



Parish Website

OUR LADY OF LOURDES HARPENDEN

18TH DECEMBER 2022

4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT (A)



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Parish Priest Canon Anthony Dwyer

Presbytery: 1, Kirkwick Avenue, Harpenden AL5 2QH Tel: 01582 712245

Email: anthonydwyer@rcdow.org.uk

Parish Administrator Mrs Melanie Armitage

The Parish Office is open Monday to Thursday 9.30am to 12.30pm.

Telephone: 01582 712245 or email: harpenden@rcdow.org.uk

Website: www.catholicchurchharpenden.org.uk

twitter: https://twitter.com/rc_olol?lang=en

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/OLoLHarpenden>

Parish Safeguarding Representative Mrs Brigid Brennan

Email: harpensg@safeguardrcdow.org.uk Tel: 07881 785 299

Parish Pastoral Council ppc@catholicchurchharpenden.org.uk

King Ahaz could be honoured as the patron of sceptics. He simply would not rely on God to help him through the greatest crisis in his life. In the crisis facing his kingdom, he preferred to trust in his soldiers and his military plans.

Are we much the same? Do we trust only the range of our own power and resources, and turn to the true God only as an extra insurance, a vague source of possible help in moments of crisis? But such faith is weak and inadequate. A fuller kind of faith would see us relying on God's invisible, helping presence, not just in those moments when human support fails us. Real faith accepts the reality of God in every moment of life. It sees God as a dimension of all our experience, literally, the Emmanuel, God-with-us.

The promise that God is with us was not for Isaiah's time only, it is for our own. Even now the sign of that continuing presence is a young woman and her child, the Virgin Mary and her son Jesus. For Joseph the unexpected pregnancy of Mary was not a sign to confirm his trust either in her or God, it was a contradictory sign. In the hours of his darkness he found the enlightening Spirit of God, the Spirit who teaches us not to judge by what our eyes see or by what our ears hear.

This gospel shows us that the signs God gives are not always the ones we would choose for ourselves. He gives signs for those who are willing to take on the darkness of doubt in openness and sincerity. Like Joseph we will encounter darkness and doubt, but we learn to accept, when Christ comes into our lives, for in him "God-is-with-us."



THIS WEEK

CAROL SERVICE

This evening at 6.00pm, our parish Carol Service takes place at 6.00pm. A prayerful and uplifting opportunity, to reflect on the message of Christmas, as once again we prepare to celebrate the birth of the new born king.

CELEBRATING RECONCILIATION

Tomorrow, Monday, at 7.30pm, the Advent Penitential Service takes place. An opportunity to make that all-important preparation for Christmas. Do think about making time, to be truly ready, to greet the Lord at Christmas.

CHRISTMAS EVE

5.00pm the children's **Nativity Play** takes place in church. See below for further details.

CHRISTMAS MASSES

Mass During the Night at **10.00pm** on Christmas Eve.

Christmas Day:

8.30am: Mass: with carols.

9.45am: Christmas Family Mass - see below for further details

11.30am: Mass with choir.

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS

Details of everything that is happening in church for the rest of Advent, and over Christmas, will be found in the Christmas leaflet. Copies are available today, so please collect one. You might also think of taking one for someone who may not attend church regularly, or maybe hasn't returned since the end of the pandemic.

CHRISTMAS OFFERING

The offering on Christmas Day, contributes to the stipend that priests in parishes receive, and contributes to their personal upkeep. Recent guidance, from the Diocese, indicates that the contributions received on Christmas Day, by standing order, cannot be included in the Christmas offering. If you wish to contribute to

the Christmas offering, then please use one of the envelopes so marked for this purpose.

THANK YOU



A big 'thank you' to everyone who supported the Parish Bazaar last Saturday, as well as those who assisted on the day, and helped with the setting, and clearing, up.

£2415 was raised. £600 will be donated to both the Harpenden Trust, and to 'Herts Welcomes Refugees'. The balance will be added to the Parish Building Fund.

