to say that I had escaped, but I replied that it is God's grace that I should be leaving at that time. I was moderately nervous that morning and prayed that God would intervene as I needed to go home. I had faith that God would see me through.

For various reasons, I decided to use an airline that was previously unknown to me, Ethiopian Airways. It was a long journey, as the flight stopped in Addis Ababa where we waited for 6 hours. There was a long delay in transferring our luggage and the baking heat did not help.

Again, I prayed to God for help, and help came. On arrival in Nigeria I could see my relatives waving to me, saying 'Welcome Home!' My heated body cooled down as I went into my brother's air-conditioned Range Rover. He hugged me and made me feel very welcomed. It was good to be home! There followed a meal with a wonderful menu. All my anxieties evaporated.

I rested for a couple of days. I was then ready to move on. I consider that going home includes reassuring relatives that God is in control. I felt that I had to share with them the message that God is greater than the evil in the world. I believe that God sent me to help, which I did.

With God, all impossibilities are made possible. Why live in fear? Believe in the Lord almighty.

Fellow Christians, know that as much as we are presently suffering, we should remember this will not be for ever. For our God is watching and will rescue us at the right time. Although it seems that things have gone from worse to worst and Satan seems to be sending fears, saying that we can't make it, don't give up. Say, 'With God I shall and will in Jesus' name.'

May God bless you all. Amen

Gladys Ikeme

(Child of God)