

Welcome to our weekly newsletter. We hope you enjoy your time at St James' and we look forward to seeing you again next week.

Thank you for your offerings last week of £1,436. Mass attendance 764.

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| 15th December (Saturday Vigil) | Third Sunday of Advent 6pm Eileen & Donald McArthur (E McArthur) |
| Sunday 16th December | 9.15am People of the Parish 11am Margaret Walsh RIP (Benson family) |
| Monday 17th December | Feria 9.30am Bill Morley (Howell Family) |
| Tuesday 18th December | Feria 9.30am Charles Faria RIP (J Craen) |
| Wednesday 19th December | Feria 9.30am Donal O'Mullane RIP (Wharton Family) 10.45am Eucharist Adoration |
| Thursday 20th December | Feria 9.30am Eileen Patrick & William Keane RIP (P Farrant) |
| Friday 21th December | Feria 9.30am Mick Brace RIP (Tomkin Family) |
| 22nd December (Saturday Vigil) | Fourth Sunday of Advent 6pm Seamus & the O'Mahony Family (Confirmation Catechists & Confirmandi) |
| Sunday 23rd December | 9.15am KSC Widows (L Thomas) 11am Terence Quinlan RIP (E Quinlan) |

Confessions are heard on Saturday, 5.00-5.45pm, or by appointment.

Morning Prayer takes place Monday – Friday at 9.10am. All are welcome to attend.

Pondering the Word (*Lectio Divina*) - A quiet reflective look at the following Sunday's Gospel. Mondays 11am-12 noon, except for Bank Holidays, here in the Church. All are welcome.

Rosary – Every day after Mass there is rosary. All are welcome.

Second Collection

This weekend, the second collection will be for our Parish maintenance fund.

Fr David writes

Ahmed Joudah, a twenty six year old ballet dancer from Yarmouk camp in Damascus, said that it was not easy to achieve his dream. He had major disagreements with his father over it. However, he insisted on achieving it and he continued his education in theatre and danced at the Higher Institute of Dramatic Arts in Damascus. During the war, Joudah was teaching the children in the camp dancing and ballet, however he received death threats from ISIS. Joudah went out of Yarmouk with his mother, because of the painful siege imposed on the camp in 2012. He lived near the camp, leaving his memories in the streets of Yarmouk, where he was dancing amidst its lanes. In 2014, Ahmed was invited to join the Arabic version of "So you think you can Dance" in Lebanon, he was fortunate to reach the semi-finals. But then he was told that he would not be able to win because he was a Palestinian-Syrian, which came as a shock to him. He did not lose hope and returned to Damascus to complete his education at the Higher Institute where he was asked to design a series of dances for dance festivals in the Syrian Opera House.

Joudah's story attracted the attention of a Dutch journalist who went to Damascus to shoot a documentary about him in 2016. Ahmed appeared in front of the camera dancing on the ruins of his home in Yarmouk refugee camp. That was what he wished for. He also went to Palmyra with the Dutch journalist to film him dancing on the old Roman Theatre, the site that witnessed the mass executions carried out by ISIS against the civilians in Palmyra. "Dancing at the Palmyra Theatre was my way in defying ISIS. I told them you could take our lives, but you would not stop us from dancing. This theatre was made for art and not for murder," said Ahmed. After showing the documentary in the Netherlands, it attracted the attention of many dancing schools in Europe. The Dutch National Ballet's director decided to create a fund called "Dancing for Peace" to enable Joudah to go to the Netherlands to dance and study. He is currently completing his studies at the University of Amsterdam and works as a dancer in the Dutch National Ballet, in addition to his work as a dance instructor at a ballet school in Amsterdam.

