

March Team St John, St Mary, St Peter, St Wendreda

3rd Sunday of Advent 14th December 2025

Team Rector: Rev Andrew Smith 01354 572117

andrew.marchurch@gmail.com

Church Services

St Peter's Sundays 8am & 11am; Wednesdays 10am

St Mary's Sundays 9.15am; St Wendreda's Sundays 11am

St John's Sundays 9.30am; Tuesdays 10am

TODAY Sunday 14th December St Peter's

3pm CHRISTINGLE SERVICE

in the CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL

Open Fri 9th 12noon-8pm, Sat 10th 9.30am-5pm, Sun 11th 12noon-3pm

Meditation

Humanity seems addicted to violence. Acts of aggression have always been the most frequent strategy for solving disputes. During the twentieth century, 43 million military personnel were killed in war, and 62 million civilians. The United Nations estimates that every day over 1000 innocent people are killed by conventional weapons, twice as many each year as were killed by the nuclear devices dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The twenty-first century has seen war after war, often brought nightly to our TV screens. And yet, especially at Christmas time, we talk of peace. Our hearts are divided.

Too often religion has played a part in the conflicts that have torn nations to pieces. The Church has justified killing and torture, encouraged violence and blessed wars. "For every Martin Luther King and Desmond Tutu proclaiming the Jesus who rode on a donkey and spoke of peace, there have been plenty who proclaim a different Jesus, well armed and dangerous." Christians may try to wriggle round the charge but it's best to come clean and admit that there is a lot of unhealthy religions around, and always have been.

And yet evil has to be resisted. It's not acceptable to dress evil up in nice clothes and pretend it isn't what it is. The problem comes in knowing how far our own violence is justified in resisting the contorted face of evil. There is a noble history of non-violence resistance, demonstrated, for example, by Gandhi and Martin Luther King, but there is an equal theological tradition of the "just war". How are Christians to make judgements in this complex ethical environment? Moreover, this is no armchair debate; innocent people are dying every day.

If violence has its roots deep in our hearts, then we're faced with the puzzle of how we change the human heart. Christians believe that it's possible in the transformation Christ offers, but the evidence is ambivalent. Centuries ago Jonathan Swift said: "We have just enough religion to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another." How can the soul be flooded with the peace of Christ so that the violence we carry evaporates?

We start with the shalom of God, the peace of God. This great Old Testament theme explores the wholeness and joy of a creation at peace with itself and with its Creator. It's not merely the absence of conflict but more positively the presence of an embracing peace and harmony. This shalom is given expression in the sabbath rest of God, in the ideal of Jubilee and in Isaiah's vision of the wolf lying down with the lamb and the leopard with the kid. The new creation described poetically in the Book of Revelation is a world in which heaven and earth fully overlap each other and God's shalom is finally established. This is our destination and our desire, and what we desire we must work for.

The teaching of Jesus is full of challenge to a violent humanity. He calls the peacemakers blessed, promising that they will be called children of God. He states unequivocally that all who take the sword will perish by the sword. He sets before us the high challenge to love our enemies and to pray for those who persecute us. What he doesn't recommend is superior firepower. It's not surprising then that there's an honourable tradition of pacifism in the Church, even though most Christians have still fond ways of squaring their conscience with using force to resist the excesses of evil. Reflecting on Jesus' command to love our enemies, Archbishop Robert Runcie said, "This saying is still offensive and obscure to many, but to 'love your enemies' is a credible peace strategy, and the only one as such the Church is authorised to pursue".

St Paul and his followers picked up the peace-making theme with alacrity and declared peace with God and with each other to be a central part of the work of Christ. "He came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near." The New Testament Letters are full of urging of believers to live at peace because Paul clearly saw that "Christ is our peace.... he has made both groups into one, and has broken down the dividing wall". This counter-cultural way of living at peace in a particularly violent age would have a dramatic effect on those who observed it. "Look how they love one another and how they are ready to die for each other", was the astonished cry of outsiders. If Christians can demonstrate the way of peace there's something immensely attractive to a world weary of conflict and violence. Other religious traditions have often been more successful at

this. One cannot help but feel awkward at the response of Gandhi to a journalist's question about what he thought about Western Civilization; "I think it would be a good idea!"

Archbishop Justin Welby brought with him, as Archbishop, a strong history of involvement in reconciliation, through his time with Coventry Cathedral. He was a canon of Coventry Cathedral 2002-7 and during that time was involved in their international ministry with its strong emphasis on the work of reconciliation. In an interview with Dr Paula Gooder, hosted by St Paul's Cathedral (following Justin's sabbatical where he spent time reflecting and writing on reconciliation) he was asked for a succinct definition of reconciliation. This was his reply; "Reconciliation is the transformation of broken and destructive relationships into accepting diversity with love." He also reminded us that Sam Wells, Vicar of St-Martin-in-the-Fields, had said that the "gospel is reconciliation, and reconciliation is the gospel." This is a message for the Church in its internal divisions and discussions, and also key for its message to the world.

WINTERWONDERLAND

at St John's 5-8pm

THIS Wed 17th, Thurs 18th Fri 19th December

Twinkling lights & Beautiful Decorations

Santa's Grotto £3 per child

Illuminated Walk £3 adult, £2 child

Festive Music & Carol Singing.

