

Coulsdon Cross

News & Views from St. Andrew's Church



December 2025 and January 2026

St Andrew's Vision Statement

A joyful, daring, diverse and generous Christian community, setting the world alight with the love of God.

Come and join us! All are welcome

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

DECEMBER

Sunday 7th 3 pm Nativity festival – come and sing some carols and share the story of the nativity, followed by refreshments

Saturday 13th Carol Singing at Coulsdon Library (10 am) The Eadmund (3 pm) and Emerald Court (4 pm).

Thursday 18th 2 pm Carol Singing at Orford House

Sunday 21st 6 pm Service of Nine Lessons and Carols followed by refreshments.

Wednesday 24th 4 and 5 pm Family Carols at the Christmas Crib, 10.30pm Choir Carols, 11 pm Midnight Mass

Thursday 25th 9.45 am Christmas Day Eucharist



REGULAR EVENTS

Every Sunday 9.45 Parish Communion – (Junior Church on the 1st Sunday of the month 'Renew' all Age on the 3rd Sunday)

Every Monday 10 -12 noon Time 2B: Coffee, chat and craft in the church hall. **Every Tuesday** Tots and Toys playgroup in the church hall. 11-12.30

Every second Tuesday Pop in Tea at 2 pm in church hall preceded by service in church at 1.30 pm.

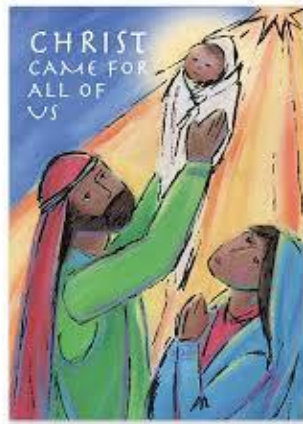
Every third Tuesday 3.30 – 5.30 pm Messy Church – craft activities, Bible story and hot meal for children and their parents / carers.

Every fourth Tuesday 8 pm – Mothers' Union, Committee Room.

Every first and third Wednesday 10 am Holy Communion (Lady Chapel)

Dear Friends,

I wonder what your Christmas plans include - apart from coming to worship at St Andrew's, that is? Perhaps you have drawn the short straw and will be cooking the Christmas lunch – or doing the washing up afterwards? If you're anything like me a snooze before the King's speech is a tradition not to be broken!



Plans – we humans love them, but as the old saying has it, “If you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans.”

Many orthodox folk who lived at the time of Jesus had lots of plans about what the coming Messiah would be like: a great and mighty warrior, uncompromising in his determination to get rid of the ‘riff raff’ which meant Gentiles, sinners, and those considered to be ‘unlawful’ – anyone in fact, who did not fit the ‘official’ definition of what God’s people should be like. These ideas might have been vote winners among the many disillusioned and disgruntled folk who had lived under Roman rule for so long. But God’s plans were very different.

Can you remember how Jesus treated Gentiles? When he was presented in the temple as a tiny tot, Simeon, the righteous old dude who took him in his arms prophesied that he would be “a light for revelation to the *Gentiles*.” (Luke 2:32) One of the first things the adult Jesus did was almost get himself thrown off a hill after telling the good citizens of Nazareth’s synagogue that Gentiles – foreigners - like the widow of Zarephath and Naaman the Syrian had been favoured by God over God’s own people! (Luke 4:25-30)

Far from driving out sinners, Jesus told a story of a prodigal son who had done every bad thing you can possibly think of and probably more. How was he treated? With the best robe, a ring on his finger, sandals on his

feet and a party the likes of which had never been seen in the neighbourhood before. (Luke 15:23)

As we prepare to sit alongside the shepherds, outcasts from polite society, to marvel at the little baby Jesus, lying in a smelly old manger - perhaps we can imagine how Mary and Joseph felt about any life plans they had had up to now?

What about us? Can we say in all honesty that our life is turning out as planned? If the answer is no, I say Hallelujah and Thanks be to God! Why? Because, as far as God is concerned, our dreams are too small. He wants to give us gifts beyond our imagining – and remind us of the eternal truth that bigger is not necessarily better, that ‘might’ does not always equate with ‘right’.

