

Readers for Christmas Masses: If you would like to read at our Christmas Masses— *24th Dec 6pm, midnight Mass 12pm, 25th Dec 9.30am & 11.30am, 26th Dec 10am*—please sign the sheet on the table at the back of the church. Only our parish commissioned readers on the regular rota to sign up please. Many thanks.

Eucharistic Ministers for Christmas Masses: Please sign the sheet at the back of church if you would like to minister at our Christmas Masses.

Catechetical Institute: Every parishioner, as well as teachers and parents has free and unlimited access to the workshops created by the world-renowned Catechetical Institute. From Scripture to parenting workshops, to catechetical training and mentoring, there is something for everyone. For information on how to register your free account visit: <https://aec.rcaos.org.uk/franciscan> or see poster and scan the QR code.

Caritas Southwark has created an **Advent Giving Calendar**, which provides suggestions of items to give to our local foodbank each day during Advent. See poster by Foodbank box in the porch.

On Sale Now!!! Repository: Christmas cards, calendars and advent calendars on sale now in the Repository. Please take time to visit after weekend Masses.

2025 Confirmation candidates & First Holy Communion families are required to sign an attendance register after Mass. Please see the Catechists at the back of the church. Please note: Confirmation Mass will be on Friday 20th June at 7pm.

First Saturday Devotions including praying the Rosary together on 5th January at 9.20am in church. Please join us.

Mass Intentions: If you would like to offer a Mass for an intention, please use the Mass Intention Envelopes available at the back of the church. Please ensure you include your contact number. The recommended stipend (donation) advised by the Archdiocese for a Mass Intention is £10. Your Mass stipend can be gift aided—please complete the gift aid declaration on the reverse of envelope if you are not already signed up to the parish gift aid scheme.

The Christmas Mass Offerings will be for our parish priest (thank-you in advance). There are envelopes on the table at the back of church available. Gift aiders please use the envelope in your box. The Digital Collection Plates in church and online will also be available for Christmas offerings. Thank you.

Support our parish and make your donations to our church go further by signing a valid Gift Aid Declaration form. Go to <https://forms.rcaos.org.uk/giftaid>.

Come and Sing Carols with the other churches in Welling on Saturday 14th December 11am – 12noon outside the Salvation Army Hall, Welling High Street. Carol sheets provided – just come along and join in. A chance to shine our light together!
www.shineyourlight.org.uk

The Divine Mercy Apostolate is holding a *Divine Mercy Retreat* at All Saints Church, 531 Kenton Road, HA3 0UL on Saturday 14 December from 1pm to 4:30pm. The Retreat will include teachings on the Message of Divine Mercy, Holy Mass, Holy Rosary, Hour of Mercy with Adoration and Benediction and Veneration of the Image of Merciful Jesus. For more info call Millie on 07957594646. No need to register – all welcome.

Join our Mailing List: To receive our weekly newsletter by email please email wellingsecretary@rcaos.org.uk to subscribe, include your name and confirm your consent to receive our newsletter. You can unsubscribe at any time by notifying the parish office. Your email address will not be shared and used only to receive our newsletter. Any queries, please contact the parish office.

Archbishop John Wilson issued a statement in response to the vote in the House of Commons concerning the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill, warning of the "*seismic and concerning shift*" in how we care for the vulnerable. To read the statement go to [Vote on assisted suicide 'represents seismic and concerning shift' says Archbishop: Archdiocese of Southwark](#) Paper copies are available on the table in the porch.

SVP & Ink Cartridges: Recycle your old ink cartridges and raise funds for the St Vincent de Paul Society by placing them in the box on the table in the porch (no large cartridges). Many thanks.



ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH

26 DEEPDENE ROAD, WELLING, KENT DA16 3QL ☒ Telephone: 020 8303 4422
Parish Priest: Canon Edward Perera
website: www.saintstephens.co.uk Email: welling@rcaos.org.uk
Secretary: Mrs. Lorraine Harris. email: wellingsecretary@rcaos.org.uk

School: St. Stephen's Primary School, Ruskin Avenue, Welling, Kent. DA16 3QG
Telephone: 020 8303 9738

Third Sunday of Advent (Year B)

Saturday 14th December
5pm Maureen Molloy RIP (M Rush)

Sunday 15th December
9.30am People of the Parish
11.30am Peter Edwards

Mon 16th 10am Feria
Jovito Dias RIP—1st anniv

Tues 17th 10am Feria
Maurice Murphy
7pm Novena Mass

Wed 18th 10am Feria
Barbara Pacheco—birthday
(Joe & Ann DeMello)

Thurs 19th 10am Feria
Birthdays of the Paguntalan Family

Fri 20th 10am Feria
Derek Pollard—wellbeing (P Wall)

Sat 21st 10am Feria
Priest Ints

Sacrament of Reconciliation
10.30am—11am

3pm—4pm Carol Service in Church

Fourth Sunday of Advent (Year B)

Saturday 21st December
5pm Tony O'Reilly RIP (M Rush)

Sunday 22nd December
9.30am Deceased Family Members RIP
(Joe & Ann DeMello)
11.30am People of the Parish

Please remember in your prayers the sick and housebound; at home, in hospital or in residential care.