Christmas Craft Stalls & Activities Refreshments

St Mary's Coffee Morning *All Welcome*

NEXT Saturday 20th December

at Roger's 10am-12noon

TODAY Sunday 14th December

G&S concert

4.30pm St John's All Welcome

St John's Church Activities

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday

9.15-11.15 St John's Tots;

Tuesday

10am Midweek Communion Service

Study Group 11-12 Next Jan 13th

Study Group 7pm-8.30pm; Film The Chosen

Wednesdays Community Hub in Hall 12-2

Thursday 1st Thursday Social Group (see above)

Friday Choir Practice in Church

Regular Church Activities at St Peter's

Tuesday

10am-12noon Knit and Natter;

1st St Peter's MU 2.30-4pm 3rd Deanery MU

Wednesday

10am Midweek Communion Service

1st Study Group 7.30-9pm Next Jan 7th

2nd Wed Christian Aid Lunch Hall 12-1pm

If anyone is interested in **CONFIRMATION**
please let Andrew know.

Sunday 19th April 4pm at St Peter's

CAROL SERVICES

NEXT Sunday 21st December

3pm St Mary's 4.30pm St John's

6.30pm St Peter's

Carol & Christmas Services; Readers – see lists.

CHRISTMAS EVE *Wed 24th December*

10am St Peter's; Holy Communion

1-3pm St John's; Messy Church Nativity

4pm St Peter's; Crib and Carol Service

9pm St John's; Midnight in Bethlehem! Communion

11.30pm St Peter's; Midnight Communion

CHRISTMAS DAY *Thurs 25th December*

Communion Services at usual Sunday times

8am St Peter's

11am St Peter's

9.15am St Mary's

9.30am St John's

3rd Sunday Advent 14th December

**Welcome to St John the Evangelist,
St Peter & St Mary Churches
in the March Team**

St Peter's Christmas Tree Festival

Sun 14th 12noon-3pm

ends with **CHRISTINGLE** Sunday 14th 3pm

All Welcome

TODAY 3pm Christingle at St Peter's

Regular Sunday Services

St John 9.30am Sung Communion

First Sunday of each Month

9.30am Wholeness Service with Laying on of Hands

Next MESSY CHURCH Christmas Eve 1-3pm

St Mary 9.15am Traditional Sung Communion

St Peter 8am Holy Communion

11am Sung Communion

*Last Sunday (not Dec) **Sunday Club 11am***

TUESDAY St John's; 10am Holy Communion

WEDNESDAY St Peter's; 10am Holy Communion

Zoom services

Sunday 5.15pm Team Service

Thursday 8.30am Morning Prayer

Team Rector: Rev Andrew Smith 01354 572117

andrew.marchchurch@gmail.com

*All enquiries about Weddings Baptisms etc to Andrew
Baptisms; 12.30 St Peter; 2pm or later St John St Mary*

Team Leader in Mission Ruth Clay 07905950849

RevRuth.marchchurches@outlook.com

Clergy; Jane Rees 463284, Anthony Chandler 652894,

Jenny Webb 650855, Mother Jane Dicker 661099

Readers; Hannah Taylor 661712, Stewart Piper

FUNERALS

Tues 16th 2.30pm Fenland; Michael Darling

Wed 17th 12.30pm Fenland; Betty Hart

Fri 19th 10.15am St Peter's; Audrey Batterbee

Mon 22nd 11.30am St Peter's; Michelle Cooper

Thu 8th Jan St Mary; Harry Deptford

Fri 9th Jan 11am St Wendreda; Ted Drabwell

Next Week, December 21st, Advent 3

Isaiah 35 v1-15, Matthew 11 v2-11

CAROL SERVICES 3pm St Mary,

4.30pm St John, 6.30pm St Peter

Thanks for the St Mary's Christmas Lunch

*Every day in Advent 5.15pm; short service of
Compline on zoom. Please contact Rev Jane for link*

ADVENT WREATH SONG

O, one for all God's people

In every age and day,

We are watching for his coming

We believe and we obey.

And, two is for the prophets

And for the light they bring

They are candles on the darkness

All alight for Christ the King

And three for John the Baptist

He calls us to sing:

"O prepare the way for Jesus Christ

He is coming, Christ the King"

The holly and the ivy

Are dancing in a ring,

Round the advent purple candles

And the white and shining King.

Minister: People of God; return !

All: You are called to be God's Own.

Minister: From the mountains

announce the good news.

All: God comes in justice and peace for all.

Minister: You are God's children.

All: Lord make us one as we walk with Christ today and for ever. Amen.

Prayer, Collect, for this week

God of glory and compassion, at your touch the wilderness blossoms, broken lives are made whole, and fearful hearts grow strong in faith. Open our eyes to your presence and awaken our hearts to sing your praise. To all who long for your servants return grant perseverance and patience, that we may announce in word and deed the good news of the kingdom. We ask this through him whose coming is certain, whose day draws near: your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, One God for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Old Testament, Isaiah 35 v1-10

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God. Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart, 'Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you.' Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; the burning sand shall

become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes. A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God's people; no traveller, not even fools, shall go astray. No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Gospel of Matthew 11 v2-11

When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to Jesus, 'Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?' Jesus answered them, 'Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me.'

As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you." Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Prayer after Communion

God of the burning sand and thirsty ground: you called John into the wilderness to announce a new creation far from palaces of royal power; make us ready for your intensity, the judgement that opens our senses to the poverty of our world and calls to life what lingers in death; through Jesus Christ, the one who is to come. **Amen.**

NEW Years Mind Books

Please include names of those they would like remembered in prayers in 2026

Leading Intercessions: workshop early 2026.
Please contact Revd Jenny if you are interested.

If anyone has any old but working Radio/Cassette players they don't want, please let Andrew know.

This Wed 17th 6pm Westwood in St Peter's
This Thurs 18th 2pm Burrowmoor in St Peter's

NEXT Choral Evensong: for Epiphany,
Sunday 11th January 4pm St John's