The babe of Bethlehem was tiny in status as well as form – insignificant as far as the ‘world’ was concerned. Not as far as God was concerned of course. And it’s the same with us: tiny specks of dust in the scheme of things – albeit star dust. But each one of us infinitely and eternally precious to our loving creator.

We all like to plan of course – that’s part and parcel of being human. But this Christmas may we take a moment to remember that God’s plans are best, however much we may doubt that at times. There is so much we don’t know and will never know – but one thing we can trust is that the one who was born to be one of us, so long ago, is still with us: yesterday, today and forever, loving us fiercely, inviting us to grow in faith from the baby in the manger through all the ups and downs of life to the resurrection joy of Easter which awaits us all.

Jesus does not come to Make Us Great Again. He comes to show us the Way to Love Greatly Again – which is the only way to life, in all its fullness, for everyone.

Love is the gift that keeps on giving. Let’s give it another go this Christmas. Wishing you God’s blessings at this holy time.

Esther and Jessie the Vicarage Dog x

NATIVITY FESTIVAL – Sunday 7th December

We hope that you will be able to join us to celebrate the story of the nativity on the 7th at 3 pm. As well as singing some of our favourite carols, and meeting some of the characters from the first Christmas, we will have the opportunity to admire some beautiful Christmas cribs loaned from members of our church family.



Did you know that the tradition of the Christmas crib goes back over 800 years and was begun by St Francis of Assisi in the Italian village of Greccio? Inspired by visiting Bethlehem whilst on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, Francis arranged for a manger scene in a nearby cave with hay, live animals and local villagers to play the biblical characters. He hoped this powerful scene would help people recognise Christ's coming in poverty and humility. As he said; *"I wish to recall to memory the little child who was born in Bethlehem. I want to set before our bodily eyes the hardships of his infant needs, how he lay in the manger, how with an ox and ass standing by he lay upon the hay."*

As we know, St Francis was onto something and the idea of the nativity scene took off with great gusto. Christmas crib scenes are displayed all over the world, reflecting different cultures and traditions.

The Christmas crib continues to speak to our hearts today. Pope Francis wrote that it is a living Gospel rising up from the pages of sacred Scripture, showing us God's tender love. "It asks us to meet Jesus and serve him by showing mercy to those of our brothers and sisters in greatest need."

The Christmas crib reinforces the powerful message of the Bible - that God comes to lift up the lowly, to support the weak, help the oppressed and resist injustice in all its forms. As we gaze on the Christmas crib, may we pray that the Lord will open our eyes to his presence among those

who experience poverty or are oppressed by injustice and violence in our world today – and do all that we can to help them.

Christmas crib prayers to be used when putting out a nativity scene.

The Stable: Lord, we remember the stable. A cold, draughty, dirty place: not where we'd expect to find the only Son of the King of heaven and earth; not the sort of place we'd want to find any new born baby. We remember, this Christmas time, those without proper shelter because of poverty, homelessness, or war.

The Animals: Lord, we remember the animals who are part of the Christmas story: the oxen, the sheep, the tired donkey, who remind us that you have entrusted us with the care of your creation. We remember, this Christmas time, the ways in which we have exploited our world and ask for your help in using its resources wisely and well.

Mary and Joseph: Lord, we remember their anxious journey to Bethlehem, their worry at finding no room at the inn; the excitement and fear at the forthcoming birth; their hopeful longing for your coming. We remember, this Christmas time, those who are anxious and fearful, who long for your hope and comfort to come into their lives.

The Shepherds: Lord, we remember how, watching their sheep on the cold, dark hillside, they were surprised by the warmth and light and joy of the angel song announcing your birth. We remember, this Christmas time, those who feel sorrowful or lonely who wait to hear your good news of love and joy and peace.

The Kings: Lord, we remember the long journey they made to an unknown destination; a journey prompted and guided by the mysterious star they believed would lead them to a king worthy of worship. We remember, this Christmas time, our own, often perplexing, journey through life and ask that we might be led to you.

