

December 2023 & January 2024

Together in Wotton

Christians living, working and worshipping together in
Wotton under Edge

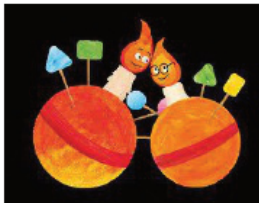


Christingle service at
St. Mary's Church, Wotton-under-Edge

Christmas Eve

Two services to choose from
4.00pm-5.00pm or 5.30pm-6.30pm
A warm welcome to everyone to come and
join in with this very special Christmas
event in aid of

The Children's Society



All St. Mary's activities and services over the
Christmas period are on wottonparishchurch.org.uk
or St. Mary's Wotton Facebook page



Year 6+ youth Drop-in

Games, snooker, Wii, tuck

2nd December

4-8pm

Wotton Baptist Church



As we journey towards Christmas this Advent season, Blue Coat staff and pupils will be joyfully preparing lines, costumes and songs for the Christmas Nativity Plays. Our younger pupils will be performing an 'Out of the Ark' musical called 'The Inn-spectors'. The play has lots of humour and is taken from the unusual perspective of examining the condition of the stable by a team of inn-spectors who are not impressed to say the least! They consider it a health and safety nightmare ...is the stable fit for visitors and a newborn baby King? The play develops and follows the main characters as they try to convince the in-spectors that the stable is fit for purpose!

St. Mary's church will once again be the place where our school community gathers to rejoice in Jesus' birth and our Junior children will deliver a more traditional service full of readings, carols and drama sketches. We are hoping that Rev'd Lesley's 'Sidney Scarecrow' will make another appearance!

Across the school RE lessons, Collective Worship and Open the Book, will focus on the core concept of Incarnation. We will be looking closely at The New Testament and how it presents Jesus as the answer — the Messiah and Saviour, who will repair the effects of sin and the Fall and offer a way for humans to be at one with God again. The concept that Jesus is God in the flesh is a challenging one for children (and adults!) to grasp but you would be amazed at how well children can articulate their curiosity and understanding. Rev'd Lesley, Rev's Phil and Rev'd Tom will put claim to this as during their visits to school they are asked some deep and meaningful questions about faith and life!

Each year we build on previous knowledge and by the time pupils reach Year Six they:

UNDERSTAND the text of the Christmas story in the Bible
DISCOVER what Christians do at Christmas and where
EXPLORE our local churches to find out how Christians worship
LEARN why Jesus came to us as the 'Light of the World'

The Gloucestershire Diocesan Education Team have chosen a prayer for the family of church schools to read and share with their community. We have been encouraged to find time and space to pray it during the term ahead, creating a web of prayerful fellowship across the Diocesan family.

In the words of **Jane Borgeaud** Director of Education:

"This prayer frames this season as a season of Hope, a word that is simultaneously joyful and alert to the challenges facing our world, our communit-

Praying for the Churches

In December we pray for Holy Cross and in January for the United Church. Please pray for priests. Catholic dioceses are struggling because of a lack of priests. Many are retiring because they are 75. Pray that more men will come forward to be ordained and that the church will adapt to fewer priests. Give thanks for the new parishioners at Holy Cross and Christ the King. God bless them in their new parishes and help them to feel welcome. Thanks for Revd Phil Summers' ministry in Wotton and that as he moves on later in 2024 God will continue to use him, and that He will also show the United Church the way forward.

Thank you to everyone who supported the Christmas Bazaar at the Oliver Memorial Chapel. Local Charities benefitted to the tune of £630 thanks to your generosity.





ies and the individuals within them at this time. The refrain of the prayer calls us to remember that we are loved, recognising that it is that love in which we may find hope through short days and long nights.”

The Season of Hope

In this season of hope

We remember your love.

Through long days and short days

We remember your love.

In wind, rain and wet days

We remember your love.

As we get ready for Christmas

We remember your love.

Lord, we have something to look forward to

Help us remember those who have very little.

Amen

To mark the start of Advent, the first candle of ‘Hope’ will be lit on the wreath during Collective Worship. Wherever you are, we invite you to join

with us to say our advent prayer ... Monday 4th December between 2.45pm and 3.10pm.

We hope that your time of advent will be filled with hope as this season progresses.

