



# “Showing Jesus is Lord in our worship, witness, prayer and care”

## SPSJ UPDATE

Christmas 2020

### ‘Joy to the World’

If there is one thing that would feel lacking in our world right now it would have to be joy! Just as we start to get excited about celebrating Christmas together and the news of a vaccine beginning rolled out, the news is suddenly dominated again by the rate of infection growing across much of Britain, and of course that thing we had all forgotten about Brexit! So we would be forgiven for thinking the phrase Joy to the World is not something we should be saying this Christmas, it just isn't politically correct.

But then again, that is the whole point of the Christmas message isn't it, the whole thing just isn't politically correct: an elderly women becoming pregnant, a child conceived out of wedlock, a baby born in the place animals were kept, people neglecting their work duties to visit a random family they have never met, an evil King ordering the slaughter of all male babies under 2 years old, and of course not to mention all the heavenly beings that kept appearing scaring everyone they came into contact with. This is not a scene from a normal year, it sounds more like a hollywood movie. And yet in the midst of this uncertainty and fear over what the future will bring, the theme that comes up time and time again in Luke's Gospel is .....  
**JOY!**

The Angel on telling Zechariah he will have a child says “He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth”.



When Mary visits Elizabeth the baby leapt for joy in its mother's womb. Upon giving birth Elizabeth's family share in her 'joy'. Both Mary's and Zechariah's songs are filled with joy. The shepherds in the field are told by the angel “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.” Then in the temple courts Simeon and Anna rejoice with joy upon seeing the baby Jesus.

The clue as to why joy is to be found in this story that includes the breaking of many cultural norms, a mass population displacement, and the murder of countless small children, lies in the words of Simeon and Anna. They were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem and therefore the light for the whole world. God, through his Spirit, had led them to see baby Jesus for who he really was.

This Christmas, may we truly see Jesus for who he really is, the King of Kings, the Prince of Peace, God who took on human form, died for us, and rose again, that we might know him and benefit from all that God is.

Later in John's Gospel, as Jesus is preparing the disciples for his death, he tells them “you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you” (16:22). This year has for many of us been one of the most challenging year of our lives.

But... If we live in Christ, if we give ourselves to follow Christ, to allow the Holy Spirit to live inside of us, to guide our thoughts and our actions. Then even in the midst of suffering nothing can take our Joy away. Because it is finished, he has won!

I am so grateful for the patience and perseverance that you have shown as a church. I am thankful for your continued generous hearts meaning we are in a good financial position moving forwards. And I praise God for the plans he has for us in the future, not least for the calling and safe arrival of the Dodwell family in Hereford.

Let us look forward to next year with hope, spurred on by the joy that comes from the announcement that God is here, Christ has come. This Christmas 'may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope' (Rom.15:13). Merry Christmas everyone, I pray it may be filled with those four themes of advent, hope, peace, love and joy, as we celebrate again the birth of our Saviour.

*Rev'd Andy Morgan*

## **This Christmas at SPSJ**

We have been working hard behind the scenes to do all we can to celebrate Christmas in accordance with the Government guidelines to ensure we are Covid-secure in all we do. We are therefore delighted to offer you the following online and in person services. If you would like to attend one of the in person services you **MUST** book in beforehand and wear a mask on the day.

Places are limited, to book your place please go to [www.spsj.org.uk/christmas](http://www.spsj.org.uk/christmas).

If you do not have internet access, you can either ask a friend that does to do it for you, or you can ring the vicarage on 01432 273676 and leave a voicemail

message with your name, a contact number and how many tickets you would like for which service.

### **Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> December 3pm – 'Carols for All'**

A multi-sensory service at St Peter's Church with signing offered in partnership with the Hereford Deaf Church.

### **Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> December 7pm – Online Carols with Compassion**

A beautiful online hour-long carol service that is uplifting and faith-building, celebrating the hope of the Christmas message with heart-warming Christmas carol singing and Bible readings in a traditional church setting with a contemporary twist.

### **Christmas Eve 4pm – Community Carols**

Different to the usual community carols, this year we will outdoors! Joining together on the playground of St James School singing some of our favourite carols as we are led through the Christmas story by Elliot and the Andes!

### **Christmas Day 9am – Holy Communion**

Join us at St James Church for a traditional Christmas Holy Communion service.

### **Christmas Day 10am – Online Celebration**

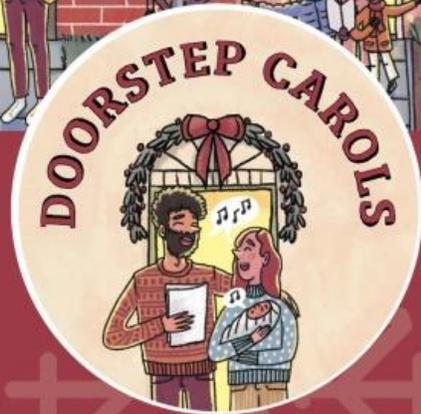
Producing services online has been a real revelation this year for us, and so we are delighted to offer a special Christmas Day celebration service for those unable to leave the house on Christmas Day.

### **Christmas Day 10:30am – Family Celebration**

Join us at St Peter's Church for our Christmas Family Celebration service with Communion.

**If you have any Covid symptoms or have been in contact with someone who has, please do follow the government guidance and stay at home. We want to keep everyone safe this Christmas.**

Our online services will be available on our Youtube and Facebook channels. You can find a link at the bottom of our Christmas webpage – [www.spsj.org.uk/christmas](http://www.spsj.org.uk/christmas).



# You're invited!

Wednesday 16th December, 6pm



## DOWNLOAD

Visit the website [doorstepcarols.co.uk](http://doorstepcarols.co.uk) and download the words.



## TUNE IN

The carols will be broadcast on **your local radio station** to help us all stay in time and in tune.



## SING

Simply sing along on the night, in household bubbles only - Help us spread the word with your neighbours!

Raising money for local charities

# [www.doorstepcarols.co.uk](http://www.doorstepcarols.co.uk)



**BBC RADIO**  
**Hereford & Worcester**



## St. James' Book of Values

As a school, we would like to create and publish a book of prayers, poems and artwork relating to our six school Christian values of:

Friendship

Hope

Perseverance

Thankfulness

Love

Forgiveness

The children will be creating work to add to the publication in school but we would also love to have contributions from our wider community. If you felt able to contribute a poem, prayer, reflection or piece of artwork that fitted under the heading of one of our values we would love to receive this.

If all contributions could be in school by January 15<sup>th</sup>

They can be e-mailed to [rmatli@st-james.hereford.sch.uk](mailto:rmatli@st-james.hereford.sch.uk)

*Thank you so much*