

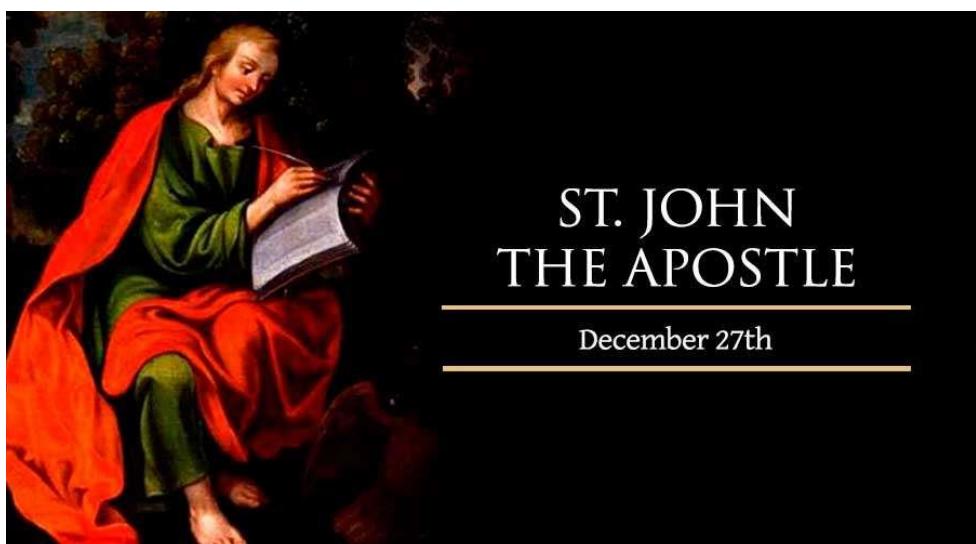
# St. Mary's Church

## Cubbington



Sunday  
20<sup>th</sup>  
December

and



Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> December

## **Sunday Message 20<sup>th</sup> December 2020**

Hello again and many greetings from the vicarage at this very festive time.

How are you all getting on, are you ready for Christmas?

As you know things will be very different this time,

I've had numerous people email and call me asking about Carol Services and Christingle – to which I've had to say sadly we can't hold them this year.

All of the spaces for the Midnight Service are taken, but there are a few spaces left for the 10.00am Christmas morning service.

What I think is extra difficult is not being able to sing.

We only get a few weeks each year to sing the Carols and this year all we can do is listen to a cd with them on.

I find it very tempting to sing along because the words are so familiar.

Today is the fourth Sunday of Advent, and the final candle around the outside of the Advent Ring will be lit.

That only leaves the centre candle which will be lit on Christmas morning.

Our readings are from **St. Luke's gospel chapter 1 verses 26 – 38** and from the final part of St Paul's letter to the **Romans chapter 16 verses 25 to the end**.

Christmas has many different parts which make it special.

For some unless they've been to the Carol service or Christingle, Christmas can't start.

For others it doesn't matter which service as long as they hear the traditional story and sing the familiar carols.

Whilst for many others it's more about the tree and decorations and the turkey along with all the trimmings.

Not of course forgetting the presents - for some these are the most important!

There were two young lads staying at their Grandmas house,

At bedtime the younger boy began saying his prayers at the top of his voice.

"I pray for a Thomas the Tank Engine train set,"

"I pray for an electric scooter",

"I pray for the latest PS3 action game.

His older brother leaned over to him and asked "Why are you shouting? God's not deaf you know".

The little brother replied, "I know he's not, - but Granma is!"

It's true we all have different things that make Christmas special.

I used to think that the TV was always better at Christmas, - there was more on – but then that was in the days when we only had three channels.

I'm sure that for some people Christmas can be difficult and even painful.

This year especially there will be a lot of people mourning the loss of loved ones, family that they couldn't visit in hospital or care homes and those who have been cut off from their friends and family through self-isolating.

And yet Christmas should be a time of hope, a time of joy and above all peace.

If we travel back just over 2000 years than we'd arrive at the very first Christmas, whose message is a part of every Christmas.

If we were to travel back to that Christmas and see the Christ Child lying in a manger – than all our fears and disappointments would vanish – and we would be filled with hope.

Because the message to the shepherds from the angel was – Good News to all people –

God has come in the flesh to save us!

