



Church Website

NEWS BULLETIN - ST ALBAN & ST STEPHEN

14 Beaconsfield Road, St Albans, AL1 3RB

Office Hours Monday-Friday 9am-1pm Tel: 01727 853 585

E-mail: stalbans@rcdow.org.uk Website: www.albanstephen.org

YouTube: [youtube.com/c/SsAlbanandStephenCatholicChurch](https://www.youtube.com/c/SsAlbanandStephenCatholicChurch)

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT 6 DECEMBER 2020



VirginMoneyGiving

Parish Team: Fr Michael O'Boy (Parish Priest) Fr Julian Davies (Assistant Priest)

Rev. Steve Pickard (Deacon) Mrs Angela Gray (Parish Administrator)

Safeguarding Lead: Mary Harber / stalbanssg3@safeguardrcdow.org.uk / 07976 277059

We are a Fairtrade parish

Dear Parishioners,

Last Christmas well over two thousand people attended our Christmas Masses. It is likely that not everyone will want to or be in a position to attend Mass on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, and that numbers this year will be quite reduced. Nevertheless, even if we were to assume a halving in numbers, we would still be faced with the task of accommodating over a thousand people in a church with a current seating capacity of between 58 -80 at the very most. This would mean our celebrating something like twelve Christmas Masses. We could draw on the support of supply priests to help celebrate these Masses. However, in addition to saying these additional Masses, we would also need to find the stewards to staff them and ensure that there was a sufficient gap between Masses to allow for sanitising and airing. Moreover, were we able to find sufficient volunteers, I am all too conscious of the tensions that allocating seating will inevitably create and that the task of refusing people entry would fall on the shoulders of the volunteer stewards. My fear is that our Masses on Christmas Day could become a recipe for disquiet rather than goodwill. In addition to the logistical challenges it is also worth noting that, apart from a small choir, the current restrictions do not allow for congregational singing. You would have to come to listen and not to sing. On Christmas Day I think that's a challenge all of its own!

With the return to public worship, we have already received a number of enquiries about the arrangements for Christmas here at St Alban and St Stephen and a decision has to be made. I have consulted with the Parish Pastoral Council and the proposal is that, as it is not practicable to accommodate everyone who may wish to come to Mass in church on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day, we stream three Christmas Masses, at which a small choir and readers would be present: one at 5pm on Christmas Eve, one at 11pm on Christmas Eve and one at 9am on Christmas Morning. Leaflets to accompany each service, and to facilitate your participation at home, will be available on the parish website. In addition to these streamed Masses, the Church will be open for individuals and families to visit the crib between 6.30pm and 9.30pm on Christmas Eve and again on Christmas Day between 10am and 1pm.

On St Stephen's Day, Saturday 26 December, there will be a morning Mass at 11am and a Vigil Mass for the Solemnity of the Holy Family at 6 pm. On Sunday 27 December there will be three Masses at 9.30am, 11.30am and 7pm. On Monday 28 December through to Friday 1 January there will be a 10am Mass each morning, with evening Masses at 7pm on Wednesday 30 December and Friday 1 January, New Year's Day. All these Masses occur during the Octave of Christmas and traditionally the Church treats each of these eight days as Christmas Day. People are welcome on a first come first served basis, but for the Saturday evening Mass on 26 December, the Sunday Masses on 27 December and both morning and evening Masses on 1 January, people are asked to reserve a place by contacting the parish office before 1pm on 23 December.

I appreciate that this Christmas will be altogether different and that it seems very odd not to have a public Mass on Christmas Day. Please trust me when I say that it has not been an easy decision to arrive at, but my feeling is that for our parish this is the best way to meet the likely levels of demand and be fair to everyone. My sincere hope is for a worthy and safe celebration of Christmas, during which many of you will take up the invitation, to join our streamed Masses, visit the crib on Christmas Day, and attend one of the public Masses celebrated in the Christmas Octave.

Fr Michael

Knights of St Columba Christmas posters These are now available in the Church Porch. Please take one home to put in a window.

SACRAMENTS AND LITURGY

The God Who Speaks - Sunday Meditations Today we begin to read the Gospel of Mark. He writes the things that are important for him about the Christian message. He does not begin with Jesus because he knows that a preparation is necessary before we can accept Him in our lives. What does it mean for you today repentance and forgiveness of sins? The people listening to John the Baptist's message confessed their sins. Perhaps during this Advent, you might consider going to confession.