WARM SPACES

Thank you to everyone who participated in the meeting about the 'Warm Spaces' on Monday evening and, as well, who have indicated their willingness to participate in this project. We will be offering a warm space, each Tuesday between 12noon and 3.00pm in the undercroft. Volunteers are asked to sign up today, to indicate, when they will be available to help. The sign-up sheet will be found in the porch.

Anyone who would appreciate a Warm Space, or just a bit of company, is very welcome. If you know someone who might be appreciative, please let them know.



CHRISTMAS FLOWERS

Thank you to everyone who donated to the Christmas flowers collection.



ALTAR SERVERS

Don't forget that, once again, you will be able to honour your patron, St Stephen. The Mass will be at 10.00am, to enrol some new Servers, and 'upgrade' some of the longer standing servers.



CHRISTMAS ALTAR SERVERS

As always, Altar Servers are needed for the Christmas Masses. Those who are available to serve should sign the list in the sacristy please.

FOR THE CHILDREN AT CHRISTMAS



CHILDREN'S NATIVITY SERVICE - CHRISTMAS EVE 2022

We are pleased to say that we will be having a Children's Nativity again this year. The service will be at 5.00pm on Christmas Eve, and is a lovely reminder to the children about the reasons for celebrating this great feast. This year we are dramatising the story "Leah, the Innkeeper's Daughter" which will be read by an adult, but we do need a cast of many - (shepherds, angels, wisemen, townsfolk etc.) So, if you would like your child to take part please come to the rehearsal in church on Friday 23rd December at 10:00am to 12.30pm, when we will be reading the story to the children and asking for them to take various parts (There are no speaking parts!) Your child does need to be at this rehearsal to take part on Christmas Eve. We have some costumes, but if you have anything suitable then they would be most useful.

The children need to be primary school age and if they are taking part in the nativity they will need to be in church at 4.30pm on Christmas Eve. Please let me know as soon as possible if they would like to take part, in the Nativity Service so far 8 children are signed up we need more children and some boys please.

(contact Ginny St John Glew, 01582 620322 or email ginny.sjg@gmail.com)

CALLING ALL CHILDREN

The 9.45am Mass on Christmas Day will be the Christmas Family Mass. So, children if you like dressing up, come to this Mass, dressed as a favourite Nativity character. There may be something for each of you as you leave Mass. If a child has a particular allergy please let the helpers know, who are distributing the goodies!

LOST PROPERTY

There is quiet a collection of lost property, in a box, near to the repository at the back of the church. If you have lost something, do please take



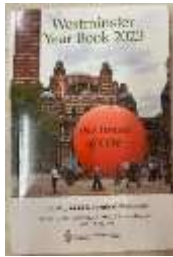
a minute to look and see if it is there. Any items remaining, will be taken to a charity shop at the beginning of the new year.

PARISH DIARIES 2023

Parish diaries, for the coming year, are now available free of charge in the porch and the Repository. Please take one and take one also for a friend or family member that isn't able to attend Mass themselves.

WESTMINSTER YEAR BOOK 2023

The new Year Book 2023 has arrived. This is a very useful book and contains the Liturgical Calendar for 2023 along with full listings of Catholic Parishes, Priests, Schools and Societies the price is £5 and these can be found in the Repository.



SEEKING WORK

A Parishioner is seeking work as a Carer. Very experience and has good references. For further information, please contact the Parish Office or Canon Dwyer.

YOUTH OF THE PARISH

FLAME 2023 - SATURDAY 4TH MARCH 2023 - 12PM TO 5.40PM RISE UP

<https://cymfed.org.uk/flame/>

This year's confirmation candidates will be joining thousands of other young catholic people at the OVO Wembley Arena on Saturday 4th March 2023 for an inspiring day of prayer, adoration, catechesis, reflection, celebration and praise. Everyone else aged School Year 9 (and not already in the confirmation course) through to University age are invited to join them for the day to experience this UK's largest catholic youth conference.

Tickets are £20 plus travel. **Please contact the parish office, or Anne Pesez** anne.pesez@gmail.com before mid January if your child is interested in coming.

