

The wonder of Christmas



No other time of the year captures our imagination quite like Christmas - and the build-up seems to begin earlier and earlier each year.

The Christmas meal with work colleagues now needs to be booked in August and the shops are full of decorations and Christmas gifts the second Halloween is over. The local garden centre always seems to be ahead of the march, transforming a huge section of its space into a winter wonderland... in September.

All of this aims to stimulate our anticipation, our excitement and, of course, our spending power - giving us plenty of time to splash the cash on the things we think we need in preparation for the 'most wonderful time of the year'.

And Christmas is wonderful - or full of wonder. It's a time when God came into the world in the most basic and humble of circumstances - a baby's cry that would change the course of human history. The angels

burst into song, the shepherds were amazed and returned, 'glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen'. This season fills our hearts with the wonder that anything is possible.

But what about the other definition of 'wonder'? The wonder that means: 'To think or to speculate curiously'. Instead of having wonder **at** Jesus' birth, is there room at Christmas to wonder **about** Jesus?

I'm not sure that the modern church is very good at letting people know that it is okay to wonder - that it's perfectly fine to walk through the door on a Sunday with questions, doubts and uncertainties. After all, don't we all have those?

You certainly don't need all the answers to turn up at St Luke's. Our services are all about finding out more; having a better understanding of who Jesus is and who we are in relation to this. We enjoy learning together, discovering new things and considering the big questions of life.

You don't need to know the Bible inside out and it's definitely okay to 'quiz the vicar' over coffee after the service. And, if he can't answer the question, he'll admit it and wonder with you.

So, this Christmas...

If you are full of wonder **at** the birth of Jesus and want to celebrate God's amazing gift of hope and forgiveness, we'd love to see you and celebrate with you.

But if you are full of wonder **about** Jesus, who He was, who He is and what it all means - then we'd be overjoyed to see you. In fact, it would be wonderful.

Details of our Christmas services are below. I do hope you (and your questions) can make it.

Wishing you all peace, joy and a sense of wonder at this special time. Happy Christmas!

Mark



This Christmas at St Luke's

Thursday 13 December - Neighbourhood Carol Service at 2pm

Sunday 23 December - Carol Service at 6pm

Christmas Eve - Christingle Services at 2pm, 3.30pm and 5pm

Christmas Eve - Midnight Communion at 11.15pm

Christmas Morning - Family Communion Service at 10.15am

You're hired!

- A warm welcome to Ade Perham, our 'Apprentice' vicar



Ade Perham joined St Luke's in September for a three-year 'training ministry' placement - a fairly new initiative within the Church of England. This apprenticeship-style development programme allows future vicars to train 'on the job' - rather than undertaking the traditional three-year residency at theological college.

Ade, along with wife Jen and one-year-old daughter Hannah (pictured), will be with St Luke's until the summer of 2021. Ade - who says he has felt called to ministry since the age of 18 - will then go on to train as a curate with a new church for another two or three years before becoming a vicar.

Says Ade: "This training route involves two main parts; half my time is spent studying through St Mellitus College in London and the other half is spent on placement, working with and for St Luke's. So far, I have enjoyed participating in Sunday services,

mid-week services, primary school assemblies, baptism visits and the recent Alpha Course we ran on Thursday evenings. I'm also planning a new, monthly daytime service with a wonderful team of people here at St Luke's."

Originally from Stafford, Ade has also lived in Canada (briefly) and Preston (where Jen went to University) prior to settling in Nottingham nine years ago after getting married. Before taking up his training placement, Ade worked as a full-time youth pastor at St Jude's Church in Mapperley and also did some part-time work as a Fire Safety Consultant, training fire wardens and offering advice to businesses.

Despite the variety of his training experience so far, Ade has still been keen to get involved in supporting youth work at St Luke's: "I wondered how long I could stay away from youth ministry - it turns out six weeks was my

limit!" he says, adding: "I love meeting new people and hearing their stories. I am used to working with teenagers and youth teams but am slowly adapting to broadening my ministry with people of all ages."