DONATIONS

All donations are greatly appreciated to help support our church & parish. Thank you.

The offertory collection during Mass on Saturday evening & Sunday morning is for parishioners who wish to donate with their gift aid envelopes or with loose cash. Other methods to donate are via the digital plate in church, online or by standing order. The collection bag will be circulated for second collections.

Donate online at <https://portal.mydona.com/assets/webPay/index.php?cid=236> or <https://justgiving.com/campaign/parishsupport>—please include parish name and location. To set up a standing order to make regular monthly donations see bank details below.

Support our parish and make your donations go further by signing a valid Gift Aid Declaration form. Go to www.rcaos.org.uk/media/xfqfyxyj/welling-planned-giving-and-gift-aid-form.pdf Paper copies of the form are available on the table at the back of the church. You can also join the gift aid scheme by completing an online form at <https://forms.rcaos.org.uk/giftaid>.

NatWest Bank
Sort Code: 51-70-14
Account No. 39013332
Account Name: RCAS Welling
Please use your name as a reference. Thank you.

Digital Collection Plates are at the back of the church. Making a donation is simple and quick. Press one of the donation values or Other Amount. Tap your card or phone on the card reader. Your donation can be gift aided by completing a digital Gift Aid Declaration on the Digital Collection Plate screen (name, address and email address required) and all future donations you make using this card will automatically be recorded as a gift aid donation. A Gift Aid Declaration is required when using the Digital Collection Plate for the first time even if you are already registered for Gift Aid at St Stephen's.

My dear People

Third Sunday of Advent is known as Gaudete Sunday, from the Latin word meaning rejoice. Gaudete is the opening words of the entrance antiphon for this Sunday taken from the letter of St. Paul to the Philippians, today's second reading. On this Sunday we light the rose-coloured candle of the Advent wreath.

The gospel today is the continuation of last Sunday's gospel and resumes the story of John the Baptist. There are two parts to our gospel today. In the first part we notice a summary of John's teaching and in the second part there is an excitement in response to his teaching and a confusion as to the identity of John.

In the first part hearing John's preaching there are three different groups of people come to him for guidance and advice—the ordinary folk, the tax collectors and the soldiers. We note that all these three groups of people are welcomed and whoever they are the message is the same. John's response to all three groups for their question is very simple and the same, that is act with justice and compassion.

The second part of the text—identity of John—is interesting. Is he the expected Messiah who will assume the leadership of Israel. However, John points instead to another figure more powerful than he who will baptise in the Holy Spirit.

John came as one who prepared the way for the Lord. His teaching in a way foreshadows the teaching of Jesus.

God does invite some people to follow him by giving up everything. But for most of us the call to discipleship does not involve such a great upheaval in our lives. The call to discipleship for many of us is a call to be sensitive to the needs of those around us and do what we can to help them.

God bless and love you all.
Canon Edward

Third Sunday of Advent (Year B)

Scripture Insights

Entering the third week of Advent, we remain in expectant preparation for the coming of the Messiah. Yet our focus shifts to joy. Indeed, this is Gaudete Sunday: the Sunday of joy! As John the Baptist continues his ministry of the good news in Luke's Gospel, Paul expounds on his manifesto of rejoicing in the Lord in his letter to the Philippians, and the prophet Zephaniah exhorts all God's people to shout for joy. Today's readings exemplify how looking inside to God for guidance and outside to one another for our mission grounds us in authentic joy in this life.

Writing in the seventh century BC in Jerusalem during the reign of King Josiah, Zephaniah looks ahead to the day of the Lord and living in the kingdom of God. Once God's people are purged of their wrongdoings and short-sighted turning away from God, they will be restored to right relationship with God, who will live in their midst as a mighty saviour. Here we can find true joy, relieved of the burdens of this life, living in unmediated relationship with God. Writing to Christians in first-century Philippi, the apostle Paul reinforces that God's peace is found in laying ourselves bare before our God in relationship with Christ Jesus. This is how we can live in the joy of our innermost selves.

The missionary activity of John the Baptist teaches us to turn this profoundly personal relationship to those we

encounter in the world. Giving from our excess and holding ourselves to a strict integrity are required, even if others do not manifest this joy that radiates from our grounded centre. Thus, we await in hope and, indeed, bring near the kingdom of God.