On behalf of Blue Coat School, I wish you all a Very Happy Christmas

Jane Blaken

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2024

Traditionally we have held the Wotton Week of Prayer over the Octave of St Peter and St Paul, 18 - 25 January each year.

Although Christian Unity is very much at the forefront of what is being done by Churches Together in Wotton, the prayer meetings have never been well-attended, possibly because going out, even for half an hour, on a cold January evening is not very appealing.

So in 2024 we are moving it to Pentecost. Whit Sunday is on 19 May, and we would meet throughout the following week.

More details closer to the time.



Have you bought your Christmas Stamps yet?

As the years pass the number of Christmas Cards I post decreases – but I will not stop altogether. Emails and e-cards are not the same.

In 2023 the Royal Mail Christmas Stamps are again Christian images. I don't know if any of my friends and family actually look at the envelope, but I still feel it is a small piece of Christian witness.

And if when you look out the cards left over from last year you find you still have a few 2022 stamps without those silly barcodes, don't worry: you can still use them.



What's on in DECEMBER?

The Keepers is a community hub supporting the residents of Wotton and surrounding areas. It is here for everyone. Either come along to one of the organised groups below, or just pop in for a chat and a cuppa - whenever we are open. Come as you are, bring what you can and take what you need.

Monday

Parent Support Group - a support group by parents for parents. 9:15am - 10:45am

Citizens Advice - to book an appointment call 0800 800510/511 or just drop in. 11th December. 10am - 2pm

Age UK Gloucestershire - a social group for those who are 50+. 11am - 12:30pm

Age UK Gloucestershire Help Team - drop in and ask questions about any aspect of later life. No booking needed. 4th December. 11am - 12:30pm

Chair Yoga - join in with some gentle, supportive yoga. Open to all. No booking is needed. Pay As You Feel (PAYF). 1:30pm - 2:30pm

After School Drop In - reading, games and toast available. Children to come with an accompanying adult. Also runs through the holidays. 3pm - 4pm

Menopause Support Group - a peer support group for those affected by menopause. 4th December. 7pm - 8:30pm

Tuesday

The Keepers' Garden - the garden is open - come along to plant, dig, weed, sit or just chat with our gardener. Refreshments provided. 10am - 12pm

The Carers' Café - run by Healthcare Assistants from Culverthay and Chipping surgeries. Coffee, chat and advice if needed. Just drop in. Carers can come by themselves or bring the person they care for. 5th and 19th December. 10:30am - 12:30pm

CONNECT (previously called Dementia Connections) - for anyone who would like to make connections, including those living with dementia, long term health conditions, and unpaid carers. Activities and conversation. 12th December. 10:30am - 12:30pm

Sing 2 Remember - sing together, share memories and make friends. Come and join this supported, dementia-friendly singing session. Just turn up. 5th and 19th December. 10:45am - 11:45am

Tuesday Lunches - come and join us for a warm meal, open to all and Pay As You Feel (PAYF). Spaces are limited, so to book a space please call 07585 466418 or pop in to find out what's on the menu! 12:30pm - 1:30pm

The Keepers' Car Club is also running on Tuesdays to provide transport from your home to the hot lunches. Places are limited so to book please call 07585 466418 or pop in.

Rainbow Cuppa (NEW) - all LGBTQ+ folk and allies welcome to join us for a relaxed chat, coffee or bring a craft along. 12th December. 2:00pm - 3:30pm

Ukulele group - open to beginners and those who already play. Come along and join in. 5th and 19th December. 2:15pm - 3:15pm

Wednesday

Drop In Café - all welcome on a Pay As You Feel basis. 10am - 12pm

Craft and Chat with tea and cake - held fortnightly on 6th and 20th. Come and have a go at Kumihimo and pom-pom keyrings or bring your own creative project! 10am - 12pm

P3 Drop In - help with a range of issues e.g. housing, debt and benefit support. No booking needed. 10am - 12pm

Job Club - help with CVs and employment support. Drop in, no booking required. 10am - 12pm

Stroud District Council Housing Officer Drop In - pop in and talk to Rachel. 10:30am - 11:30am

Health Visitor Drop In - available to weigh babies and answer any questions. Next drop in is on 6th December. 10am - 12pm

Gloucestershire Real Nappy Project will be visiting, a great chance to find out about washable nappies. 6th December. 10am - 12pm

Men's Shed - talk about the projects they're working on and discuss yours. 13th December. 10am - 12pm