That promise made at the very first Christmas is the same promise made to us this Christmas

No matter who we are – what we've done – how far away from God we've moved – **God loves us and He never gives up on us.**

Sadly, for many people Christmas stopped being about Christ a long time ago.

Now it's about extravagance, materialism and money.

And yet the story of Christmas is the very opposite.

It's about the one who left all of the riches to be born in a dirty stable.



*Manger Square Bethlehem, looking towards the Church of the Nativity  
(where Jesus was born).*

**Jesus came to transform our lives, to make us new again.**



*The spot where Jesus was born, in the crypt of the Church of the Nativity*

The Good News of Christmas is that we can learn from the **Past**, - in order to change how we are at **Present**, - so that we can have a better **Future**.

It doesn't matter what we've done in the **Past**, - because of the Christmas story – we can have a new and better **Future**.

I imagine that everyone is hoping and praying for a better future. Many people have already said to me “let's hope next year is a better one.”

This year has been a dreadful year, unprecedented in so many ways.

Next year can be a better one, even if we have to wait a few months for the vaccines to rollout and we still have some restrictions on what we can and cannot do for a time.

We will, I'm sure get back to some form of normality eventually,

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But while we wait, give a thought for the first Christmas that began all our celebrations –

The Christmas when we were presented with the greatest gift ever –

The Christ Child.

One day Jesus will come again.

One day Jesus will come to take us home.

But until that day may God Bless you and Keep you.

And I pray that you will all have a wonderful Christmas.

**Amen.**

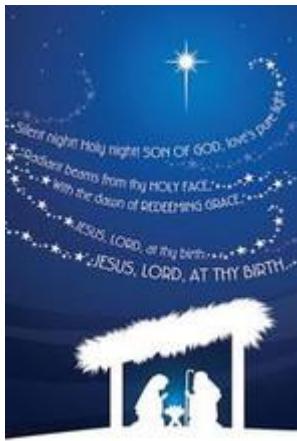


*Inside the Church or Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth.*



*The Shepherds Field Chapel is southeast of Bethlehem in the West Bank in Palestine.*

*The chapel marks the place where it is believed that the angels first announced the birth of Christ.*



## A Christmas Blessing

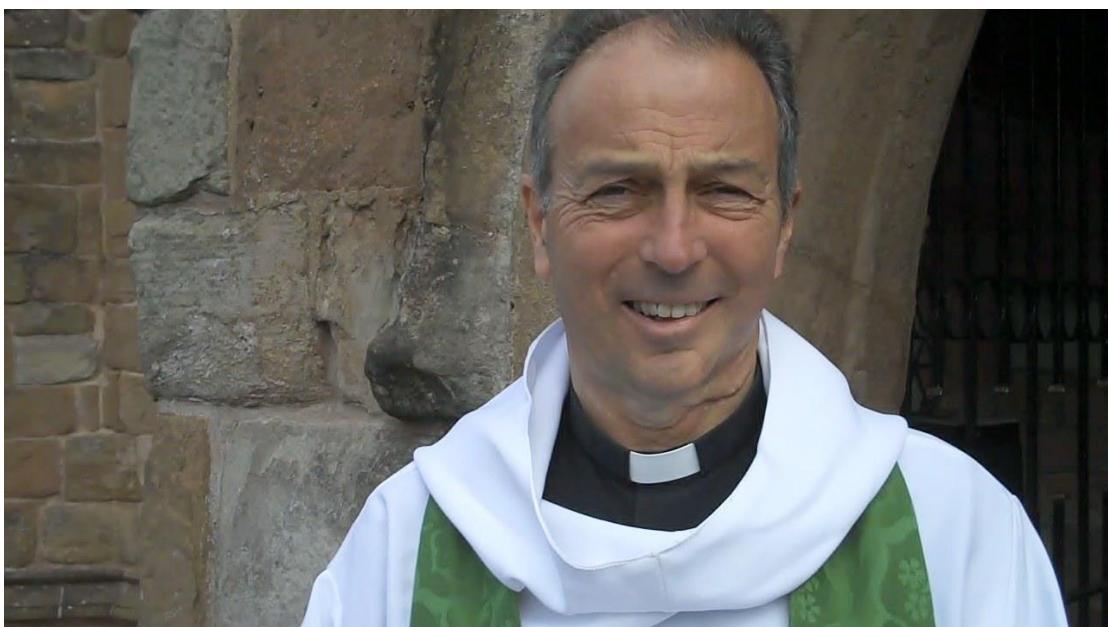
May the joy of the angels,  
the eagerness of the shepherds,  
the perseverance of the wise men,  
the obedience of Joseph and Mary,  
and the peace of the Christ-Child  
be yours this Christmas.

