

Come and sing Carols with the other churches in Welling next to the cannon / Christmas tree at Welling Corner – a chance to *Shine our Light* together! On *Saturday 13th December* 2pm – 3pm. Carol sheets provided – just come along and join in. All welcome.

St Stephen's School Christmas Tea Party on Tuesday 16th December at 10.30am in the school hall. All parishioners welcomed to join us for a festive celebration and enjoy a cup of tea & cake in a relaxed and friendly setting with carol singing.

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.

Volunteers Needed to help decorate the church for Christmas on Friday 19th December from 4pm. Please come along to lend a hand.

Christmas Carol Service on *Saturday 20th December at 3pm* in church followed by refreshments in the parish hall. This is always a very joyful occasion. Please mark the date in your calendar. Please feel free to speak to the Sunday Mass choir leaders for more information. Choir practice on Saturdays at 10.45am in the small hall.

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.

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.

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

Advent Reconciliation Services on Monday 22nd December 7pm—8pm at Our Lady of the Angels Church, Carlton Road, Erith, DA8 1DN and St John Fisher Church, 48 Thanet Road, Bexley, DA5 1AP. A time to reflect which allows us to pause during the busy run up to Christmas - as we prepare to welcome the baby Jesus! All welcome to attend either church.

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.

Bexley Foodbank: Christmas sweet treats—e.g. chocolates, biscuits, mince pies etc. will be gratefully appreciated by their needy customers. Please put your donations in the box in the porch by **Thursday 18th December** so your food gifts can reach the customers in time for Christmas. Your support and generosity is much appreciated.

Also, a list of urgently wanted items can be found at <https://bexley.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-food/> as well as a list of not needed items—thank you. Donations of strong 'bags for life' are wanted—please put any spare bags you have in the donation box. Thank you.

Exposition of The Blessed Sacrament weekdays from 9am. Please join us.

Rooted in Love is a programme for married and engaged couples to meet online monthly at 8.30pm, where we share friendship, reflect on real-life topics, and pray together as we grow in love rooted in Christ. Dates available in January 2026. Email mflkent@rcaos.org.uk to sign up or receive more information.

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.



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 A)

Saturday 13th December

5pm Louiza Lobo—thanksgiving birthday

Sunday 14th November

9.30am People of the Parish

11.30am Canon Jeremiah McCarthy

Mon 15th Feria

10am Cara Heather—continued recovery from a serious condition (E McKenna)

Tues 16th Feria

10am Mark Hughes RIP

7pm Maurice Murphy

Novena Prayers

Wed 17th Feria

11am **Funeral: Peter Ward**

Thurs 18th Feria

11am **Funeral: Joao (John) Colaco**

Fri 19th Feria

10am Frances Wall—well being (P Wall)

Sat 20th Feria

No Morning Mass
No Sacrament of Reconciliation
3pm Parish Carol Service

Fourth Sunday of Advent (Year A)

Saturday 21st December

5pm Sheila Duggan RIP—birthday

Sunday 22nd December

9.30am Thanksgiving - Akumabor Family

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 after the Liturgy of the Word during Mass on Saturday evening & Sunday morning is for parishioners who wish to donate with their gift aid envelopes or with loose cash. If you choose to donate via the digital plate in church, online or by standing order, please continue to do so—there is no need to change your chosen method of giving. The collection bag will also be circulated for second collections.

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>.
Donate online at <https://portal.myдона.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.

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 situated at the back of the church. 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 registered for Gift Aid at St Stephen's.

My dear people

Third Sunday of Advent is known as Gaudete Sunday. Gaudete means rejoice in Latin and it comes from the Entrance Antiphon for today's Mass, taken from the letter of St. Paul to Philippians. Usually on this day we find the presiding priest wearing rose-coloured vestments instead of violet or purple. This practice of wearing rose-coloured vestments came about in the 12th–13th centuries.

During the Middle Ages Advent was kept as a kind of a 'mini' season of Lent in preparation for the celebration of Christmas. Just as fourth Sunday of Lent, known as Laetare Sunday, to relax the Lenten observances, Gaudete Sunday was a moment of a greater joyful anticipation as we near Christmas. This joyful anticipation is proclaimed and sung aloud this weekend as we pray, 'Rejoice in the Lord always, and again we say rejoice.'

Just as we met John the Baptist on the second Sunday of Advent, we meet him once again on the third Sunday of Advent. Having met John the Baptist in chapter 3, today we meet him again in chapter 11, and he is in prison. The

reasons for his imprisonment we read in chapter 14.

The mission of John the Baptist ends with his imprisonment and death. His trials seem to be both physical and mental, and also it seems he has lost his former confidence that Jesus is the one who was to come. Jesus, the one whose mission he has prepared, has not preached the Kingdom in the way John expected. But Jesus reassures him by describing his mission in terms that John would recognise from the prophets.

Jesus' answer to John's messengers is that his deeds can speak for themselves. John has witnessed to Jesus and now Jesus witnesses to John the Baptist.

As the days grow shorter and colder, as we wait in joyful hope, the readings invite us to think of new life. Where in our lives do we need to experience the newness as we journey towards the feast of Christmas?

God Bless you and love you all.
Canon Edward

Third Sunday in Advent (Year A)

Scripture Insights

Feeding the hungry, releasing those held captive, giving sight to the blind, raising up those who are bowed down: these are the marks of the kingdom because they are God's activities. It's easy to read them merely as spiritual metaphors, but the material and the spiritual always intertwine in Scripture. God (and Jesus) feeds those who hunger for bread and those who hunger for God.