There is nothing quite so puzzling as someone else's joy when we are feeling down. Or someone else's sadness while we are feeling on top of the world. The ultimate puzzle though is when people are joyful in the midst of suffering and desolation, when people dance among the ruins that surround them, refusing to be locked into an environment of despair. When I saw the documentary of Ahmed on social media last year, I was truly blown away by his determination and inner freedom in the midst of adversity. I saw courage and passion in his eyes. I found his story very moving and inspirational. Like Zephaniah the prophet in the first reading, calling through the slums of a defeated Jerusalem for a grand party to celebrate the real fortune of the people. Like St Paul in the second reading, a prisoner in a cell awaiting his approaching death and writing letters to cheer other people up. Like John the Baptist in the gospel today, a wilderness voice in occupied territory announcing Good News to his own country people.

What was the reason for this joy in the midst of persecution and despair? What is it that keeps us as humans joyful in the midst of suffering? Zephaniah, Paul and John the Baptist shared one belief: that the Lord was very near. God's nearness didn't act as a threat to them but funded them with a radical source of joy that no one could steal from them. Not even the executioner. Their joy in the closeness of God gave an edge to their preaching exhorting others to make ready. It gave them a vision to see the far side of disaster. It moved them to draw others into that sense of joy. None of them was enclosed in his own joy. Each moved out hoping his inner joy would be catching.

People journeyed into the wilderness to meet and hear John because he was a magnetic character who intrigued people to seek him out and also follow him. People asked him "What must we do then?" and John's answer is to challenge people's generosity and sense of fairness so that others may have reason to rejoice. Give bread to the hungry and clothes to those who have none. When the tax collectors ask what to do, John tells them to keep to the going rate without overtaxing people in order to cream off the extra money for themselves. People are burdened enough. Be just he told them. To the soldiers he said not to use their position as a weapon for their own reward. Be content with your pay and stop stealing from the poor and weak. John exhorts them to be happy in doing what is just.

We all need a power that carries us through difficult times, that prods us on when we face the reality of our weakness and limitation. To believe in the abiding presence of a God who cares and gives us a deep sense of joy in the midst of our own grappling in life. As we continue our Advent journey, we are invited to reflect on our times of disorientation and pain. Do we collapse and become resentful? What are the resources which keeps us going through? Does the realisation that God is with us sustains us along the way?

“Drop-In” Evening Surgeries – The next drop in surgery with Fr David will be on **Tuesday 22nd January 2019 between 5pm-7pm**. No appointment needed.

Christmas Fair

Many, many thanks to everyone who contributed to or helped with the Christmas Fair. Not only did the hall and stalls look beautiful but there was a wonderful community spirit present throughout the day. As an added bonus we raised £2300 on the day with the raffle adding a further £515. What a magnificent effort. This money will go towards the project that is aiming to improve the back of the church. This is an exciting development so look out for further details!

Advent – Prepare ye the way of the Lord

Advent Carol Service – Sunday 16th December 4pm

Advent Reflection Service - Led by Fr David Camilleri, Thursday 20th December 8pm

Christmas

The Christmas cards for Petts Wood Churches Together are here. Please take a bundle and deliver them to the houses in your road, if you safely can. Thank you.

Religious advent calendars, Christmas cards and the like are now on sale in the repository and from the stall in the church porch after all Sunday Masses.

Gifts on Christmas Day

At all Christmas Masses you are invited to bring a gift of a brand-new toy to put around the Christmas tree. This year we are supporting Great Ormond Street Hospital, who are looking forward to receiving toys/gifts for boys and girls aged 0 - 16. They have asked that we do not donate stuffed animals/teddies but are in special need of sensory toys for children aged 0-1 years old and toys for children ages 14-16 years. We know you will be generous as always.

Help Sofia (Twinkle Toes) raise money for Great Ormond Street Hospital...

Sofia Cotta, Stuart & his daughter Zoe will be kick starting their new year (13th Jan) with a cool 20km ‘winter walk’ across the streets & bridges of London, along with 2000 others to raise money for GOSH. Zoe (now 14yrs old) has been an in & out patient of GOSH since she was born with a rare condition called Goldenhar, and so very keen now that she’s able, to give something back. Please help us support them on this chilly experience! Sponsorship form for their Team: “Twinkle Toes” will be at the back of church.

