

March Team St John, St Mary, St Peter, St Wendreda
Last Sunday of the Kingdom Season, 23rd November

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

Meditation

The awe-inspiring Christ hymn in these verses from the Letter to the Colossians is one of my absolute favourite passages. It tells that Christ is all sufficient for the Christian life of worship, faith and new life. There is no need for any other spiritual exercises, laws, rules, or practices outside of Christ, for in him is all the mystery and fullness of the godhead. Growth in spiritual maturity is a matter of following Christ and not the worship of angels, ascetic practices, observance of special holy days or laws about food or purity. The hymn's point in elaborating the present status and authority of Jesus Christ is to demonstrate to the Colossians that in their saviour they have all they need; even if they wish to explore spiritual experiences and new understandings or philosophies.

This hymn may have its origins in the Church's liturgy, its worship words. It is appealing to imagine that this hymn may have been composed, or at least used, in Colossae itself: and that a great compliment is being paid strengthening the relationship with the congregation by using their words, their paean of praise to Christ. But the hymn may also have been adapted somewhat to suit the epistle's author's own purposes.

In this passage, Jesus Christ is seen as risen and ascended. This is a resurrection theology in the light of the ways in which Jesus Christ is related to the present life of the church and the believer. The risen Christ is also clearly connected to Jesus the man who first died on the cross before being raised.

This hymn emphasises a creation theology too. All things on earth and in heaven – things visible and invisible – were created through the agency of Jesus Christ. There is no room for intermediary angels, spirits, or lesser gods taking on some role in creation. The creation is not a “botched job” through the interference of lesser spiritual beings, fallen angels or devils; it is the sole responsibility of Jesus Christ.

Creation also encompasses re-creation, or redemption. Colossians makes very clear the unity or continuity between Jesus the man and the cosmic

Christ: ‘*through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things... by making peace through the blood of his cross.*’ The following verses also involve wider resurrection; looking forward to being presented ‘holy and blameless’ before God – once again through the death of Jesus Christ.

The hymn forms into two halves; this means that the centre and focus of creation is the Church, of which Christ is the head. This highlights the very close relationship between the risen cosmic Christ and all his followers. The two halves have certain parallelism, but the first part dwells on creation, while the second part dwells on reconciliation or redemption (re-creation).

This Colossian hymn has some links with the biblical Wisdom tradition, in a rather tangential way, to the beginning of John's Gospel (*The Word was with God, and through him all things came to be...etc*). In the Wisdom of Solomon, Wisdom is an image of the goodness of God, active from the beginning of creation, penetrating all things, and holding all things together, superior to all created things. The important differences are that in the Wisdom writings, the figure of Wisdom is a woman, and she is regarded as having been created by God. In Colossians here, on the other hand, Christ embodies Wisdom and he is divine in nature, pre-existent and ‘*the image of the invisible God.*’

This is a passage of high-flown Asiatic rhetoric and is designed to create an outpouring of praise, joy and wonder in the audience. There are some similarities to the hymn Paul quotes in Philippians chapter two, but in Colossians there is no servant language or a theology of “emptying”; and while the Philippians hymn speaks of God's vindication of Christ, Colossians reveals Christ already vindicated, now reigning as cosmic creator, ruler and redeemer all rolled into one.

We end the Church's year this Sunday; this year Luke's gospel has been our principle guide, next year it will be Matthew. Luke ends his gospel with resurrection and ascension stories (and of course has “What happens next?” in his Volume II the Acts of the Apostles, but we end with part of his passion narrative. The soldiers, who may not have been above quite a bit of random violence towards Jesus, are doing their familiar job of crucifying, and Jesus grants them forgiveness; although they do not repent, or understand either the wrong or the significance of what they are doing. They then join in the crowd in mocking Jesus, challenging Jesus to save himself, not realising that Jesus has saved them despite their ignorance and conduct. When one of the terrorists who are sharing Jesus' fate joins in, the other both asserts their own guilt and pleads for redemption in the future. Jesus grants straightaway,

“Today, you will be with me in paradise”. Luke makes it abundantly clear that the cross is about forgiveness and redemption, and that it is granted regardless of understanding, deserving or earning, and that it is now available and made real.

Very different from Mark and Matthew’s cry of forsakenness, Luke has Jesus’ last words from the cross as *“Father, into your hands I commend my Spirit”* and we are invited to pray the same gentle and intimate prayer ourselves. So personal and intimate, yet to be held in tension alongside the equally wonderful experience of the creating and redeeming cosmic Christ of the Colossians hymn. Truly a fitting end to the Church’s year.

Prayers

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, always and everywhere to give you thanks, holy Father, almighty and eternal God. For with the oil of gladness you anointed Christ the Lord, your only Son, to be our great high priest and king of all creation. As priest, he offered himself once for all upon the altar of the cross and redeemed the human race by this perfect sacrifice of peace. As king he claims dominion over all your creatures, that he may bring before your infinite majesty a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace.

So, let us with confidence present our prayers and supplications to the throne of grace.

