



St John's, Stoneleigh Weekly Newsletter 31st December 2023 The First Sunday of Christmas

A MESSAGE FROM REV. GEOFF ANDREW

I guess it's just a little too early for Happy New Year, so I'll simply say I hope you are having a happy Christmas season. After the flurry of services last weekend (thanks to all who helped in any way), this past week has been thankfully quiet. Anne and I managed to get away to the south coast for a couple of days which was lovely. 2023 has been a challenging year for many people and if that includes you, then I do pray that next year will bring calmer waters. I'm looking forward to seeing what God has in store for us all as we continue to serve him in Stoneleigh. Next week we begin a new sermon series, 'Walk the Talk', based on the book of James.

Rev. Geoff Andrew

RESUMPTION OF SERVICES IN THE NEW YEAR

There will be **no** Morning Prayer on Monday 1st January 2024. The normal pattern of services will resume from January 3rd with a service of Holy Communion at 9.30am.

Rev. Geoff Andrew

RUSH ACADEMY CHILD SPONSORSHIP

RUSH is one of our primary mission partners. Based in Kakamega, Kenya, RUSH was set up by Andrew and Lucy Amukowa to provide education to local children and give them the tools to break out of the cycle of poverty. One of the ways we can support the work of RUSH is to sponsor a child. We have a number of children's profiles available at St John's and sponsorships cost £20 per month. Please speak to Claire Cornell or Rev. Geoff if you are interested. *Rev. Geoff Andrew*

CHURCH 'WHO'S WHO'

With us having two well-established congregations now, it is not always easy to match a face with a name. So we plan to produce a church 'Who's Who' booklet with names and photographs so we can get to know each other better. This is only for the use of church members and will not go further afield. John Martin has kindly agreed to lead the project and he will be approaching you sometime in the next few weeks to ask if he can take your photograph and a few details. I encourage everyone to participate. Thank you! *Rev. Geoff Andrew*

ST JOHN'S REFLECTIONS

We have set up a new WhatsApp group dedicated to sharing Christian reflections, meditations and bible verses. Called St John's Reflections, its purpose is to build one another in the faith. That doesn't mean that such things can't be shared on the main St John's WhatsApp group, but it makes sense to have a place set apart from the general admin and chat. The new group is open to all. Just let myself or Will Porter know if

you would like to join. And I should add that joining does not mean you have to contribute...it's perfectly fine to just receive!

Rev. Geoff Andrew

UKRAINE CRISIS APPEAL

Thank you so much to St John's who are still helping the people of Ukraine. If you can donate: shower gel, shampoo, soap, sanitary items, nappies, warm socks, protein bars, packet soups, first aid kits, toothbrushes, toothpaste, torches, bandages and warm gloves, or anything else listed on the donation box in the church, you will be helping people survive in Ukraine. If you wish to donate money, please either write a cheque made payable to Shelly Weiczorek, go to the whiteeagleappeal.org page or put cash in an envelope marked Ukraine. We can then buy chest drains and other medical equipment that is not easy to buy in shops. Thanks for all your support.

Shelly, Ukrainian Refugee Contact

UKRAINIAN REFUGEE CHRISTMAS APPEAL

This Christmas, Epsom & Ewell Refugee Network (EERN) is supporting refugee families in our area to buy Christmas gifts for their children, and to host a Christmas celebration so that the community has a space to come together. A donation of £20 will support one child to attend this Christmas party and a £15 voucher for each child so that their parents can choose a meaningful Christmas gift for them. The party will be organised by the Ukrainian community, with support from the EERN team. Please follow this link to donate:

<https://epsomandewellfoodbank.enthuse.com/cf/4a8d>

Rev. Geoff Andrew

PRAYER GROUP

We are delighted that the monthly prayer group is gaining momentum. Having said that, due to the festivities in December there will not be a meeting this month. The next meeting will be at 3.30pm on Thursday 18th January 2024 in the Chapel. This will follow coffee café. *Steve Simper*

ZOOM

Our Sunday service is streamed via <https://stoneleigh.tv>. Any problems, please let us know. *Tim Rogers*

Book of Remembrance

Jamie Humphreys

Music

1. The holly and the ivy
2. It came upon a midnight clear (MP 345)
3. In the bleak mid-winter (MP 337)
4. *During communion*: O Lord, hear my prayer (MP 908)
5. Lord for the years (MP 428)

Today's Service

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul compares the Christian life to a race and describes the kind of disciplines required of an athlete to compete successfully. As we stand on the cusp of a new year, it's not a bad time to reflect on whether we are equipped spiritually for the year ahead.

Readings

Philippians 3:10 – 4:1

Lynne Coppin

¹⁰ I want to know Christ – yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,¹¹ and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

¹² Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. ¹⁶ Only let us live up to what we have already attained. ¹⁷ Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. ¹⁸ For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. ²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

4 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!

Matthew 28:16-20

Rev. Geoff Andrew

¹⁶ Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'

Collect

God in Trinity, eternal unity of perfect love: gather the nations to be one family, and draw us into your holy life through the birth of Emmanuel, our Lord Jesus Christ.