Evangelisation Pillar

Confirmation 2019

The second preparation session is on Monday 17th December from 7.00pm-8.30pm.

A DATE FOR YOUR 2019 DIARY

From **10th to 16th March** next year we are holding another **Week of Accompanied Prayer**. Previously, such Weeks have been really appreciated.

Details of the Week will be published in the New Year, but in the meantime you are invited to **note the Week in your 2019 diary**.

Eucharist Adoration – Be Still in the Presence of the Lord. Your time set aside in your hectic life – wasting time in silence with God. Takes place for an hour **each Wednesday** shortly after the Morning Mass and the Wednesday Café starting at 10.45am and finishing with Benediction at 11.45am.

First Friday of the Month. A time of silent meditation in an evocative atmosphere created by soft background music and candles. From 7.30pm till 9.00pm. The **next will be on Friday 4th January.** *All are welcome for all or part of this time of Adoration ending with Benediction.*

Pilgrimage/Cultural tour to Oberammergau & Salzburg – 25th May to 30th May 2020

We are organising a pilgrimage/ culture tour to Oberammergau for May 2020. This is the famous Passion play that is performed every 10 years. We need to establish the level of interest and potential numbers so please contact the parish office if you are interested.

Social Pillar

New Year's Eve Party

Tickets are now available at the back of church for the New Year's Eve Party. Take one to reserve your place and pay on the night.

Looking forward to another wonderful parish event.

Parent and Toddler Group

The St James parent and toddler group has reopened on Friday afternoons between 1.30pm-3.30pm. £2.50 per family.

Monday Craft Club

The next Craft club will be on Monday 14th January 2019.

Liturgy Pillar

Children's Mass

We are looking for someone to co-ordinate the children's readers' rota for the children's mass once a month. Please contact the parish office for more information.

Music Workshop

We invite all music lovers to our next workshop which is being held in the Community Centre on 26th January, led by Meg Shepherd. Please put this date in your diaries.

Children's Liturgy

Please note Children's Liturgy will NOT be on when there is a Church Parade Mass. If you would like to lead or help please contact Hannah via email: childrens.liturgy@stjamespettswood.org

Children's Choir, Christmas Day 9:15 Mass.

Calling all kids year 2 and up to help sing for the Christmas 9:15 Mass. We need your voices to get into the Christmas Spirit!

There will be several practice sessions where we will sing through the songs. We are singing songs which will be familiar to the children. To make this as convenient as possible, sessions are 10:20am - 10:50am (between the two Masses) in the side room of the Parish Hall. Parents could have a coffee/tea while we sing through the hymns.

Sessions:

10:20am - 10:50am December 16th

If you are interested, please give your names to youthchoir.stjames@gmail.com so we have an idea of numbers.

Christmas Choir

Our Advent service will be held **this Sunday 16th December at 4pm**, and on **Christmas Eve**, we will start with carols **at 11.30pm followed by Midnight Mass.**

200 Club Winners

£500 Ann O'Reilly Number 68

£200 Jackie Cosgrave Number 10

£200 Miriam Gustafikova Number 108

£100 Kathryn Salter Number 155

Congratulations to our Christmas winners.

We would like to thank Ken Evans for all his hard work organising the 200 Club.

However, there are still places available for any new parishioners or late comers. Please [contact Ken Evans](#) for details.

Thank You from Bethany

I would like to thank everyone who purchased items from my fundraising Christmas Goodies stall on Sunday. Together we raised £99.20 from this event alone. I have now raised £3,084 towards my £5,000 target for my World Challenge Expedition to Costa Rica in Summer 2019.

Many thanks, Bethany Towell.

