

Sunday 23rd December

The Ten O'clock at St Matthew's

Born to a Virgin Isaiah 7:14; 9:1-7; Matt 1:18-25 Preacher: Richard Coombs

11am at Cheltenham Minster

Joyful Expectation Micah 5:2-5; Preacher: Clare Dyson
Luke 1:39-45

6.30pm at St Matthew's Carol Service Preacher: Richard Coombs

Christmas Eve 24th December

4.00 pm Crib Service St. Matthew's Preacher: Jayne Seward

11.00 pm Midnight Communion Cheltenham Minster

God with us Zech 2:10-13; Preacher: Richard Coombs
Matt 1:18-25

Christmas Day 25th December

9 am at Cheltenham Minster

The True Light Isaiah 9:2-7; Preacher: Richard Coombs
John 1:1-14

10.30 at St Matthew's All-Age Christmas Celebration

Born at Bethlehem Luke 2:1-12 Preacher: Richard Coombs

Sunday 30th December

The Ten O'clock at St Matthew's

Presented with Gifts Matt 2:1-12 Preacher: Robert Sutton

11am at Cheltenham Minster

The Promised Servant Isaiah 42:1-9; 1 John 1:1-7 Preacher: Rod Pellereau

NO 6.30

Week beginning 24th Dec

Minster opening times are usually: **11-3pm** on weekdays and **11-6pm** on Friday with Minster Books from **2pm** And everyone is invited to join us for Daily Prayers in the Minster at **12.30pm**.

However, the Christmas opening times are somewhat different and so are listed below under the individual days

Please note the Church Office is closed from Mon 24th until Tues 2nd Jan.

Monday 24th Dec	Minster open 11am– 1pm with Lunchtime prayers 12.30 16.00 Crib Service - St. Matthew's 23.00 Midnight Communion - The Minster
Tuesday 25th Dec	Christmas Day 9.00 Communion BCP - The Minster 10.30 Christmas Celebration for All Ages - St. Matthew's
Wednesday 26th Dec	Boxing Day The Minster is closed
Thursday 27th Dec	Minster open 11am– 1pm with Lunchtime prayers 12.30 19:30 Bell ringers' Practice - The Minster
Friday 28th Dec	Minster and Minster books as usual 19:45 Music group practice - St. Matthew's All singers and musicians welcome
Sat 29th Dec	Minster and Minster books as usual

Crib Service Christmas Eve at 4.00 Why not pause for half an hour in all your last minute preparations and come and hear the events of the Christmas story, sing carols and enjoy mince pies. This is for all ages but particularly suitable for little ones.

Midnight at The Minster Are you looking for some quiet space before Christmas Day? Then come and be part of our Midnight Communion Service (starts at 11pm) on Christmas Eve at The Minster. This will be a special time of reflection, carol singing and prayer leading up to communion, as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

From Richard

'Fear not!'

Have you noticed that whenever an angel shows up in the Christmas story he (or she – are angels male or female?) says, 'Fear not!' 'Fear not Mary!' 'Fear not Joseph!' 'Fear not shepherds!' Now this may be just because it's pretty scary if an angel appears at the end of your bed but it's also because everyone in the story has much to fear.

In those days, becoming pregnant before marriage, would have meant disgrace and even death by stoning for Mary. Joseph knew that he wasn't the father and the only solution was a quiet divorce to save the family name. The shepherds were ordinary Jewish folk living in constant fear of lions, wolves, thieves, the Romans and King Herod. To all these people, the angels say. 'Fear not!' 'Fear not Mary, you have found favour with God and have the high honour of being the mother of God's Son.' 'Fear not Joseph, go home and marry Mary, she hadn't been unfaithful, God has given her a son who will be the Saviour of the world.' 'Fear not Shepherds, this baby is going to bring peace to all people on earth.'

Christmas can be a time of fear for us. Our fears may seem trivial in comparison to those of Mary, Joseph and the shepherds but small worries can loom very large. Family reunions can expose tensions which are suppressed for the rest of the year. It can be enormously stressful getting everything done in time for Christmas, the shopping, the cooking, the decorations. Many people are on their own at Christmas and fear loneliness. For some, this will be their first Christmas without a loved one. Others will be awaiting the results of medical tests or be in the middle of treatment. Financial worries can loom large with the average Christmas spend per person at £800.00. None of us can fail to be worried about the uncertainty surrounding Brexit. Some will be uncertain about whether they will have a job to return to after the holiday.