NO Wotton Area Neurodivergent Support group (WANDS) - a group run by, and for, ND adults and parents/carers of ND children including Autism, ADHD, PDA, Dyslexia etc. The next meeting is on 31st January. 7pm - 9pm

Talk Club - a new talking and listening club for men to help keep mentally fit. 6th and 20th December. 7pm - 8:30pm

Thursday

Lloyds Bank - drop in for basic transactions such as account balance, direct debit, standing order and bill payment enquiries for both personal and business account customers. No cash services are available. 9:30am - 3pm

Wotton Area Neurodivergent Support group (WANDS) - a group run by, and for, ND adults and parents/carers of ND children including Autism, ADHD, PDA, Dyslexia etc. 14th December. 9:30am - 11:00am

Wotton Area Breast Support Group - anyone touched by breast cancer is invited to drop in and meet others who know just how it feels. The next meeting is on 21st December. 10am - 11am

Qigong - meditation, breathing and gentle movement. No booking is needed. Pay As You Feel. 12pm - 1pm

Independence Trust and NHS social prescribers' Drop In - help to connect and grow in confidence. Just drop in, no appointment needed. 11am - 1pm

Welcome Space - run by the Independence Trust and CALMHS - a space to talk and be listened to. Call 01453 767999 to book. 1:30pm - 3:30pm

Menopause Support Group - a peer support group for those affected by menopause. Usually runs on the 3rd Thursday of the month - NOT in December. 7pm - 8:30pm

French For Beginners/The Terrified (NEW) - an informal French conversation group. Come along and join in. 7:30pm - 8:30pm

Friday

The Keepers' Garden - the garden is open - Come along to plant, dig, weed, sit or just chat with our gardener. Refreshments provided. 10am - 12pm

Drop In Café - all welcome on a Pay As You Feel basis. This cafe is quieter than a Wednesday, the tables are spaced apart, board games available if wanted. 11:30am - 12:30pm

OPENING TIMES

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday:
9.00am - 4.00pm

Wednesday and Friday:
9.00am - 1.00pm

CLOSED on 26th and 28th December

CHRISTMAS

2nd December
Christmas under The Edge - Santa and Town Hall Teas. 4pm - 8pm

23rd December
Cafe with carols. 10:00am - 12pm (carols 10:45am - 11:15am)

25th December
Christmas lunch. Booking required. 11:45am - 2:00pm

27th December
Cafe with cake and soup. 10:00am - 12:30pm

29th December
Cafe with cake and soup. 10:00am - 12:30pm

Please check the weekly timetables on the website as some activities will not run in the last two weeks of December.



It's important to us that everyone is included, the Hub is accessible to all and we work in collaboration with other local organisations.
www.thekeepers.org.uk Reg Charity No. 1192121



Coming soon to Wotton Baptist Church:

Monday 11 December at 7.30pm Concert with Common Voices and Round the Edge Community Choir in aid of Home Start Stroud and Gloucester

Wednesday 13 December Concert with the Oriana Singers

Friday 22 December Wotton Dramatic Society present 'A Holly Jolly Christmas'

An Alpha Course will commence in the new year, likely launch date will be 11 January

**Candle-lit Carols at Ozleworth
6pm - Monday 18 December**



Remembrance at Dryleaze Saturday Club

On Saturday 11 November Rev. Phil Summers led a quiet reflective service remembering all those who had fought for our freedoms at great cost, giving thanks for them and looking forward as well with hope for peace in the future. After a hymn and prayers the Last Post was sounded, followed after a short silence with Reveille. Phil read some poems from different eras which looked at war from varying perspectives and also referred to a number of quotations from the Bible including from the Beatitudes. Prayers were said for peace in our troubled world and in particular for those peoples involved in conflict at the moment. May the freedoms we enjoy continue.

Absent friends and those who were unable to attend because of ill health were kindly remembered.



No afternoon would be complete without the refreshments provided regularly by the Ladies from the United Church. Many thanks to them and also to the afternoon's musicians (on cornet and piano). Thank you too to Phil for guiding our thoughts at this particular time.

Mary George

Photo: the Remembrance Table at Dryleaze

The Dryleaze Saturday Club Christmas Event will be on Saturday 9 December from 2.30 - 4.30pm There will be games, carols, refreshments, Rev. Summers' Christmas message and a visit from Santa!

The following meeting will be on Saturday 13 January.

This is open to all.