Loving God, you have taught us that the power of the heart is greater than the power of wealth and might. Hear us as we pray for the fulfilment of your reign.

We pray for all those in positions of power, that they may govern with wisdom and integrity, serving the needs of their people.

May your reign come.

We pray for your Church, the sign of your reign, that it may extend your welcome to people of every race and background.

May your kingdom come.

We pray for Christians of every denomination, that together we may come to understand the royal priesthood you bestowed on us in baptism.

May your dominion come.

We pray for those whose commitment to truth brings them into conflict with earthly powers, that they may have the courage to endure.

May your rule come.

We pray for our communities of faith that attentive to your word we may always worship in spirit and in truth.

May your reign come.

Stir up, O Lord, the wills of your faithful people; that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may by you be plenteously rewarded; through Jesus Christ our Lord, in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

NEXT Saturday 29th 11.30am St Peter's

FREE Coffee Concert

The Snowman

Complete Live performance with narration & song

FENLAND MUSIC (FMC) Concert

Christmas at the Movies

Saturday 6th December 7pm St Peter's

£8 at door Refreshments Raffles

QUIZ NIGHT for St Wendreda 27th Nov 7.30 for 8

March Cricket Club, Burrowmoor Rd PE15 9RS

Teams of 4; £3 per person on night

Wed 26th Deanery Synod at Coates 7.30pm

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 Dec 9th

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

**First Thursday Christmas meal on Thursday 4th
December at the conservative club 7pm for 7:30pm.**

All welcome - partners, friends

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 Dec 3rd

2nd Wed Christian Aid Lunch Hall 12-1pm

**March Foodbank needs volunteers to help at the
food collection at Tesco 27th to 29th Nov (one
hour slots). Please contact Rev Jenny for more info**

Leading Intercessions:

we are planning to run a workshop in early 2026 for
those who already lead intercessions and those who
might wish to consider leading them in the future.
Please contact Revd Jenny if you are interested.

St Mary's 2 Course Christmas Lunch

Sunday 7th December 1pm in the Parish Room

Tickets £15 from Ruth 01354 650858 or

fundraising@stmaryschurchmarch.co.uk

Draw prizes please!

Saturday 6th December

St John's Christmas Fair with Choir Singing

10am-1.30pm

**Refreshments, Crafts, Children's Activities, Cakes,
Tombola, FATHER CHRISTMAS All Welcome**

Last Kingdom Sunday 23rd Nov

Welcome to St John the Evangelist,

St Peter & St Mary Churches

in the March Team

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

NEXT WEEK, Last Sunday 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.marchurch@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

BAPTISM

12.30pm St Peter's Roman Ashley Newstead

FUNERAL

Wed 26th 12.30pm Fenland; Joseph Stacey

Next Week, November 30th, ADVENT SUNDAY

Isaiah 2 v1-5, Romans 1 v1-7, Matthew 24v36-44

12.30pm Baptism at St Peter's

**Thanks to those who supported the
St Peter's Christmas Fair**

NEW Years Mind Books

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

Wed 26th Deanery Synod at Coates 7.30pm

ADVENT CHORAL SERVICE

NEXT Sunday 30th November

4pm St John's

All Welcome

Prayer, Collect, for this week

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you gave us your Son, the beloved one, who of all the ages, the One who is, who was rejected, the Saviour who appeared defeated. Yet the mystery of his kingship illumines our lives. Show us in his death the victory that crowns the ages, and in his broken body the love that unites heaven and earth. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Epistle, Colossians 1 v11-20

Brothers and sisters: May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

WINTERWONDERLAND at St John's 5-8pm

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

Sunday 14th December 4.30pm in St John's

G&S concert

All Welcome

St Peter's Christmas Tree Festival

Friday 12th – Sunday 14th December

Refreshments and Trees

Open Fri 12th 12noon-8pm,

Sat 13th 9.30am-5pm Sun 14th 12noon-3pm

ends with CHRISTINGLE Sunday 14th 3pm

All Welcome

Individuals or Organisation invited to enter a tree and sign up to help please in the many ways needed

Donations for Contents of Hampers welcomed

See Christmas Events newsletter for more info

Gospel of Luke 23 v33-43

When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.' And they cast lots to divide his clothing. And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, 'He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!' The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, and saying, 'If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!' There was also an inscription over him, 'This is the King of the Jews.'

One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, 'Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!' But the other rebuked him, saying, 'Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.' Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' He replied, 'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.'

Prayer after Communion

God of unbroken weakness, you laugh at our love of power: may we find kingship in the love that is killed for speaking its name without even the shadow of force. Stir up, O Lord, the wills of your faithful people; that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may by you be plenteously rewarded; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

St Mary's Coffee Morning All Welcome

Saturday 20th December at Roger's 10am-12noon

CAROL SERVICES

Sunday 21st December

3pm St Mary's

4.30pm St John's

6.30pm St Peter's

Anyone interested in singing in the choir at the Carol Service at St Peter's please let James know asap

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

9.15am St Mary's

9.30am St John's

11am St Peter's