The answer to these fears is the same as the answer to the fears of Mary, Joseph and the shepherds. 'Do not be afraid.' Jesus Christ has come into this world to bring us peace. He does not give us his peace by instantly solving all our problems. His peace is above all, peace with God, knowing that we are loved, forgiven and accepted by him. But secondly, it is knowing that because God has come to be with us as his Son, Jesus Christ, nothing is too small for him to be concerned about and nothing is too big for him to be concerned about. Take your fears and concerns to him, and you will find that even if the problems do not disappear, you will find that God is with you in the midst of them and will take away the panicky fear.

Have a very happy and peaceful Christmas and New Year. Richard

If you need to contact me, my e-mail address is richardcoombs@stmstm.org.uk and phone number, 01242 703154

Upcoming Events

Tues 8th Jan Barnabas Group at St Matthew's 10.30am

Mon 14th Jan Church Prayer Meeting at St Matthew's 8.00pm

Tues 5th Feb Prayer for Schools Spring Meeting Warden Hill Primary School 7.45-9.30pm Details below

Sat 9th Feb Music and Canapes for Samara's Aid St. Matthew's 7-10pm
Details below

Barnabas Group next meets on **Tuesday 8th January** at St Matthew's starting with coffee at 10.30am, followed by a talk from John Richardson entitled "A life of Learning". For more info please contact David and Margaret Towers 01242 693121 or 07870666958 or email dg.towers@yahoo.co.uk

Our next **Church Prayer Meeting** is **Monday 14th January at 8pm** at St Matthew's. Come and join with us in praising our amazing God and then praying for our church, our town and our world.

Christmas at 'FoodBank' and CCP's 'Foodshare' is a busy time with heavy demand for basic food necessities. So now and on into the new year will you please be particularly generous? Thank you for your continuing support of these two very important services within our town.

Keeping in touch Our **Weekly Email** has further details of what is happening so please contact the office and sign up for this. We adhere to GDPR so your inbox will not be flooded with other items.

Church Office: 44 Clarence Street, Cheltenham GL50 3PL 01242 519520
office@stmstm.org.uk www.stmstm.org.uk  St Matts Cheltenham  @StMattsChelt
Deadline for inclusion in the following week's Notice Sheet is 9am on Tuesday

Week beginning 31st Dec

Everyone is invited to join us for Daily Prayers in the Minster at **12.30pm**.
Minster opening times: : **11-3pm** on weekdays and **11-6pm** on Friday with
Minster Books from **2pm** **Christmas variations set out below**

Monday 31st Minster open 11am– 1pm with Lunchtime prayers 12.30
23.00 Watchnight Service - The Minster

Tuesday 1 Jan **New Year's Day Happy New Year!**
Minster closed

Wednesday 2nd Jan Church Office reopens
12:30 Midweek Communion - The Minster

Thursday 3rd Jan 19:30 Bell ringers' Practice - The Minster

Friday 4th Jan 19:45 Music group practice - St. Matthew's
All singers and musicians welcome

Watchnight Service at The Minster with Communion to reflect
on the past year and to prayerfully commit to God the year to come.
Monday 31st 23.00

Sunday Club and Youth Groups

These will all restart from Sunday 6th January.

Book now for the Youth Weekend Away

This is coming up in less than SIX WEEKS! **Fri 25th - Sun 27th January**
at Viney Hill Christian Activity Centre. This is for all youth (yrs 7-13)
and is sure to be a fantastic weekend with lots of fun activities,
great worship and time to be together.

If you'd like to come contact Annie as soon as possible.

UNCOVER

SEE FOR YOURSELF

Many people have written off Christianity without ever really looking at Jesus' life and teaching. That's why in the New Year Richard and Nicola, with Annie and Simon Phillips are going to be hosting an '**Uncover**' group.

'Uncover' is an informal way of finding out more about Jesus – not religion, not church but the person at the heart of Christianity. We will explore that evidence about Jesus found in one of his biographies in the Bible written by one of his early disciples called Luke. The aim is for anyone to uncover the evidence for themselves, discuss it and ask any questions. No knowledge of Jesus or the Bible is needed. This may be for you or for a friend you could bring along. Take an invitation card.

There will be six sessions on **Thursday evenings**: 10th, 17th, 24th 31st January, 7th, 14th February 2019 at 8 – 9.30pm with coffee and cakes, at The Scandinavian Coffee Pod, Royal Well Place, GL50 3QD. To join the group or to find out more, contact Richard on 01242 519520

Collects for the Christmas Season

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Eternal God, as Mary waited for the birth of your Son, so we wait for his coming in glory; bring us through the birth pangs of this present age to see, with her, our great salvation in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Christmas Eve

Almighty God, as we prepare with joy to celebrate the gift of the Christ-child, embrace the earth with your glory and be for us a living hope in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Christmas Day

Lord Jesus Christ, your birth at Bethlehem draws us to kneel in wonder at heaven touching earth: accept our heartfelt praise as we worship you, our Saviour and our eternal God. Amen