Holy Communion at Dryleaze House.

There will be a Christmas Communion Service on Wednesday 20 December at 11.00 am in the Lounge. Everyone welcome to attend this quiet half hour of hymns, prayers, Communion and reflective thoughts. Friends and families will be remembered in prayer especially those who are unwell or have other difficulties. A looking forward to a festive season of happiness and peace.

The New Year will be celebrated at a Communion Service on Wednesday 17 January 2024 at 11.00 am in the Lounge. Hymns, prayers, Communion and thoughts of families and friends will start the New Year, coupled with hopes for health and peace in the coming months. A warm welcome is extended to everyone.

Your Christmas Card from the Churches should (if you live in the town) be with you soon and will list most of the services and events as shown below.



Special Services and events for Christmas 2023

Sunday 3rd December

6.00pm: Advent Service of Darkness to Light - *St Mary's*

Sunday 10th December

4.00pm: Children's Advent – *St. Mary's*

Sunday 17th December

5.00pm: Carol Service – *Oliver Memorial Chapel*

6.00pm: 9 lessons & Carols – *St. Mary's*

6.00pm: Carols by Candlelight – *United Church*

6.30pm: Carol Service - "Hope for Everyone" – *Baptist Church*

Saturday 23rd December

5.00pm: Mass for Sunday – *Holy Cross*

Christmas Eve, Sunday 24th December

9.30am: Family Service – *St. Mary's*

10.15am: Christmas Eve Sunday Worship – *United Church*

10.15am: Morning Service – *Oliver Memorial Chapel*

10.30am: Sunday Service – *Baptist Church*

4.00pm: Christingle Service – *St. Mary's*

5.00pm: Carols followed by Christmas Mass – *Holy Cross*

5.30pm: Christingle Service – *St. Mary's*

9.30pm: Bethlehem Midnight Mass – *St. Mary's*

11.15pm: Midnight Mass – *Oliver Memorial Chapel*

Christmas Day, Monday 25th December

9.30am: Celebrating Christmas Together with Communion- *St Mary's*

10.00am: All Age Christmas Day Service – *Baptist Church*

10.00am: Christmas Mass with live Crib – *Christ the King, Thornbury*

10.15am: Christmas Day Worship - *United Church*

New Year's Eve, Sunday 31st December

11.00am: Benefice Service with Communion & speaker – *St. Mary's*

6.00pm: New Year's Eve Concert – *St. Mary's*



Available at The Ark ...

Some packets of Christmas cards left - individual ones too. Hurry before they're gone!

Special eats available for the next few weeks – Christmas cake, stollen and mince pies.

We have some new Hannah Dunnett coasters, plus cards for all occasions.

Pop in to The Ark, 45, Long Street, W-u-E.

Will you be on your own this Christmas or caring for someone by yourself?

**Join us
around the table for
Christmas lunch**

CHRISTMAS DAY

11.45am - 2pm

The Keepers, Symn Lane, Wotton-under-Edge, GLOS, GL12 7BD

PHONE 07585 466418 OR POP
IN TO BOOK BEFORE 18TH
DECEMBER

In Gaza, Christian and Muslim Palestinians celebrate Christmas together

- So read a headline in Arab News dated 24 December 2022.

At that time About 1,300 Christians, both Greek Orthodox and Latin Catholic, were living in the Gaza Strip. Greek Orthodox Christians celebrate the birth of Christ on 7 January; Latin Catholic Christians on 25 December. These two days are considered official holidays in all public and private institutions. Hamas, it reports, forbids the public observance of Christmas, but has allowed private celebrations in Christian homes and institutions.

The article continues: Christmas trees are available in some shops, as well as decorations, which are bought by Christians and Muslims alike. "Most of my customers for Christmas decorations are Muslims," shop owner Mahmoud Al-Hajj told Arab News.

"My children love the Christmas tree and the lights on it," one customer told Arab News. "We are Muslims, but this time is a time of joy and I want my children to feel it as it is the case in many countries of the world. I have Christian friends in my workplace. We celebrate Christmas together, as well as Eid Al-Fitr, and Eid Al-Adha. We are one people."



And so we pray for peace

'Together in Wotton' is produced on behalf of all the Churches of Wotton under Edge. Items and comments are welcome and should be sent to the Editor Judy Mills judy.mills@live.co.uk

All material for the February edition please by 5pm on Monday 22 January