HOMELESSNESS SUPPORT GROUP AMAZON WISH LISTS. CREATED FOR Noah and Keystage The link to **KEYSTAGE'S** is <https://amzn.eu/3HSwWDw>: **NOAH** the link is <https://amzn.eu/1YCWRpo>.

We do want to emphasise that we know there are many good causes out there and also how difficult things are financially, particularly at the moment so please don't feel under any pressure to donate to the bins **and** the Wishlists - or indeed to either. If you are able to contribute in some way, this will be very much appreciated by both NOAH and Keystage.

If anyone is interested in becoming more involved with the group, please contact Monika Westgate at monikamoko@hotmail.com.

NOAH and Keystage DONATION BINS

For NOAH, (Blue Bin) they ask for clothing (no undergarments, unless they are brand new and packaged); coats and jackets; shoes; toys; and bric-a-brac. You can also Gift Aid your donations for them by filling out a Gift Aid form, copies of which will be kept at the back of church and also in a plastic pocket attached to the bin.

Keystage (Yellow Bin) have asked for tinned foods and non-perishable foods e.g. cereals, biscuits, chocolate; and socks, gloves, scarves and toiletries. Thank you all so much for your ongoing support which is much appreciated by both NOAH and Keystage.

WISHLIST ADDRESS UPDATE

If you have problems in sending to the gift registry address it appears this is due to the Amazon settings. Please try entering the address manually. **For NOAH that will be 141 Park Street Luton Beds LU1 3HG.**

For KEYSTAGE it will be Park West House 29 Park Street West Luton LU1 3BE

COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS ENTERTAINMENT DAY

Thursday 22nd December - join in with our Community Christmas Entertainment day. Lots of festive music to sing with a performance at Field House in the afternoon followed by a performance to family and friends at the end of the day. A perfect opportunity for a musical day

away from the hustle and bustle of Christmas on the High Street! To book a place contact Katie info@musicale.co.uk

SING FOR ...4 JANUARY 2023

Please put the dates in the diary - something to look forward to in January! Adults and children are invited for this charity-fundraising singing project - more details to follow but there is a choice of Tuesday OR Sunday rehearsals.

Tuesday 10th January 7.30-9.00pm Undercroft

Tuesday 17th Jan, 24th Jan, 31st Jan AND to widen the opportunity for more/ families to take part in this project :

Sunday 15th January 3.00-4.00pm Undercroft

22nd Jan, 29th Jan

Performance SUNDAY 5th FEB 2pm
Rehearsal, 3pm CONCERT

Please email katiemjack@yahoo.co.uk to book a place £35 for the project per family

(whether 1 person or 10 !) Money, after expenses, to NOAH and Keystage Housing

MASS INTENTIONS NEXT WEEK

Sat 17th Dec 6.00pm	Advent feria 4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT (A) People of the Parish
Sun 18th Dec 8.30am 9.45am 11.30am 6.00pm	4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT (A) Margaret Hughes RIP (1 st Anniv) Bernard St John Glew RIP John McKenna RIP (Anniv) Zoom Code 883 7014 5568. Carol Service by Candlelight
Mon 19th Dec 9.15am 7.30pm	Advent feria Agnes Kelly RIP (Anniv) Advent Penitential Service
Tue 20th Dec 9.15am	Advent feria Brendan Ryan RIP (Recently Deceased)
Wed 21st Dec 9.15am	Advent feria Sr Nora (Spec Ints) Novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help
Thur 22nd Dec 11.00am	Advent feria Teresa Newham (Spec Ints)
Fri 23rd Dec	Advent feria



SEASON OF CHRISTMAS

Sat 24th Dec 5.00pm Mass During the Night 10.00pm	THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD Nativity Service People of the Parish
Sun 25th Dec 8.30am 9.45am 11.30am	THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD People of the Parish People of the Parish People of the Parish Zoom Code 883 7014 5568.
Monday 26th Dec 10.00am	ST STEPHEN The first Martyr Altar Servers Mass



CONFESSIONS - SATURDAYS
 10.30AM - 11.00AM & AFTER THE 6.00PM VIGIL MASS