Baptisms Please contact Fr Julian for baptism enquiries at juliandavies@rcdow.org.uk.

First Holy Communion & Confirmation 2021 Parents and guardians for those due to celebrate their First Holy Communion (Year 3 and above) and Confirmation (Year 10 and above) next year are invited to register online. Please go to the 'Sacraments' tab of the parish [website](#) and click on either 'First Communion' or 'Confirmation' where you will find the relevant registration point. *Please note that if your son or daughter was a part of last year's programme but has yet to receive Holy Communion or be Confirmed, there is no need to register again.*

Sacrament of Reconciliation If you are in need of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, please contact the Presbytery. Confessions will be held in the open air and will observe social distancing.

Anointing of the Sick The current restrictions allow for end of life care, so it is possible for those who are dangerously ill to be anointed at home or while in residential care (should the care or nursing home permit this). Currently we are not allowed into Watford General Hospital. If somebody is admitted into Watford General, or any hospital, and they wish to be visited or anointed please contact the hospital chaplaincy. Where the person is incapacitated, the request will need to come from their next of kin. The number for Watford General is 01923 244 366.

Advent Penitential Service This year's Advent Penitential Service will take place on Saturday 12th December at 10am. Scripture readings, prayers and examination of conscience will be followed by an opportunity for private prayer during which the Blessed Sacrament will be exposed. The service will conclude at 11am. You are warmly welcomed to participate in this special prayerful preparation for Christmas. As it is not possible to receive the Sacrament of reconciliation during this service, please contact the priests separately to make your individual confession. The service will be live-streamed for those who are unable to attend.

Resources added to our website Please see the Liturgy Group section of our website (via Groups tab on top bar) for some new resources we have added to help and support parishioners during the current period.

Arrangements for booking weekend and weekday Masses From Friday 4th December we will once again be celebrating public masses in church. Advance booking is not necessary for weekday masses, other than the mass on Friday evening. Booking in advance will still be needed for Friday evening and for weekend masses as there are high numbers of attendees and a limited number of spaces in church. Stewards will still need to take the names and contact details of those attending weekday masses for contact tracing purposes. To reserve a place for Friday evening or weekend masses, please contact the parish office during office hours, 9am-1pm on weekdays, on 01727 853585 or at stalbans@rcdow.org.uk. Please note that bookings can only be made from Monday morning for the following weekend.

Stewarding help needed If you are able to help with stewarding for any of our masses, and you are under 70, please consider giving up an hour a week to volunteer. For further information, please contact Melanie O'Neill at mjoneill5@btinternet.com.

PARISH LIFE

Advent Talks: Towards Christmas and Beyond This year's Advent talks will be given by Fr Michael and Fr Julian. The immediate aim of the series is to reflect on our current situation, through the lens of the Christmas story, but it is also hoped that they will stimulate our preparation for next year's Parish Assembly and the formation of our pastoral priorities. They will be streamed at 8pm as follows:

- Monday 7 December - Worship and Charity
- Monday 14 December - Windows: Within & Without

Please [click here](#) for a link to the livestream page which you can also access via the website homepage. Following each talk there will be an opportunity for questions, but in addition, after the first three talks, there will be a series of Zoom discussion groups on the following Friday at 1pm and 8pm, and Sunday at 12.30pm. To join the discussion group meetings on Zoom, please [click here](#) and join using meeting ID: 963 0384 6300 and passcode: 210940.

Christmas day takeaway lunch invitation If you, or someone you know, wishes to receive a Christmas day lunch delivered to your home, please contact David on 07543 400650 or by emailing dave_markham@yahoo.co.uk by 7 December.

Christmas day lunch - call for help! We have a cook, but help would be appreciated to plate up food, to wash up afterwards and for drivers to deliver the meals please. Drivers must be DBS checked. If you would like to help, or offer lifts, please contact David on 07543 400650 or email dave_markham@yahoo.co.uk.

Parish Council The next PPC meeting will be held on Wednesday, 9th December at 5pm.