**Amen.**

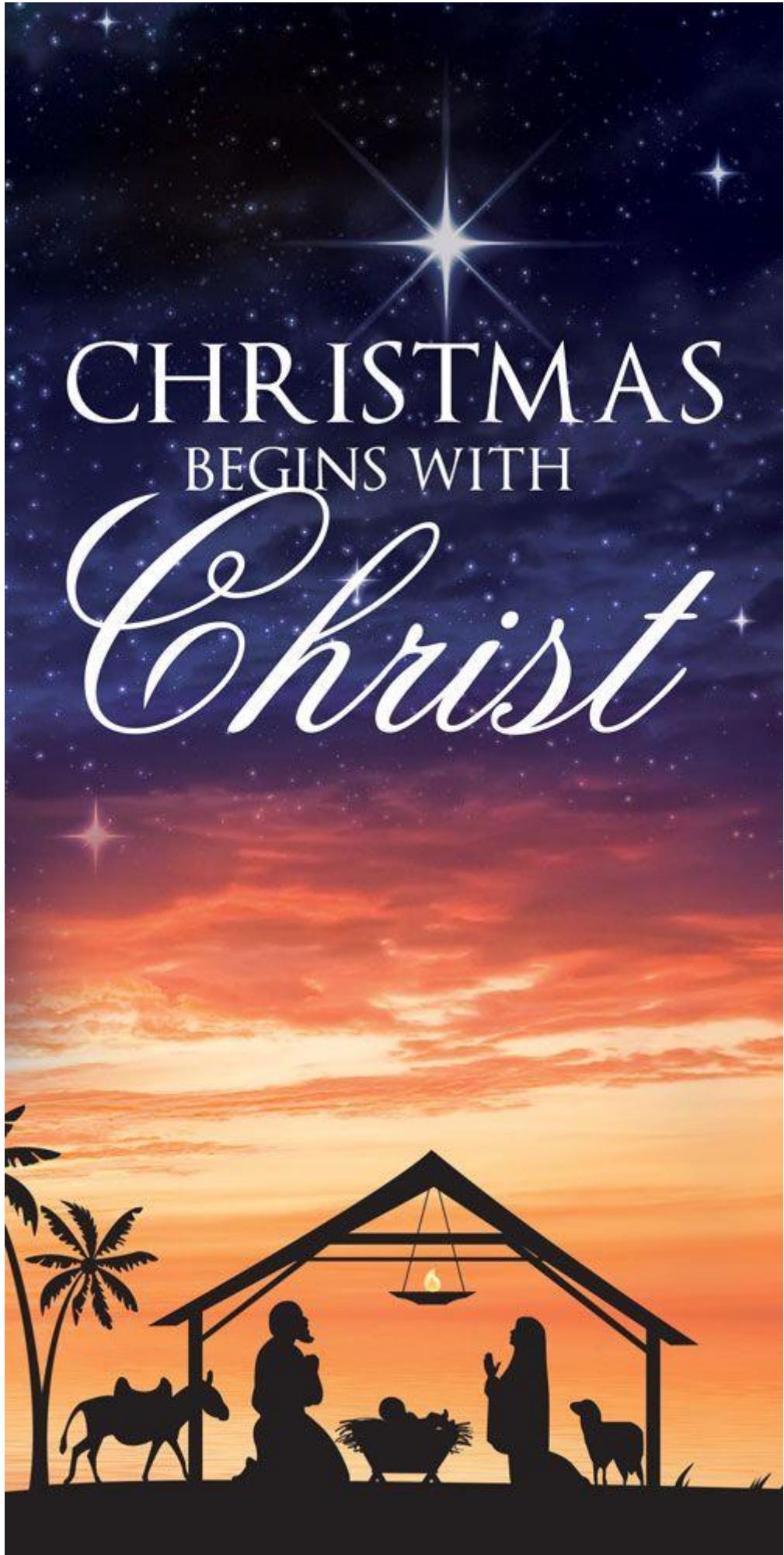




## Reverend Graham



CHRISTMAS  
BEGINS WITH  
*Christ*



# SUNDAY 20<sup>th</sup> December 2020

## Fourth Sunday of Advent

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### SERVICE TODAY

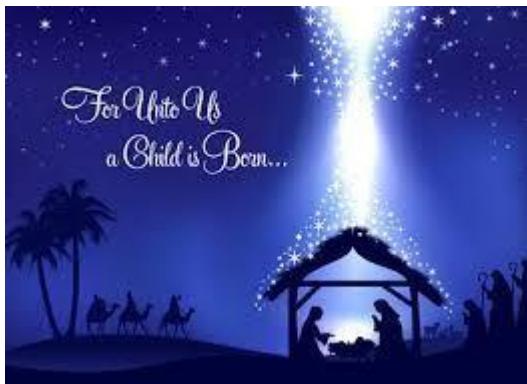


Invitation only  
10.00am: Book of Common Prayer

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### Christmas Eve

Invitation only  
11.30pm: Midnight Mass



### Christmas Day

Invitation only  
10.00am: Family Service

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### Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> December

Invitation only  
10.00am: Common Worship



## **Sunday Message 27<sup>th</sup> December 2020**

Hello again and greetings from the vicarage.

I hope that you all have had a good and Happy Christmas and have managed to see your friends and family.

Despite the restrictions, it was good to see people in church worshipping on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