Although Jesus' ministry ushered in the dawning of God's kingdom and a new end of exile for all people, we are still waiting, here in this season of Advent. James writes to his fellow Christians to tell them to be patient as they await the coming of the Lord. Be patient, he repeats. He uses as his examples the farmer and the prophet. The farmer waits patiently for months to see how her seeds will grow; the prophets waited through decades of loss and suffering before seeing the glory of the Lord arriving to save them. Indeed, the prophet Isaiah is like a farmer, for he announces the salvation of God with flowers that bloom in the desert.

Reflections

• When the disciples of John the Baptist asked Jesus, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?" they probably hoped for a yes or no answer (Mt 11:3). While their question was pretty straightforward, Jesus' response is not so easily understood. Instead, Jesus invites John's disciples to reflect on the things that they have seen and heard.

• On this Third Sunday of Advent, we celebrate Gaudete Sunday, a day of great rejoicing. Now more than halfway through Advent we take a moment to celebrate and rejoice in what we have seen and heard. Like John's disciples, we have experienced the incredible works of the Lord. We see and hear dozens of instances of joy, comfort, health, and well-being every day. The Lord is no longer just coming soon. The Lord is close at hand! We have many reasons to rejoice!

Introduction to Mass

We rejoice with all our hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Let us prepare the way for his coming by examining our lives and asking the Lord to restore us to right relationship with him.

Liturgy and Life

When we start the season singing, "Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord," we have to give ourselves the space and ability to do so. When we hear the words of the Third Sunday of Advent ("The blind receive their sight, the lame will walk, the lepers are cleansed . . ."), we need to ask ourselves if we have opened our eyes to the needs of those around us. Take this time to come into a deeper relationship with God through prayer and service. The hopeful result: rejoicing in our renewed spirituality as we celebrate the birth of Jesus!

LTP Sourcebook 2025



Repository: Advent candles and calendars, Christmas cards, calendars, candles, children's Christmas books and Christmas Mass Bouquet cards on sale now in the Repository. Please take time to visit after weekend Masses. (cash only please).

Archbishop John's Advent 2025 reflection. This Advent, Archbishop John is calling us on to reflect on the "astonishing truth" that the "Lord Jesus is, and always will be, Emmanuel: God with us, God beside us, God within us". In a [video reflection](#), Archbishop John said that: "to say God is with us is not poetry but power. It means that the Lord Jesus stepped into our humanity so that we might step into his divinity. It means that God is no distant deity, but one who draws near; who shares our joys and carries our sorrows; who opens heaven to earth, and earth to heaven". You can watch his full reflection at rcaos.org.uk/advent2025.

Southwark Spirituality Commission Advent reflections. The [Southwark Spirituality Commission](#) will be sending daily reflections during Advent featuring Scripture, thoughts and prayers. Sign-up to receive them directly into your inbox each morning via tinyurl.com/SSCAdvent2025. These reflections are a great way to keep your mind focused on the Lord Jesus during the busy Advent season.

St George's Cathedral Christmas Schedule can be found here: [christmas2025.pdf](#)

A Day With Mary on Saturday 20th December starting at 9.20am and finish at 5.30pm at Our Lady Help of Christians, Blackheath SE3 9RD. During the day: Confession & Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Please bring a packed lunch. For more info see poster or go to www adaywithmary.org

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 and post it through the presbytery letterbox. Please ensure you include your contact number. The recommended stipend (donation) advised by the Archdiocese for a Mass Intention is £10. Please give plenty of notice to avoid disappointment if you would like specific date for your intention as we may not always be able to accommodate your request at short notice (at least 6 months notice is recommended). If you are a UK tax payer please complete the Gift Aid declaration on the reverse of the envelope. Cheques made payable to 'RCAS Welling'. Thank you.

Parish Coffee Morning on Sunday in the parish hall between the 2 morning Masses. Please join us for a cuppa & chat. Donations welcomed.

Called to Bear Fruit consultation response published. Please take a booklet from the table at the back of the church home to read. Thank you to the thousands of people who took part in the Called to Bear Fruit consultation. We are grateful to you all for sharing so openly your hopes for the life of the Church in our Archdiocese. The consultation response, which includes 15 actions points for renewal, is also available at rcaos.org.uk/calledtobearfruit. The consultation revealed a burning desire within our parishes to be missionary and evangelising disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, who work together to help people encounter His love. So, as we move forward on the next steps together, let's build up the Body of Christ in Southwark with faith and confidence, becoming ever more a community of missionary disciples filled with joy and hope for the future. As an Archdiocese, we will continue to discern the process of renewal, and further updates will be provided in due course.

The Jubilee Year concludes in just three weeks. There is still time to visit the designated shrines and churches across the archdiocese and to receive the plenary indulgence. For a full list of places: <https://rcaos.org.uk/faith/jubilee-2025/designated-jubilee-churches-and-shrines/>

Church Decoration: If you would like to make a financial contribution towards the cost of the recent decoration work in church, the meeting room and new hall doors please contact the parish office. Cash / cheque donations can be posted through the presbytery letterbox in a sealed envelope with 'Church Decoration' written on the front (cheques made payable to 'RCAS Welling'). Donations can also be made on the Digital Collection Plates at the back of the church and online at <https://portal.mydona.com/assets/webPay/index.php?cid=236> or use the church bank account details on the front page of the newsletter (use reference: Church Decs). Your support is important and deeply appreciated. If you are able, please gift aid your donation. Thank you. Support our parish and make your donations go further by signing a valid Gift Aid Declaration form. Go to <https://forms.rcaos.org.uk/giftaid>.