

The Dunster Benefice
Carhampton, Dunster, Timberscombe,
Withycombe with Rodhuish, Wootton Courtenay
Newsletter 11th December 2020



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Last Call for Operation Christmas Child Shoe Box Appeal Boxes may be delivered to Under the Rainbow in Friday Street, Minehead, today from 10am to 4pm or tomorrow before 1pm. They have boxes for you to fill if you don't have one. It is also possible to fill one online: <http://samaritans-purse.org.uk/>



Advent Reflections Attached to this newsletter is the third in a series of weekly **Advent Reflections** from the Dunster Benefice written this week by Revd Sue Austin.

Online National Christingle Service

The whole country is invited to join The Children's Society's online National Christingle Service in partnership with the Church of England. It will be available from 9am on Sunday and will remain on YouTube so you may watch at a time to suit you. Click [here](#) to go to the Church of England's website where you can download an order of service and watch a trailer. The same page will have the service link on Sunday.

Sunday 13th December (Third of Advent) Readings & Collect

God for whom we watch and wait, you sent John the Baptist to prepare the way of your Son: give us courage to speak the truth, to hunger for justice, and to suffer for the cause of right, with Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Common Worship Collect taken from Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England © The Archbishops' Council 2000

Isaiah 61.1-4 & 8-11

If you do not have a Bible to hand you can find the Isaiah reading on these websites:

<https://www.biblegateway.com/> or <https://bible.oremus.org/>

John 1.6-8 & 19-28

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, 'I am not the Messiah.' And they asked him, 'What then? Are you Elijah?' He said, 'I am not.' 'Are you the prophet?' He answered, 'No.' Then they said to him, 'Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?' He said, 'I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the Lord" ', as the prophet Isaiah said.

Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, 'Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?' John answered them, 'I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.' This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

Services on Sunday 13th December

St John the Baptist Carhampton – 9.30am Holy Communion

St George Dunster – 11am Morning Prayer

St Petrock Timberscombe – 11am Holy Communion

All Saints Wootton Courtenay – 11am Alternative Songs of Praise with Carols

St Bartholomew's Rodhuish – 6pm Carol Service

Most churches will be open for private prayer on a Sunday or some other day of the week, please keep an eye on the notice boards.

Rector's Note

This Sunday we celebrate the feast of St John the Baptist. It is a special day for the church in Carhampton since it is their patronal festival, the day the saint of the church is especially remembered. One of the few survivals of ritual that has been possible despite COVID-19 is the Advent wreath, with its three purple candles for the church fathers, the prophets and John the Baptist), one pink one (for Mary the mother of Jesus) and the white candle in the centre for Jesus himself. We remember the words at the beginning of the gospel: Jesus is the light of the world and coming into the world and John the Baptist is the one who bears witness to the light.

We know more about John than we do about the disciples. We know his parents, Zachariah and Elisabeth, that Zachariah was a priest in the Temple in Jerusalem and that the family were related in some way to Mary. Like Jesus, we do not know where he was until the age of 30. We know John left his family and went to live in the desert, subsisting on whatever the desert could provide. He may have gone at a very young age to live in one of the religious communities that existed outside the mainstream of society, possibly the Essenes. Some of their writings were discovered in caves near the dead Sea. He preached that people must repent and be baptised and that Jesus was coming. He died in prison after Herod had him arrested.

We are astonishingly law abiding, as a country. We are governed by consent, although it might not always feel like it. The rule of law is upheld, even by criminals, who usually turn up for their trial, even if they know they might be going to prison. People have generally abided by the restrictions placed upon us, not because of the penalties but because it's the right thing to do.

The ritual that we follow in church services, the pattern of the year, the colours we decorate with, what we say, are also matters of consent. We can change what we do and say, but we do it to honour God and to help us to pray. Candles, those brief, bright things, help us to remember Emmanuel, God with us, that this time of waiting will end.

Caroline