It was sad not to have held our lively Christingle and our candle lit Carol Service but there will be other years and we will appreciate them all the more.

Today is the first Sunday after Christmas and is usually known as the Sunday after Christmas or the Sunday after the Nativity.

But this year because of how the dates have fallen being the 27<sup>th</sup> December it is also the feast day of John the Apostle and Evangelist.

And so, I am using the bible readings for John.

They are from **Johns first letter to the Gentiles the whole of chapter 1** and from his own gospel **John chapter 21 verses 19 to the end.**

We read a lot from John's gospel at this time of year.

And everyone will know the words from the first chapter, words which I mentioned only a couple of weeks ago "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God".

But how much do we actually know about the man himself?

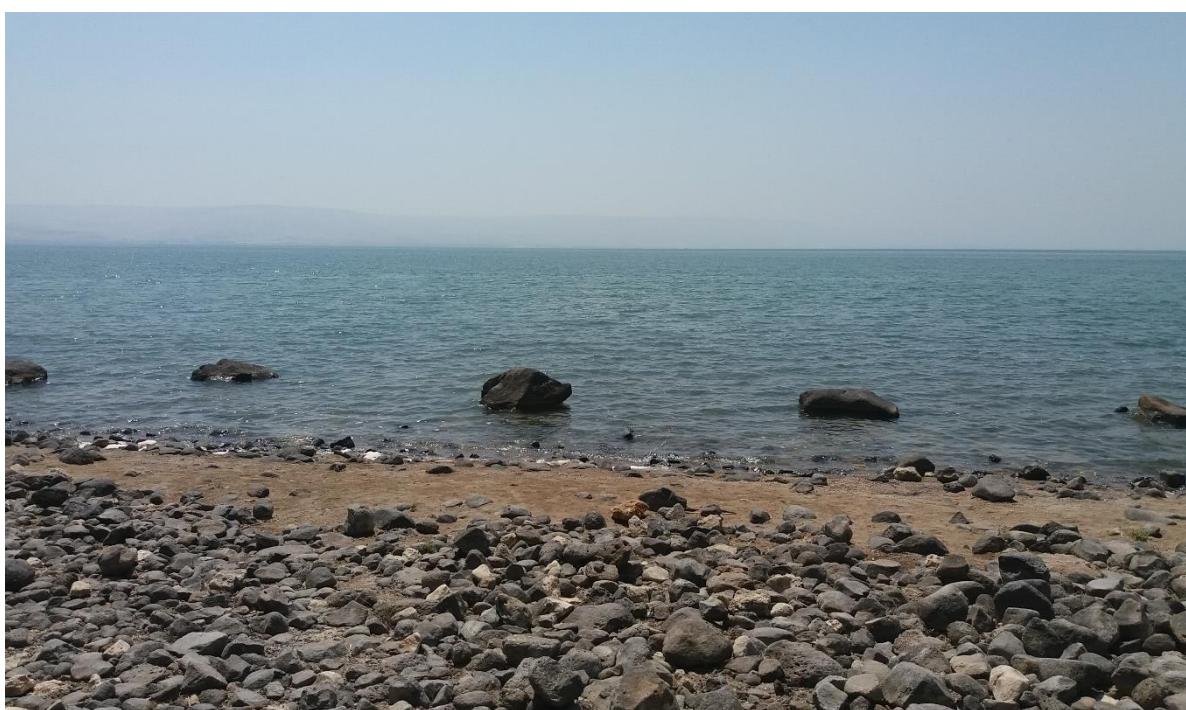
"Sons of thunder" is the nickname Jesus gave to John and his brother James who were two of His closest disciples.