Reflections

- Charitable giving is at its height this time of year. When those who have wealth and power become fully invested in the well-being of those who do not, both materially and through relationship, we will all be able to shout together in joy over Jesus' glad tidings to the poor.
- Today's Scriptures seem to work together seamlessly to affirm and build up our holiday spirit despite having been written in very different contexts and moments in time. As we strive to open our hearts more fully to Jesus in the coming year, these readings can serve as nourishment to meet him with joy.
- Before Jesus' arrival, the people are filled with expectation. For some, those expectations were exceeded while others were left demanding a different kind of messiah. Our own ways of responding to God might also be shaped by our expectations of how God should show up in our lives.

LTP Sourcebook 2024

Parish Carol Service in church on Saturday 21st December 3pm—4pm. Refreshments available in the parish hall afterwards. All welcome. There will be a collection for *Friends of the Holy Land* – giving hope to vulnerable Christians.

The Spirituality Commission will be sending daily reflections during Advent featuring scripture, thoughts and prayers. You can sign-up to receive them directly into your inbox each morning here: tinyurl.com/adventreflections2024

Volunteers Needed to help decorate the church for Christmas on Friday 20th December, after the 10am Mass. Please come along to lend a hand.

Archbishop John's Christmas message calls on people to turn to the Lord Jesus in hope. You can watch the full message on our YouTube channel or read the message in full at [Archbishop John's Christmas message: turn to the Lord Jesus in hope: Archdiocese of Southwark](#)

Praying the Mass with Archbishop John: Advent is a time people return to Mass, sometimes after many years - for others Mass is the cornerstone of their spiritual lives. To help people, wherever they are on their spiritual journey, connect more prayerfully with the Lord Jesus, Archbishop John has [recorded a message \(tinyurl.com/prayingthemass\)](#) which guides us on how to pray through the Mass. Archbishop John said: *'the Eucharist is at the very heart of the Mass, but also the Church. It is an invitation from the Lord Jesus to participate in His sacrifice'*.

CAFOD Advent 2024: Help Ukrainian families rebuild walls & fix windows to keep out the cold – and providing fuel so families can cook food and stay warm. Please give today at <https://cafod.org.uk/give/appeals/advent-appeal> or scan the QR code on the poster on the noticeboard in church.

A Day With Mary on Saturday 14th December St George's Cathedral, Lambeth Road SE1 starting at 10.15am, finish at 5.30pm. During the day: Confession and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Carols are sung during this DWM. Please bring a packed lunch. Tea / coffee provided. See poster for details or go to www adaywithmary.org

Catholic Worker Advent 2024 newspaper is available on the table in the porch. Please take a copy home to read.

This Weekend we welcome **The Knights of St Columba** who will be handing out their *Keep Christ in Christmas* posters. Please give a donation.

Parish Coffee Morning will be on Sunday 5th January 2025 and will continue on the first Sunday of each month in the parish hall. Please pop in for a cuppa & chat. Donations welcomed.

Southwark Archdiocese Rosary Prayer Project: Everyone is warmly invited to join this Archdiocese-wide prayer initiative, praying a decade of the Rosary each day for priests and parishes in their deanery. For details see the poster on the notice-board & pick up an invitation leaflet at the back of church or email southwarkrenewal@gmail.com.

Prayer Intentions Book: Parishioners are invited to write any prayer intentions in our Parish Prayer Intentions book which is placed on the table at the back of the church. Please take time to read the intentions and include them in your prayers.

Fire and Accidents : In the case of a fire in church or in the parish hall please evacuate the building immediately and report to the assembly point in the car park by the school fence (Assembly Point sign on fence facing the church & hall). There is a First Aid box in church (sacristy) and in the parish hall (kitchen) including an accident report book. Please note that any slips, trips, falls or accidents must be logged in the report book and the parish office must be notified as soon as possible.

Bexley Winter Shelter (BWS): Volunteers Needed: BWS provides overnight accommodation, hot meals, help and support for those affected by homelessness in the Borough of Bexley from Friday 3rd January to Sunday 30th March 2025. Each night's venue is located in central Bexleyheath. If you could spare an evening (6.30pm ~9.00pm) weekly or fortnightly, please get in touch.

- More details are available on the BWS website: <https://www.bexleywintershelter.org.uk/Articles/698880/Volunteer.aspx>
 - The application form to volunteer can be found at: https://www.bexleywintershelter.org.uk/Articles/698092/Bexley_Winter_Shelter.aspx
 - Any questions can be emailed to: volunteer@bexleywintershelter.org.uk
- Please call Paul Harris to find out more about volunteering at BWS – 07825 934694.