The Baby: Lord, we remember your coming into our world, and into the life of humankind, as a tiny, helpless child. We thank you that you came to share our joys and sorrows and set us free from fear and despair. We remember, this Christmas time, all the children of our world, in need of love, food, and freedom. In the name of Jesus Christ, the Babe of Bethlehem, and our crucified and risen Lord and Saviour. Amen.

(Fulwood Methodist Church)

NEW CHURCH WEBSITE!

We are so grateful to Audra who has put together a fabulous new website for St Andrew's! Check it out:

www.standrewscouldon.co.uk

We are currently trying to get traffic to the old website redirected – please bear with us whilst this happens – and do let Audra know if you have any comments or suggestions. Email her at audra.proctor@gmail.com



MAKING A DIFFERENCE DURING THE FESTIVE SEASON

Our friend Lizzie Mills works in the Communications team at King's College Hospital.

Christmas is a time for family, celebration, and togetherness. But for many patients in hospital it's time spent away from home. For NHS staff, it means giving up time with their own loved ones to care for those who need them most.

Hospitals and healthcare workers across South London and Surrey are calling on their local communities to help spread some joy during the festive season. Here are a few ways you can show your support:

Epsom and St Helier Hospitals Charity Christmas Appeal: You can help make a donation towards providing some small touches that brighten the wards at the most difficult time of year – from festive decorations and gifts for children, activities that patients and families can enjoy, and wellbeing treats and hot meals for staff working on Christmas Day.

Find out more at www.esthcharity.org.uk

London Ambulance Charity Christmas carol service: As ambulance crews prepare for another tough winter, the London Ambulance Charity is spreading some comfort and joy with the announcement of its first Christmas carol service. The event will raise money to support the hard-working call handlers and ambulance crews at London Ambulance Service, as well as funding life-saving defibrillators for communities across London. Together in Song – A Christmas Carol Service will take place at St Bride's Church, Fleet Street, London, on 16 December 2025 at 6.00pm. Visit

<https://www.londonambulancecharity.org.uk/Event/together-in-song-christmas-carol-service> to book tickets.

King's College Hospital Charity Appeal: This winter, the Charity is asking for support to help King's create space to save more lives. Soon, our world-first Outdoor Critical Care Unit will open – a sanctuary where patients can experience nature and fresh air as part of their recovery. Designed as a healing sanctuary high above London, the garden will feature natural planting, a wildflower meadow, and tranquil spaces that support both physical and emotional rehabilitation. Every detail has been carefully planned for patients who remain connected to vital medical equipment such as drips, ventilators, and power supplies. Here, even the most critically ill will be able to feel the sun, breathe fresh air, and reconnect with the natural world. Find out more at <https://supportkings.org.uk/>



ECO CHURCH: HOLLY AND IVY, NOT TINSEL OR GLITTER!

Our eco church co-ordinator Ann Witham writes...

Christmas is a time to celebrate the birth of Christ, share gifts, indulge in mince pies and spend quality time with our loved ones - but it can be a challenging time when trying to reduce our environmental footprint. We can feel frustrated by wasted food, unwanted gifts and mountains of wrapping paper in the bin. Hopefully the following suggestions can help us have a greener Christmas.



If you are planning to buy a gift for those special people in your life try to opt for a quality item that will last for a long time. Look at the materials the gift is made from – for clothing or food choose fair trade or organic certified items, use independent booksellers and ensure that any wood or paper gifts are made from 100 % recycled or FSC certified materials. Many people now buy second hand items so why not consider shopping in charity shops for Christmas items. Banstead, for example, has a number of well stocked charity shops. This would help the planet by reducing the need for new materials and would reduce emissions used to create new products.

As an alternative to a material gift you could decide on an experience and there are now lots of ideas for a variety of budgets – tickets for an event, a voucher for a special meal or you could donate your time or expertise. When buying cards and wrapping paper avoid all foil and glitter, be wary of crackers which contain plastic toys and when thinking of table decorations try not to use single use table cloths and napkins.