They were the sons of Zebedee who was a Galilean fisherman.

The family lived close to Capernaum, a place where Jesus lived and based His ministry in Galilee.



*The Town of Capernaum close to John's family home.*



*The shore at Capernaum where John and his family would have fished.*

You will remember the famous passage where John and his brother upset the other ten disciples when they asked if they could sit beside Jesus on His throne, to which of course Jesus declines their request. **Mark 10: 37.**

Even so Jesus had a special connection with them, and it is thought that where we read “the disciple whom Jesus loved “this is a reference to John.

John, James and Peter were Jesus’ best friends and were invited to witness some of the events that the other disciples only heard about.

The raising of Jairus’ daughter, the Transfiguration when Jesus met Elijah and Moses, and Jesus’ private prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane.

John and Peter were trusted with preparing the Last Supper.

After Jesus returned to heaven, His three best friends continued the ministry and became what Paul described as ‘pillars of the church.’

John outlived the other two who were both martyred.

It is believed that John had a long life eventually dying of old age.



It is also  
thought that  
he moved to  
Ephesus  
where he  
wrote his three  
letters.

*The theatre of  
Ephesus.*

In his gospel he never mentions his own name referring to himself as ‘the disciple He loved’ with reference to Jesus.

John was a witness to Jesus and his reason for reporting all that he saw and heard was to prove to us that Jesus is the Son of God.

In his gospel and in all of his letters he is presenting the evidence for what Jesus says.

This evidence is presented to us to make a choice – is Jesus the Son of God or not?

I think it would be very difficult to read John’s gospel and come to the conclusion that Jesus is not the Son of God.

John gives us an account of everyday occurrences of what took place whilst he was with Jesus.

And in his first letter which he sent to several Gentile congregations and was also written to all believers everywhere,  
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he wrote authoritatively to give the new generation of believer’s assurance and confidence in God and in their faith.

So much so  
that we are  
still reading  
these words  
nearly 2000  
years later  
and they are  
as important  
today as they  
were when  
John wrote  
them.



*The library in Ephesus where John lived for a part of his life.*

We can't forget that John also wrote the wonderful book of Revelation.

His message was originally for the seven churches in Asia who were experiencing persecution, but it is also for all believers of all time.

The Roman authorities had exiled John to the island of Patmos and it was here that he had a vision of Christ.

And following that God revealed to him what would happen in the future when He returned to triumph of evil.

John chose to reveal his revelation in the form of apocalyptic writing – that uses symbolic imagery to communicate hope especially to those who are struggling.

One of my favourite and most uplifting verses is in the first chapter verse 3 where he writes –

“God blesses the one who reads this prophecy to the church, and He blesses all who listen to it and obey what it says. For the time is near when these things will happen”

We have waited and celebrated the birth of Christ once again and now we wait expectantly for Christ to come again!

May I wish you all a Very Happy New Year, praying that this coming year will allow us all to meet and socialise with all of our friends and family.

And that our church may once again thrive with worship and activity to the glory of God.

**Amen.**





PS. Please could I ask you to remember my family and myself in your prayers. Unfortunately, my mouth is not very good again and it appears that I have another cancerous tumour.

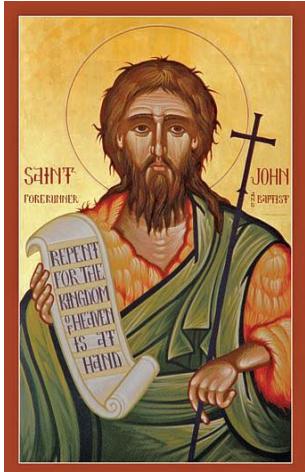
I am expecting to go into hospital for surgery sometime in January.