Under the guidance of St Luke's vicar Mark Fraser, Ade is keen to develop his preaching skills and learn more about ministering within the wider church and local community.

Says Ade: "As a family we are excited to see all that God has in store for us - there's a saying: 'God doesn't call the equipped, but He equips the called' - that certainly echoes how we feel!"

"The welcome we have received from people at St Luke's has been amazing - they are a genuine bunch and accepting of everyone. There is a real buzz around the place, and it already feels we're part of a new family. We're really delighted to be here."



St Luke's continues to support the Nottingham Street Pastors as one of its local mission partners.

This outreach initiative that has more than 70 volunteers from across Nottingham churches who are trained before hitting the streets - caring for those coming into the City to enjoy the night life.

Every Friday and Saturday night, the Street Pastors are on hand between 10pm and 3am to help those who may be vulnerable through excess alcohol consumption, drug use or because they have been separated from friends. They work alongside the City's police, bars and clubs to help defuse arguments and fights peacefully, give first aid or just listen to people who want to talk. They also provide free flip flops to those who have discarded or lost their shoes and bottled water to keep people hydrated.

Importantly, whilst the Street Pastors are on shift, there is another team of Christians praying for them during the night - for their safety and for all the people and situations they will encounter during the evening.

Kate Troy, a St Luke's regular and volunteer Street Pastor, says: "As soon as I heard about what they do, I wanted to be involved. I had a difficult time growing up and, like many people, I looked forward to going out drinking and clubbing with friends at the weekend as a way to escape.

"I was quite young and vulnerable back then, and I see people just like that every time I'm out with the Street Pastors - we're just looking out for them to keep them safe. Everyone plans to have a great night out, but it doesn't always end up that way. The Street Pastors are there to listen and provide support if things go wrong or if people need help getting home safely."

Adds Kate: "No one night is ever the same! You come across all sorts of situations and are never sure if you can handle it, but we always do with God's help. It's great to know that people are praying for us while we are out - I really feel that God is at work in our city."

If you belong to a church and want to volunteer, visit the Street Pastors Nottingham Facebook page to find out more.

50 years of Christingle

2018 marks the 50th birthday of the Christingle service in the UK and St Luke's will again be holding three Christingle services, back to back, on Christmas Eve.

This is probably the busiest day of the year at St Luke's as we welcome up to 600 people through our doors in just one day.

Says Sarah Sharpe, Families Minister at St Luke's: *"Last year, we changed the format to now run three Christingle services, one after the other, as so many people kept coming, we couldn't fit them all into the church! It's wonderful that so many local families now attend this service as part of their annual Christmas Eve tradition."*

But what is a Christingle? And why are these services so popular?

Bishop Johannes de Watteville started the Christingle tradition in Germany in 1747 as a way to get children to think about Jesus in relation to creation and the world. But the Christingle service only arrived here in 1968, when John Pensom of the Children's Society introduced the service to the UK as a fundraiser for the charity. Whilst there is no mention of oranges or Christingles in the Bible - and this isn't recognised as an 'observed' Christian festival - this service gained favour over the years. There are now more than 5,000 Christingle services held in the UK, raising around £1.5m for the Children's Society each year.

As well as singing carols and hearing a Christmas message, those taking part are given a Christingle - an orange with a red ribbon around it, a candle poking out the top and cocktail sticks with raisins and sweets stuck into it. Could the popularity be due to the services being so accessible to children and families? Or is it that the orange - adorned with its various decorations - provides an element of oddity and fun?

We asked nine-year-old Emily Johnson, a regular at St Luke's and pupil at Pierrepont Gamston Primary School, why she enjoys Christingle services so much...

"It's a great service to go to with friends and family on Christmas Eve. You learn about what all the different bits of the Christingle stand for and get to eat the raisins and sweets after the service!"

"It's so lovely when they turn the lights out and the whole church is full of candles and smells of oranges - it just makes you feel so Christmassy."



The orange represents the world.



The red ribbon indicates God's love wrapped around the world and the blood Christ shed on the cross.



The dried fruits and sweets are symbols of God's creations. For many people they also represent the four seasons.