A scary amount of food waste is created at Christmas, the equivalent to approx. 4 million plates of Christmas dinner going straight in the bin. Plan your food carefully, use or freeze left overs and only buy what you know will be eaten. Why not consider having at least one meat free meal over the Christmas period?

Make sure your Christmas tree is as sustainable as can be. If you choose a real tree make sure it is Grown in Britain certified. Opt for a potted tree which can last a lifetime or recycle your cut tree once you have used it. If you have a fake tree or are planning to buy one remember it is estimated that it takes 10 years to make it environmentally worthwhile.

Some of these suggestions are not easy to follow but just choosing one or two will make a difference. However the most important thing to remember is to try and allocate some quiet time to think about the true meaning of Christmas and to enjoy both quality time with loved ones and the beauty of nature on winter walks.

NEWS FROM THE CONTACT GROUP

Contact Group co-ordinator Monica Jefford writes...

Today's media provide frequent and varied opportunities for remembrance. The majority of people respond to situations of need immediately, generously and willingly particularly when faced with a global/national event. Disasters and tragedies can prompt corporate outpourings of grief as well as an individual demonstration. Reinforced by annual remembrances, many remain in the universal conscious for years to come. The introduction of electronic communications speeded news up whilst at times heightening its impact and paved the way for what we have now.

All of us have personal memories, good and bad, often needing no help to recall. As a couple of us shared at the recent St Andrew's All Souls Service we could remember every detail of the day someone close died.

Pop In guests are no different needing no reminder of such episodes and other events in their lives. Tuesday afternoon offered an opportunity to reflect on them. Aided by Esther, Roy Fortune, from the Royal British Legion, provided a personal reminiscence of his years of involvement with the Poppy Appeal in Coulsdon. Guests also coloured in bookmarks to take home or display in the church for others to share. Many featured poppies, the universal symbol of remembrance, adopted by the Royal British Legion, as their emblem, in 1921. Most of us need no reminder of the devastating effects of war so it was good to be reminded of the amazing help given by this well renowned organisation.

There is much that could be said about memory and its significance, one being the value of stimulating it. This is particularly pertinent in those living with the more prevalent, degenerative neurological conditions that induce amnesia. Pop Ins support this with topics covering contemporaneous and historic events often accompanied by shared artefacts.

Soon many will celebrate another momentous event that happened over 2K years ago, the extent and manner of which is relative to their spiritual and secular view. It is another reminder that time does not always dim memories. All need to be acknowledged as part of who we are. As someone once said: "Memories are timeless treasures of the heart"

As our TVs and retail outlets are reminding us Christmas is coming though I'm not sure now if there are sufficient resources for the goose to get fat. At the December Pop In guests will make cards and wrap gifts for Ukrainian Children followed by a festive tea.

A three course Christmas lunch with all the trimmings followed by entertainment and carol singing is planned for the January Pop In. Mother Christmas enjoyed herself last year and looks forward to attending again. If you would like to join us please speak with one of the volunteers.

Monica and the Contact Group volunteers x

'FORK HANDLES' AT ADVENT

Each year we light a candle on each of the four weeks of Advent. But why?

Candles are important symbols in many religions. For Christians, they remind us of Jesus, the light of the world and the hope he comes to bring to us, especially in the midst of a dark time.



There are different traditions about the meaning of each candle, but at St Andrew's we follow the traditional interpretation which is said to go back to the 9th century.

Advent 1 (purple) : The Patriarchs or 'Fathers of our Faith' – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – sometimes Joseph is also included.

Advent 2 (purple) : The Prophets

Advent 3 (pink) : John the Baptist

Advent 4: The Blessed Virgin Mary

Christmas Day (white): Jesus

Why do we use this colour scheme? Purple is the traditional colour of penitence. During Advent we spiritually prepare ourselves for the coming of our Saviour by reflecting on the things we have done wrong in the sure and certain hope he is coming to help us. However, on the third Sunday we use pink, because this Sunday is also known as Gaudete Sunday, a Latin word that means 'rejoice.'

White is the traditional colour of spiritual transcendence – remember that Jesus' garments became dazzling white at the Transfiguration. The angels at the tomb were also dressed in white.