Knit and Natter in Lockdown The Parish Friends Knit and Natter group received some very good news at the beginning of November when we found out that the 20 stripy jumpers we knitted and had sent to an orphanage in South Africa at the beginning of lockdown, had eventually arrived. We are delighted to have gained several new knitters over the past months. Members have been busy making hundreds of squares that have been made into blankets, several of which have gone to local care homes. We have also been making scarves and jumpers and last Sunday, these, together with some blankets, were taken to Br Johannes who used to run the Catholic Workers Farm in Calais. He is now developing a new project in London for Eritrean and Ethiopian Refugees and is delighted with our contributions.

We will continue to knit for these refugees and would like to include men's hats if we can find volunteers to make them. We have also recently been asked to knit twiddle muffs for care home patients with dementia. We find it so very satisfying and humbling to be able to help so many needy people here and around the world. It is also a very restful way of passing the hours during lockdown. If you can knit, have any good wool to contribute or would like to help in any way please let me know. Contact Helen on 07860 830340 or via the parish office.

CAFOD World Gifts CAFOD's range of virtual gifts, make a real difference to families living in poverty across the world. While we have the coronavirus pandemic and lockdown here, we can still be good neighbours to our sisters and brothers overseas by giving World Gifts as Christmas presents to family and friends. The Keep Clean Kit gift for £6 and the Vegetable Garden gift for £10 are just two gifts that will help vulnerable families affected by the pandemic to protect and feed themselves. Let's spread joy and hope around the world this Christmas. Visit cafod.org.uk/worldgifts or take one of the physical brochures at the back of the Church.

Traidcraft There is still time to order gifts and Christmas cards from Traidcraft. If you would like a gift catalogue, please contact Maureen - grabecki@hotmail.com, 765549. You will find items online at Traidcraft. If you order via the parish, 10% of the order price will go to CAFOD.

Communications Do you have an interest in how we as a parish community communicate, not only among ourselves, but with the world at large? Do you have skills and experience that may help? Would you like to be part of a Parish Communications Group? Would you be willing to join a communication strategy group? If so, please email Fr Michael at michaeloboy@rcdow.org.uk.

Phishing email One of our parishioners has recently received an email purporting to come from Fr Michael,

requesting an urgent favour and asking that they contact him urgently by replying to the email. This was a scam or phishing email and the parishioner may have been targeted because his contact details were included in an article in the bulletin. Please be on your guard. Scam or phishing emails often include some urgent requirement to do something which usually involves providing financial or other personal information. Fr Michael or Fr Julian would never request personal or financial information in this way, but if you are in doubt about the validity of an email supposedly from them, please contact the parish office.

Virgin Money Giving If you would like to donate to the parish using Virgin Money Giving, please click [here](#) or use the QR code at the top of the newsletter.

Contactless Giving Point A contactless giving point is now located in the Church porch. To make an offering using contactless giving select the amount you wish to donate and tap the top of the machine with your mobile phone or card.

Standing Orders In view of the current lockdown we would ask you to consider making your offertory contribution by standing order if you do not already do so. If you would like to gift aid your donations, but have not yet completed a gift aid form, please consider doing so. To find details of how to set up a standing order or complete a gift aid form, please click on the 'Donate to the Parish' button on the home page of the [website](#) or by emailing or phoning the Parish Office. In 2019 we received on average £6,788.05 a month in standing orders. Between January and March 2020, the average total was £6,724.25 a month. By June 2020 this had increased to £7,765.14 a month and, in October, it stood at £9,044.80. Thank you to those who have traditionally given via standing order and to those who have set them up.

SCHOOLS & WIDER COMMUNITY

Certificates of Catholic Practice for Primary and Secondary School Admissions Fr Michael will be available at the Presbytery on Wednesday 9 December 4-6pm. No appointment is required and forms will be provided by Fr Michael. It is not necessary for your child to be present.

Light Up a Life The Hospice of St Francis in Berkhamsted is inviting you, your family and friends to join its 'Light up a Life' online event at 4.30pm on Sunday 6 December, where the whole community can come together to celebrate and remember loved ones. Both Hospice supporters and the wider community are welcome. More details can be found [on the website](#).

St. Alban and Stephen Catholic Primary School & Nursery invite you to join us at one of our virtual open mornings on Tuesday 8 and 15 December at 9.30am. Please email admin@ssas.herts.sch.uk if you are interested.

