



Ellesmere
Port
Parish

December 2023 newsletter



I was asked on Tuesday afternoon what was the difference between Lent and Advent and of course there is a difference! We look at Advent as a time of preparation – preparing to celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, but also a time to prepare ourselves for his return.

As we enter the period of Advent can I encourage you in all the busyness of this season to take time for yourself, time to step out from the busyness and spend time with God waiting on him. Advent begins our journey through this very special season of preparation and expectation as we prepare to celebrate the coming of Christ in his incarnation whilst looking ahead to the time when he shall return and so do join us for our 3 Advent meditations – a time of peace and quiet and a time for you and God in amongst the tinsel and lights.

Also, as we enter Advent I pray that we would not just focus on the negative news that is gripping the world but remember the many ways that God has blessed us personally and as a church this year and always carrying the thought in our hearts that we live in hope – great hope and of course that hope is in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Life gets very busy in December, life inside the church and life outside of the church, however, can I please encourage you to make the most of this season in sharing the good news of the birth of Jesus. We have lots going on so please do let friends and neighbours know and invite them along.

News from Gemma, our Community Development Worker:

Thank you's! - Once again thank you to all the Toms Tots team - the group continues to flourish, and numbers are fantastic. We had a visit from Pudsey bear thanks to our community worker Adele from Asda, and the children enjoyed a Teddy Bears Picnic (I think the adults enjoyed it too!). Thank you to those who have stepped up to join the team following my plea for new volunteers, the more the merrier so it isn't too late to join in the fun!



Thank you to everyone who has become a Co-op member and has selected us as their cause. We have started to collect funds, so I am pleased to see that we have supporters out there enjoying the benefits of their new membership. If you are yet to become a Co-op member and wish to know more, please do come and speak to me, I am happy to help you sign up online, or alternatively, if you go instore, they are able to help you too. Remember you can gain benefits with your membership, whilst also supporting our cause.

Christmas Community time:

Community Christmas Trees! Please see the attached instructions and available printable options for our community Christmas tree project. We aim with this project to spread prayer throughout our community throughout the Christmas season, and to make this project a success, the more people involved, the better! So, have a read of what to do, and either print the option you would like to put in your home/office window, or collect a printed version from Church, and let's all work together to fill our community with prayer this Christmas time.

Christmas food hampers - We will be delivering 195 food hampers to families for the Christmas holiday period. This is the largest number of hampers we have ever had requested, and I feel it is an unfortunate sign of how the current cost of living crisis is impacting upon our community. In order to achieve this task, it takes a lot of hard work and dedication, so thank you to the FIG team for all the background work that has already taken place. Our food delivery is due on Tuesday 5th December. Volunteers to support with the unloading of the food, and the collection at Aldi would be much appreciated. As you can imagine, there will be a lot of food to fill so many bags. We will then be packing the hampers on Wednesday 6th December, and again, all hands-on deck and as much support as possible would be appreciated. We will be packing in the church hall this time - please do come along if you are able to help. We also add some extra treats in our Christmas hampers for families, some additional Christmas bits for the children to enjoy. If you are in a position to make a financial donation to support our work with the food hampers, donations can be made via BACS with the reference FIG, or on the Sum up machine or in cash at Sunday services. Thank you.

Christmas Craft Activity Afternoon - Tuesday 19th December - 3-5.30pm - fun for all the family. We will be hosting another event for our families to join, with Christmas crafts, food, and a visit from Father Christmas!!! This will be a fantastic way to get in the Christmas spirit with our families, and we would love for as many of our church family as possible to be involved. If you are available to support with a craft, in the kitchen, serving some food, setting up before the event, clearing away afterwards, all support makes these events run smoothly, and it takes a team of people to ensure the event is a success. Plus, our families report back how much they enjoy meeting members of the church family and spending time together, and it is a real blessing to be able to enjoy this experience, and to further spread the light and love of Jesus within our community. So, if you are available to join us and support in any way on this day, please do let me know, it would be great to have as many people join in as possible. I think we may even sing a few Christmas carols!

Finally - The Beacon Project! Please do come along to the Beacon Project stall at the Christmas Fair to find out what it is all about, where things are up to, and to see our fantastic new merchandise that will be for sale, with all proceeds going towards the project. It is so exciting to be able to share news with you about this, so please do come along and find out more!

A big thank you to all who supported the Hot Pot Supper and quiz night. A total of £475 was raised which will go towards the cost of pantomime tickets for those children who attend Ignite and ABC.

Also, to those who enjoyed the bacon butty morning a total of £243 was raised which will be going to Forum Housing, and their gift for a stranger initiative at Christmas.

Dates for December

Friday 1		Christmas Fair set up in St Thomas
Saturday 2	11am – 2pm	Christmas Fair in St Thomas
Sunday 3	10.45am	Café Church – ADVENT
Tuesday 5	4.30pm	Food delivery at St Thomas – help would be appreciated in loading food at Aldi, Ellesmere Port and unloaded at St Thomas please
Wednesday 6	9am 7.30pm	Food hamper packing at St Thomas Church Hall Advent reflections in St Thomas Church
Friday 8	10am	Coffee morning at 4 Horstone Gardens CH66 2JL Tickets £3 – available from Liz Blair
Wednesday 13	2pm 7.30pm	Christmas Tea at Two in coffee lounge Advent reflections in St Thomas Church
Friday 15	1pm	PALS Christmas Lunch in church hall – booking essential
Saturday 16	10.30am 5pm	Carol Singing in Port Arcades – with an invite to join everyone for a coffee and a mince pie at Trinity Church afterwards. Pop Up cinema in St Thomas
Sunday 17	10.45am 11am 6.30pm	Nativity Service at St Thomas Nativity Service at St Lawrence - ABC Carol Service at St Lawrence
Tuesday 19	3pm	Christmas Craft & Fun afternoon at St Thomas for families in the community
Wednesday 20	2pm	Advent reflections in St Thomas
Thursday 21	7pm	Blue Christmas Service at St Thomas
Saturday 23	10 am	Christingle making in coffee lounge
Christmas Eve	9am 11am 4 pm	Service of Holy Communion at St Thomas Service of Holy Communion at St Lawrence Christingle Service
Christmas Eve	11.30 pm	Christmas Eve Communion at St Thomas and St Lawrence
Christmas Day	10 am	Christmas Day Communion at St Thomas and St Lawrence
New Years Day	10am 11am	Service of Holy Communion at St Thomas Service of Holy Communion at St Lawrence

St Lawrence News

A big thank you to Eunice Holt for her sterling work in keeping the 11am service with accompaniment since Jonathan's accident, thankfully Jonathan has healed well and is returning to play on December 3rd.

We will be celebrating two 90th birthdays on 10th December - Jeanette and Sherry are sorting a short tea after service to celebrate their fathers' pending big birthdays.

We are hosting the Women's Institute Carol Service on Thursday 7 December and so hopefully the Christmas tree will be in place by then and then final pre-Christmas Church decorating will take place on Saturday 16 December. ABC will be presenting their nativity on 17 December and so we look forward to welcoming them to the 11am service. *Jan & Jane*

I am very aware that we've asked much of our church family in recent weeks, and so I want to say 'thank you' to all who have contributed to our various initiatives, either by donation or by volunteering. Our Advent and Christmas activities could not take place without church members giving of their time and their treasure.

I do hope that you will all have a very blessed Christmas. My prayer is, like so many in the Christmas story, you will be 'surprised by God' this season and experience both his blessing and his peace.

With love and prayers in this very special season.

Gill