The candle symbolises Jesus, the light of the world, who brings hope to people living in darkness.

We'd love to see you at 2pm, 3.30pm or 5pm on Christmas Eve - just follow the citrusy smell! For more information on Christingle services and the charity we are supporting, visit www.childrenssociety.org.uk

Ladies' Christmas Craft Night

Craft for the crafty and non-crafty!

Wednesday 5 December
St Luke's Church / 8pm

Tickets: £5
Available from the church office

families@st-lukes-gamston.org

JOY!

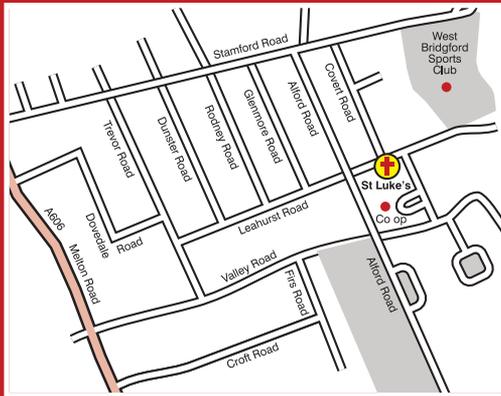
A celebration of Christmas

Sunday 16 December
3.00pm-4.30pm
Pierrepont Gamston Primary School

Some cracking surprises, food, activities, Christmas message & lots of fun!

About St Luke's

St Luke's is an Anglican Church (Church of England) with around 180 members. Together we enjoy a mixture of service and worship styles from traditional to modern. We offer a warm welcome to everyone, so if you are keen to try church for the first time or are returning to church, we'd love to see you.



Who's who



Rev Mark Fraser

Vicar



Ade Perham

Trainee Vicar



Sarah Sharpe

Families Minister



Andy Wright

Youth Worker



Joanne Pilkington

Church Office Administrator

Contact us

St Luke's Church
Leahurst Rd, West Bridgford,
Nottingham NG2 6GL

Call the church office
on **0115 974 5024** or email
office@st-lukes-gamston.org

Things to do at St Luke's

Older People / over 50s

- Prime Time – social group for older people with music, talks and refreshments on the first and third Thursdays of the month at 2pm
- Coffee Break – Every Saturday morning from 10am

Children 4 and under

- Dads & Tods - tea, chat and bacon butties every third Saturday of the month at 10am
- Tinies & Toddlers - Every Thursday morning 10am to 11.45am (term time only) crafts, singing, story time and free play

Youth (11-18s)

- 1st and 3rd Fridays: Youth Café at St Luke's - 7.30pm
- 2nd and 4th Fridays: Youth Worship at St Giles't - 7.30pm
- Hot Chocolate and Cereals, every Monday at St Luke's from 3.30pm contact youth@st-lukes-gamston.org for more info

Mums

Oasis – local mums 'sharing life' every Wednesday 10 to 11.30am
- good chat, great coffee, simple Bible study and prayer (crèche provided)

Regular Sunday services, prayer and worship at St Luke's

Midweek

- Morning Prayer: 9.15am on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday & Friday
- Morning Communion: 9.15am every Thursday

Sunday Services

- 9.30am Sunday morning worship / communion including regular activities on Sunday mornings for the following age groups 0-3, 3-7, 7-11 and 11+
- 5pm Traditional communion / teaching service

Second Sunday of the month only

- 9.30am Activities and breakfast snacks followed by a short All-Age service from 10am
- 5pm Communion service
- 7pm Engage (informal service)

You can also visit our website at www.st-lukes-gamston.org to find more information about our church and download audio recordings of our Sunday sermons.

Do you live near St Luke's?

Join us for our
Neighbourhood Carol Service
2pm on Thursday 13th December

A traditional service of carols and Bible readings followed by tea and mince pies

Featuring the choir from Pierrepont Gamston Primary School

All activities and events are held at St Luke's Church unless otherwise stated. Our church building is also used by the community including Guides, Brownies, Rainbows and Leahurst Road Pre-school. Our community hall is also available to hire for meetings, children's parties and special events. St Luke's is a registered charity (number: 1132547)