At the moment I am waiting for further test and scans.

When I know more, I will let you know.

Thank you and may God Bless You and all of your family.

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## The Collect for Saint John

Merciful Lord,  
cast your bright beams of light upon your church,  
that, being enlightened by the teaching  
of your blessed apostle and evangelist Saint John,  
we may so walk in the light of everlasting life,  
through Jesus Christ  
your incarnate Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and forever.

**Amen**

# A Prayer for the New Year

Dear Lord

Bless us in the coming Year,  
Bless our hopes, and dreams.

Look after us and be with us.

Yes, Lord,

with your help it's time to begin again,  
to start afresh with you.

**Amen.**

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*On a lighter note!*

*Something a little different to close with.*

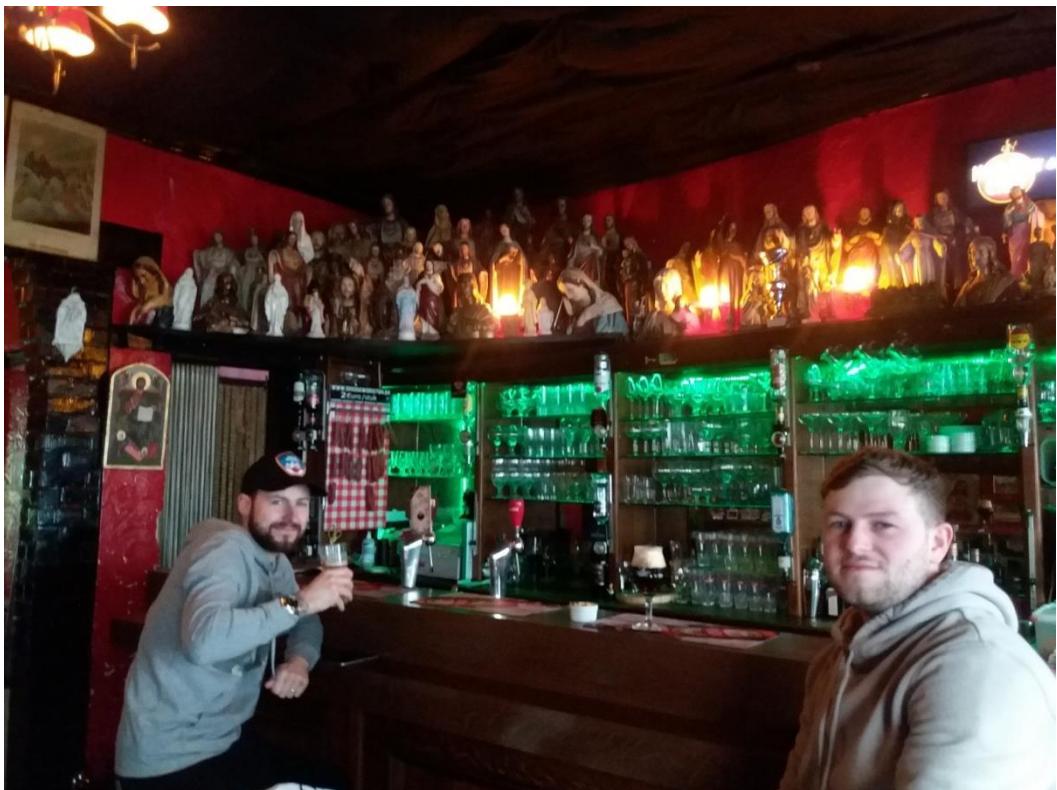
*A bar named 'The 12 Apostles' we came across in Ypres.*



*One of the many decorated walls inside the Bar.*



*It would have been rude not to taste the beer!*





**SERVICE TODAY**

**Christmas 1**

Invitation only

**10.00am: Common Worship**

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**SUNDAY 3<sup>rd</sup> JANUARY 2021**

Invitation only

**10.00am: Book of Common Prayer**

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For any of your family, friends  
and neighbours  
who have access to the internet,  
you might like to suggest  
that they look at the church's website  
where they will be able to see this message  
and other useful information.  
Also, anyone you know with  
Primary Age school children will find stories  
from 'Open The Book'.

Tell them to Google  
St. Mary's Church Cublington.