Justice & Peace

Foodbank donations

The response of many generous parishioners, to the appeal for Christmas food and goodies, has been amazing. For the last three weeks our collections have been full of mince pies, puddings, assorted biscuits, cakes, chocolates, crisps and lots more. Special thanks to the person who donated £30 of Tesco vouchers. The Foodbank organisers have packed the hampers and now must revert to ordinary foods and household goods. So please use this list until further notice: **cold meat, cooking sauce, tinned potatoes, custard, rice pudding, male and female razors, shaving foam, washing-up liquid, large nappies (size 5 and 6), and shampoo.** J&P Group.

Message from CAFOD

Lend Your Voice to help our global family

Do you enjoy inspiring people by giving talks and presentations or would you like to learn? Are you free two weekends a year to inspire others with stories of CAFOD's work with people facing poverty and injustice? How about joining our team of CAFOD volunteer speakers across Southwark Archdiocese? Your passion and skills will bring CAFOD's work to life and get more people involved in making the world a fairer place. For more information and to book on our next training day on Saturday 16 February in Waterloo, please email southwark@cafod.org.uk or call 020 8466 9901.

Pastoral Pillar

St James The Great 'Memory Café'

Here at St James we run a Dementia Café on the first two Tuesdays of each month from 2pm to 3.30pm in the Community Centre. This is a time for guests with dementia and their carers to come for refreshments and a chat in a comfortable and safe environment and if they wish, join in with activities such as quizzes, games and music. If you would like to know more, please contact: pastoral.care@stjamespettswood.org or telephone the Parish Office: 01689 827100. **We look forward to welcoming you.**

Helplines and Counselling Services.

A list of helplines and counselling services is available on our website, and in the church porch, for anyone who might need this.

Finance Pillar

Fundraising by shopping online

Several parishioners over the last few years have helped the parish by raising donations through easyfundraising.org.uk. Recently we reached the milestone of £3,000, for which we thank everyone who has made purchases that way. Over 3,400 retailers including Amazon, eBay, M&S, John Lewis, Argos, Booking.com, tour operators, now make donations on every purchase (from 0.5% to 5% of cost). The top supporter parishioner has raised £388 (all transactions are completely anonymous), so why not embrace the idea and help St James'? To get started, follow the item on the left menu bar of the parish website. Once you've registered, you have the option to install an automatic donation reminder in your browser to make sure no purchase misses its reward. Any questions, please contact roger.wright@stjamespettswood.org. Thank you

Polite Reminders

Parking

- The Parish disabled parking spaces are for Blue Badge holders only.
- Please be aware of our neighbours in the surrounding roads, please do not block driveways or double-park your car.

In Church

Please refrain from eating and drinking while you are in church.

Seeing a Chaplain if You Are Admitted to Hospital

- **Protecting personal information** (data protection) is really important when you become an inpatient in hospital.
- **So please specifically ask hospital staff to pass on your details** to the hospital's Roman Catholic chaplain as soon as you are admitted if you would like a Chaplain to visit you.
- **Fr David would always be very happy** to visit you too, so please ask a relative or friend to let him know about your admission. You, or they, can email Fr David on: father.david@stjamespettswood.org, or phone the parish office on 01689 827100.

Rotas for this week: *Thank you for helping*

Weekend 22nd/23rd December

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| Cleaning the Church | Altar Servers/ Readers |
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Wednesday Coffee

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| S Barradell, M Howell, B D'Arcy |
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16th December 2018

| Mass | Saturday 6pm (Vigil) | Sunday 9.15am | Sunday 11am |
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| Welcomers | T Connolly | L&J Samuels | L McDonald S May |
| Readers | J Bajorek M O'Mahony | Children's Mass | Z Bajorek R Del Guercio |
| Ministers of Holy Communion | P Driscoll T Babb B Babb R Wright J Gribben | W David T Forde M Howell S Cotta A Ward | T troy A Bunnage P Murray V Terry N Longhurst |
| Bar | | | M Smith N Longhurst |

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|----------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Coffee | | D Delf F Curran E Aletta | J Cosgrave T Troy |
| Altar Servers | Roisin Fintan Peter Nathan | Zoe Lydia | Francis Emily Paulina |
| Tellers | P Cosgrave, T Dabrowski | | |