

Readings: Sunday 13th December

1 Thessalonians 5.16-24

¹⁶Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray without ceasing, ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. ¹⁹Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰Do not despise the words of prophets, ²¹but test everything; hold fast to what is good; ²²abstain from every form of evil. ²³May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

John 1.6-8

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

John 1.19-28

The Testimony of John the Baptist

This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, 'I am not the Messiah.' And they asked him, 'What then? Are you Elijah?' He said, 'I am not.' 'Are you the prophet?' He answered, 'No.' Then they said to him, 'Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?' He said, 'I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the Lord" ', as the prophet Isaiah said.

Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, 'Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?' John answered them, 'I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.' This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

PLEASE NOTE:

The effect of going into Tier 3 (from lockdown) is:

- the churches are open for public worship
- but we are not allowed "to mingle" before or after a service

Please remember: "Hands. Face. Space" and to keep within your social bubble.

Thank you! Revd David

CHRISTMAS SERVICES IN BENENDEN

- Benefice Carol Service streamed on-line on Mon 21st Dec at 7:30pm.
- Nativity Service on Christmas Eve at the top of The Green at 3pm.
- Midnight service on Christmas Eve at 11.30pm.
- **Christmas Day:** 8am Communion, followed by **two** short family services, **ticketed with numbers restricted to 100**, at **9:30am**, and at **10:45am**

To book tickets for the 9.30 or 10.45 Christmas Day family services, please contact Cathy Baker, our Benefice Administrator, confirming the number of tickets required and the number and names of people in any social bubble/s.

Please note, tickets will be reserved on a first come, first served basis.

Email: benendenchurch@gmail.com Tel 07971 459 592 (Cathy Baker)

Sunday 27th December:

With all the busyness of this extraordinary year, we have decided, in line with guidance from our Bishop this week, not to hold any services in the parish on the 27th December. The statement from the Diocese reads, "*In the interest of people being able to take a proper break after Christmas, Bishop Rose is encouraging those involved in church leadership not to feel under any pressure to hold live church services (either online or in person) on Sunday 27 December.*"

The thinking behind this is to give all involved in the services that day in both parishes (sidespeople; organists; choirs; readers; intercessors; those preparing and leading worship and those preparing sermons) time off with their families during the "Christmas Covid window" from the 23rd and 27th December. It's not just about the time on the Sunday, it also frees people up from the preparation time. Reading in the Church Times: the Diocese of Ely have already formally implemented this across their Diocese.

I trust that everyone will understand this decision, and allow those who have worked so hard for us all in the unprecedented times to have a rest with their families.

Revd David.



Comfort and Joy is the Church of England's Christmas campaign for 2020.

It holds together the hope that Christmas will bring joy and celebration after a uniquely difficult year with an acknowledgement that – for those who have lost loved ones or livelihoods, or who are potentially still not able to be together with loved ones – it may be the Church's role, both nationally and locally, to provide consolation, rather than assume everyone will be ready to join in jubilation.

We also have to anticipate there may be further spikes.

This Christmas the Church will need, in the words of St Paul in Romans 12.15, to 'Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep'. We will aim to celebrate where we can together in one place – but also embrace a wider community that wants to join in the celebration but may not be physically able – or emotionally ready – to do so. We hope that Comfort and Joy will enable us to build a campaign that both enables us to reconnect with the rich and joyous traditions of the past and to offer God's consoling love in the present.

Daily Scripture and Reflection is posted on the St George's Church website and Facebook page every day of the week.

PLEASE KEEP AN EYE ON THE CHURCH WEBSITE AND FACEBOOK PAGE FOR THE LATEST INFORMATION REGARDING OUR CHURCH SERVICES

Website: <http://www.benendenchurch.org/>
Facebook Page: @StGeorgesBenenden
A Church Near You: <https://www.achurchnearyou.com>

Coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance for churches

We are registered with the NHS "Track and Trace", please make use of this if you have downloaded the app to your smartphone.

Live services in church resumed on 2nd December. We are open for individual private prayer every day.

If you come into church please remember: "Hands. Face. Space."

Please hand sanitise on entry and exit. Wear a face covering. And maintain 2m social distancing from others not in your household or social bubble. Please do not come to church if you have Covid-19 symptoms.

There are prayer resources available as you come into church. (Please take them away with you when you leave if you use them.) If you wish to read some scripture when you come to church for private prayer, please bring your Bible with you. Revd David

EXTRACT FROM UK GOV RMENT REGULATIONS:

Summarising the position for places of worship

People must follow the restrictions on social mixing set out by their area's local restriction tier and adhere to social distancing between households. In Tier 2 and Tier 3 areas, people must not mingle indoors with anyone they do not live with or have formed a support bubble with.

Whilst engaging in an activity in the place of worship, or surrounding grounds, **all parties should adhere to social distancing guidelines at all times**, even within a group of six or where a specific activity-based exemption is applicable. This means people should be 2 metres apart or more than 1 metre apart as well as taking extra steps to stay safe (such as wearing face coverings) to reduce the risk of transmission.

Full details at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic-from-4-july/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-from-2-december>

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