MASS INTENTIONS & READINGS

Sunday 6 December - 2ND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

6pm Vigil Mass Linda Peters (Ann)

9.30am Mass Anna Awinti (Ann)

11.30am Mass Peter Okoro (RIP)

7pm Mass Conway and Mary Lee Berners-Lee (Ann)

Reading 1, 40:1-5, 9-11, Responsorial Psalm, 85

Reading 2, 2 Peter 3: 8-14, Gospel, Mark: 1:1-8

Monday 7 December - St Ambrose

10am Mass Peter Barrows (RIP)

7 m Mass Sean McDonagh (Ints)

Reading 1, Isaiah 35:1-10

Responsorial Psalm, 85, Gospel, Luke 5:17-26

Tuesday 8 December THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

10am Mass Yvonne Plourde (RIP)

Reading 1, Genesis 3:9-15,20, Responsorial Psalm, 98

Reading 2, Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12, Gospel, Luke 1:26-38

Wednesday 9 December Advent feria

10 am Mass Sammons family (Ints)

7pm Mass Andrew McIntosh (RIP)

Reading 1, Isaiah 40:25-31, Responsorial Psalm, 103

Gospel, Matthew 11:28-30

Thursday 10 December - Advent FERIA

10am Mass Martin McDonagh (Ints)

Reading 1, Isaiah 41:13-20

Responsorial Psalm, 145, Gospel, Matthew 11:11-15

Friday 11 December Advent FERIA

10am Mass CWL Rota Mass

7pm Mass Henry Clancy (RIP)

Reading 1, Isaiah 48:17-19

Responsorial Psalm, 1, Gospel, Matthew 11:16-19

Saturday 12 December Advent FERIA

10am Advent Penitential Service

Reading 1, Ecclesiasticus 48:1-4, 9-12

Responsorial Psalm, 80, Gospel, Matthew 17:10-13

Sunday 13 December - 3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

6pm Vigil Mass Mickie Clancy (Ann)

9.30am Mass Pat Judge & Caroline Fagen (Ann)

11.30am Mass Angela Anzalone (Ann)

7pm Mass People of the Parish

PLEASE PRAY

Together with Churches together in St Albans, this week we pray for the pastor and members of the New Testament Church of God.

For those suffering with Coronavirus and for all the Sick including

For those who have died recently.

For all those whose anniversaries occur at this time including Linda Peters, Anna Awinti, Conway and Mary Lee Berners-Lee, Mickie Clancy, Pat Judge & Caroline Fagen, Angela Anzalone, Epifanio Funes, Eddie Patino and Patrick McGoohan.

May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed through the mercy of God rest in peace

Liturgy of the Word for Children' online You can download this week's leaflet and activity sheet for children from our website, under [Groups - Liturgy](#) or from the Diocese of Westminster [website](#), where you will also find other useful Advent resources for children and families.

The Feast of the Immaculate Conception - 8 December

The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is that the Virgin Mary was conceived without original sin, nine months before her birth. The doctrine was almost universally believed over the centuries but was only formally defined as a doctrine of the Church by Pope Pius IX in 1854. Because it is so old, it is one of the Marian doctrines that Islam shares with the Catholic Church, though, of course, the theological details are very different.

Missionaries of the Sacred Heart There are several feast days in honour of Our Lady this week. December 8 also marks the foundation date in 1854 of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart when, following a novena to Mary, an anonymous donation enabled Fr Jules to establish in Issoudun, France the first formation house for the MSCs.

Fr Tom Hewitt MSC Facing on to the Cricket Pitch in Clarence Park the bench renovated in Fr Tom's memory has proved a positive aspect of the recent lockdown. Many parishioners have searched it out and used it as a meeting point. Certainly I have enjoyed sitting on it, taking in the view, and meeting parishioners as I do. I have heard much about Fr Tom and am sure he would have delighted in a bench that draws people together. When, in early 2019, parishioners made donations to fund a bench in Fr Tom's memory, nearly £2,500 was raised. The new bench cost just under £500 leaving a surplus of nearly £2,000 and the question of what to do. The suggestion at a recent Parish Pastoral Council was to donate the remaining monies to a charity which Fr Tom would have supported. I suspect that Fr Tom will be remembered fondly for a good many years ahead so my intention is to retain £750 for a future refurbishment. However, Fr Tom was greatly involved with our parish SVP. Since we have had no collection for the SVP this year I propose to donate what remains to our SVP, specifically for the families they have traditionally supported at Christmas. If you made a donation towards Fr Tom's bench and are not happy for the remaining funds to be used in this way please contact me. Fr Michael.