



Dear Crofton Parish,

Happy Christmas! We made it! I hope, in spite of everything, you've been able to see, video call or speak to your loved ones and that the next few days can be something of a respite from the challenges this year has brought.

CHRISTMAS AND BEYOND

Our Christmas Eve **Midnight Communion at Home** is at 11.30pm on Facebook and our website this evening. An Order of Service can be found here <https://croftonparish.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Christmas-Eve-Service-Booklet.pdf>

On **Christmas Day**, we will be gathering for a short Church Online at 10am on the Holy Rood Facebook page or the Crofton Parish website. St Edmund's 8am BCP Communion will be going ahead as usual. You need to pre-book for this service through Gary or Sorel, though it will be nearly full by now.

On **December 27**, it's 'Catch-Up' Sunday: the chance to join in with any of the Christmas services and events you might have missed. There will be a specific post on the Holy Rood FB page that morning with links to services and events such as Christingle at Home, FOCOC Nine Lessons & Carols etc, so they will be easy for you to access. St Edmund's will have a Morning Service with 'Side B' of the congregation.

On **January 3**, for Church Online, Dan and Beth are pre-recording a special service for Epiphany, which will be the last in the 'Christmas at Home' series. We'll resume Church Online live from HR on January 10. St Edmund's 'Side A' will be gathering for BCP Communion.

The **Thursday morning** service will not take place on December 31, but will resume on January 7.

THROUGH THE TIERS

Since I last wrote to you, it's been announced that all of Hampshire (apart from the New Forest) will be going into Tier 4 restrictions from Boxing Day onwards. I think we can expect these restrictions to last well into January, which won't make for much of a Happy New Year. However, with increasing

numbers of people getting vaccinated, we can look forward into 2021 with confidence.

Places of Worship are allowed to remain open in Tier 4. With our carefully-managed system of Services and Streams, we can carry on in-person meetings and services for now. However, should we start to see an increase in cases locally, we will obviously review this. If you are at all concerned about coming to a service or Stream, please don't feel you need to come but join in online instead.

Continuing to do the basics keeps all of us safe: use hand sanitiser on arrival and exit and keep socially distant from other people. In Tier 4, socialising of any kind between households is not permitted, so please be aware of this, particularly before and after services and Streams.

THANK YOU

This is my final Vicar's Letter of 2020. As we reflect on one of the most challenging years most of us have ever faced, I want to recognise the incredible work of so many people in the parish.

The **Staff Team** and **Wardens** have consistently gone beyond the call of duty this year. We have necessarily had to limit the numbers of people involved in running Parish life and my sincere and deep thanks go to: Jude & Dan Greenfield, Beth & Martin Yeandle, Gill & Jim Nolan, Julie Mizen, Simon Swindells and Kathryn England for the huge amount of time they have put into the technical development and running of Church Online and restarting our youth and children's work. We have been able to gather virtually every Sunday since March, keeping a sense of worship, prayer, spiritual growth and community. Without this small group of people working behind the scenes (and in front of the camera) that wouldn't have been possible.

The **Parish Office** team, under the calm leadership of Vicki Edwards, have responded to the challenges of this year with professionalism, care and an eye for detail that has helped get us through 2020. This year, we have re-organised the entire Parish (more than once) and tried to keep over 600 people going in the same direction. We couldn't have done that without the skill and commitment of Vicki and her team: Sue Elgie, Gill Nolan and Claire Willis.

Please note that the Parish Office will be closed from Friday 25 December until Monday 4 January. In an emergency please leave a message on 07856 016032 and someone will get in contact with you.

Re-opening St Edmund's after Lockdown 1 presented its own set of challenges and I am grateful to Gary Willcocks and Sorel Mitchell for all they contributed to being able to resume services at St Edmund's so smoothly. My thanks also to Gary, Karen Wainwright, Rev Ted Goodyer and Rev Wing Man Tsang for their help taking services.

The Thursday morning service at Holy Rood has become an important place of community and prayer for many this year and I'm grateful to Colin Prestidge for taking the reins on the relaunched service.

Likewise, the Young at Heart community have played a wonderful role supporting some of the most isolated in our area. My thanks to Jenny Wilford and team for all they have contributed this year.

Launching our 'One River, Many Streams' vision mid-year was a big moment for us and I want to extend my thanks to all those willing to be Stream Hosts and to our many Home Group and other leaders who have done so much to keep us together.

Finally, I want to thank **you**. The level of engagement, commitment and community in Crofton Parish has never been higher, which – in a year like 2020 – is quite something. While we won't ever want to live through a year like again, the Holy Spirit has done something quite special among us during this season of pruning and scattering. I know we will want to take this with us into whatever life post-Covid looks like.



On January 10, we'll be thinking about 2021. I do hope you'll join in with Church Online that morning for what will be an important Sunday as we look at the year ahead.

In the meantime, may God bless you and your loved ones.

With love,

Richard