The circular shape of the wreath reminds us of God's everlasting love. Some wreaths are also decorated with evergreen leaves which represent the hope of eternal life.

JESSIE'S JOKES!

A little boy named Nicholas told the Father Christmas his parents took him to see; 'You and I have the same name.' Father Christmas replied, 'Well, hello Brian!' 😊

What is the most popular Christmas wine? 'I don't like Brussel sprouts!' 😊

Best responses for those Christmas gifts you didn't want!

- Well, well, well, now, there's a gift!
- You know, I always wanted one of these! Jog my memory - what's it called again?
- You know what? -I'm going to find a special place to put this!
- Boy, you don't see craftsmanship like that every day!
- And it's such an interesting colour too!
- You say that was the last one? Am I glad that you snapped that baby up! 😊

What did the English teacher call Santa's helpers?
Subordinate clauses! 😊

How do accountants celebrate Christmas? By singing Hosanna in Excel Sheets 😊

A Sunday school teacher asked her class, "What was Jesus' mother's name?"

One child answered, "Mary."

The teacher then asked, "Who knows what Jesus' father's name was?"

A little kid said, "Verge."

Confused, the teacher asked, "Where did you get that from?"

The kid said, "Well, you know how they are always talking about 'Verge and Mary'" 😊

Snowball by Shel Silverstein

I made myself a snowball as perfect as could be. I thought I'd keep it as a pet and let it sleep with me. I made it some pyjamas and a pillow for its head. Then, last night it ran away - but first - it wet the bed. 😊

1 Corinthians 13—Christmas Version

If I decorate my house perfectly with tartan bows, strands of twinkling lights, and shiny balls; but do not have love, I'm just another decorator.

If I slave away in the kitchen, baking dozens of mince pies, preparing gourmet meals, and arranging a beautifully adorned table at mealtime; but do not have love, I'm just another cook.

If I work at a soup kitchen, sing carols in the nursing home, and give all that I have to charity; but do not have love, it profits me nothing.

If I decorate the tree with shimmering angels, and crocheted snowflakes but do not focus on Christ, I have missed the point.

Love stops the cooking to hug the child. Love sets aside the decorating to kiss the dog. Love is kind, though harried and tired. Love does not envy another's home that has coordinated Christmas china and table linens. Love does not yell at the kids to get out of the way, but is thankful they are there to be in the way.

Love does not give only to those who are able to give in return, but rejoices in giving to those who cannot. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. Love never fails.

Toys will break, necklaces will be lost, golf clubs will rust; but giving the gift of love will endure for ever. 😊

A PRAYER FOR THE NEW YEAR

God of all time, help us enter the New Year quietly,
thoughtful of who we are to ourselves and to others,
mindful that our steps make an impact and our words carry power.
May we walk gently. May we speak only after we have listened well.

Creator of all life, help us enter the New Year reverently,
aware that you have endowed every creature and plant, every person
and habitat with beauty and purpose. May we regard the world with
tenderness. May we honour rather than destroy.

Lover of all souls, help us enter the New Year joyfully,
willing to laugh and dance and dream, remembering our many gifts with
thanks and looking forward to blessings yet to come.

May we welcome your lavish love.
May we cast off the small, vindictive god our fears have made.
May the grace and peace of Christ bless you now and in the days ahead.
Amen.

Vinita Hampton Wright



CONTACTS AT ST ANDREWS

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Junior Church: Beth Ten Cate

Parish Canine Rep: Canine Jessie Foss (Days off Monday – Sunday.
Don't contact unless you have treats.)

PARISH MAGAZINE:

Editor: Rev'd Canon Esther Foss (details as above)

Parish Administrator: Danielle Stobart, Parish Office 020 86762966
(open Monday and Wednesday 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.)

standrewsoffice@yahoo.com

USUAL SERVICES Sunday 9.45 am Parish Eucharist (1st Sunday Junior Church, 3rd Sunday Renew All Age Eucharist) Wednesday (1st and 3rd) 1st 10.00 am Book of Common Prayer, 3rd Holy Communion with prayers for healing.