



The Stratfield Mortimer Benefice  
of

St Saviour  
Mortimer West End

St Mary and St John  
Stratfield Mortimer

St John the Baptist  
Padworth

St Mary's Church of England School

St John's Church of England School

Diocese of Oxford



From the north window of the chapel at St Mary's church.  
Stratfield Nortimer

# Midnight Mass

24<sup>th</sup> December 2021 at 11.30 p.m.

at St John's Mortimer and online at: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6931233940>

**Prayer Thoughts:** *This holy night we come to Midnight Mass - albeit for many online this year - to celebrate the birth of the holy child who offers the light of God's grace and love to all the world. This night we remember that the 'Word of God' is no longer the 'message' spoken by prophets, but the 'messenger' of God himself in person. This night the Church calls upon us all to welcome Christ and his message into our hearts and lives; into our relationships and communities; to receive and make our own his message of goodwill towards all; and to allow his joyful spirit of thanksgiving to renew us that we may lift our hearts and voices to join in that age-old jubilant song: 'Glory to God in the highest, and peace to people on earth.'*

*Happy Christmas.  
God bless,  
Paul*

# Midnight Mass

*This 'holy memorial' is known by various names: 1) 'The Eucharist' - which means 'Thanksgiving' - because Jesus offered himself in love; 2) 'the Lord's Supper' - or 'Breaking of the Bread' - because we celebrate it as a shared meal; 3) 'Holy Communion,' because we become one with Christ by receiving him; and 4) 'Holy Mass' - holy sending - because it gives us a mission: to go in peace to serve the Lord.*

*The 'objectives' of the Eucharist: The faith community gathers for the public celebration of the Eucharist in order to worship God; ask his forgiveness for sins; thank him for blessings received; listen to his voice in Scripture; present the needs of the world and our own needs too; offer our lives to him; gain spiritual nourishment and recharge our weakened spiritual batteries by sharing with him in Holy Communion. The simple structure of the Eucharistic celebration is organized to achieve all these goals.*

*If you are not able to come to St John's please do share in the weekly service online. May God bless us as we join together to worship. The present guidelines about cleaning, attendance, distancing, singing & speaking and receiving Holy Communion in churches will be followed carefully.*

## THE GATHERING SONG

**O come, all ye faithful,  
Joyful and triumphant  
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;  
Come and behold him,  
Born the king of angels:  
*O come, let us adore him  
O come let us adore him  
O come let us adore him,  
Christ the Lord.***

**Yea, Lord we greet thee,  
Born this happy morning;  
Jesu, to thee be glory given:  
Word of the Father,  
Now in flesh appearing:  
*O come, let us adore him,  
O come let us adore him,  
O come let us adore him,  
Christ the Lord!***

## THE GATHERING

**Priest** In the name of God - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.  
**All** Amen.

*The priest may introduce the Eucharist.*

## THE GREETING

*The greeting proclaims the presence of the Lord with us.*

*The Penitential Rite, the Gloria and the Opening Prayer follow. The purpose of these preliminary rites is to help the people, gathered for the celebration of the Eucharist, to join with each other as a worshipping community, and to prepare to listen to the Word of God and to celebrate the Eucharist - the Great Thanksgiving.*

**All** The Lord be with you  
**And also with you.**

## THE PRAYERS OF PENITENCE

*The Invitation to Confession - we call to mind our sins that we may repent of them / turn from them and ask forgiveness of God and each other.*

Hear the words of the angel to Joseph:

*'You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.'* *cf Matthew 1.21*

My dear brothers and sisters, as we come together as God's family and prepare to celebrate the Eucharist, let us call to mind our sins and seek the forgiveness of God through Jesus our Saviour.

*A pause for silent reflection follows.*

**All** I confess to almighty God,  
and to you, my brothers and sisters,  
that I have sinned through my own fault,  
in my thoughts and in my words,  
in what I have done and in what I have failed to do.

*The Absolution*

Priest + Almighty God have mercy on us,  
forgive us our sins,  
and bring us to everlasting life.

**All** Amen.

## **THE GLORIA**

*Gloria, gloria, in excelsis Deo.*  
*Gloria, gloria, in excelsis Deo.*

**Glory to God in the highest,  
and peace to his people on earth.  
Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father,  
we worship you, we give you thanks,  
we praise you for your glory.  
*Gloria, gloria, in excelsis Deo.*  
*Gloria, gloria, in excelsis Deo.***

**Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,  
Lord God, Lamb of God,  
you take away the sins of the world:  
have mercy on us;  
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:  
receive our prayer.  
*Gloria, gloria, in excelsis Deo.*  
*Gloria, gloria, in excelsis Deo.***

## **THE COLLECT**

Priest Let us pray.

*Together we spend a few moments in silence, realising, and giving thanks, that we are in the presence of God our Father to whom we make our prayers. The prayer 'collects' our thoughts.*

Priest Eternal God, who made this most holy night to shine with the brightness of your light:  
bring us, who have known the revelation of that light on earth,  
to see the radiance of your heavenly glory;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

**All** Amen.

## **THE LITURGY OF THE WORD**

*The Liturgy of the Word consists of readings from the scriptures; a sermon/homily, which expounds the readings; the Profession of Faith, which is the Creed of God's people; and the Prayer of the Faithful or General Intercessions in which the people of God intercede for all humankind and all creation.*

*In the Liturgy of the Word God speaks to us of redemption and salvation and nourishes us with his 'word.' We are not only listening to past history. The God who speaks to Israel and to the early Church speaks to us today through the power of the Holy Spirit working within us as we listen to him and as he reveals the pattern for our lives. 'The word of God is something alive and active: it cuts like any double edged sword but more finely...it can judge the secret emotions and thoughts'(The Letter to the Hebrews 4:12).*

## **THE FIRST READING – THE LETTER OF PAUL TO TITUS 2: 11 – 14.** - Read by Gwen Adshead.

Reader A reading from The Letter of St Paul to Titus.

God's grace has been revealed, and it has made salvation possible for the whole human race and taught us that what we have to do is to give up everything that does not lead to God, and all our worldly ambitions; we must be self-restrained and live good and religious lives here in this present world, while we are waiting in hope for the blessing which will come with the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Christ Jesus.

He sacrificed himself for us in order to set us free from all wickedness and to purify a people so that it could be his very own and would have no ambition except to do good.

*At the end of the reading:*

Reader This is the word of the Lord.

All Thanks be to God.

*Now we hear the Gospel (the Good News) and acknowledge that we are his people and called to be part of his mission to the world inasmuch as we share his message and his life with faith, hope and love.*

### **THE GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

**Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.**

I bring you news of great joy:

*Luke 2: 10-11*

today a saviour has been born to us, Christ the Lord.

**Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.**

### **THE GOSPEL READING - ST LUKE'S GOSPEL 2: 1 - 14.**

The Lord be with you.

All **And also with you .**

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke.

All **Glory to you, O Lord.**

Caesar Augustus issued a decree for a census of the whole world to be taken. This census – the first – took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria, and everyone went to his own town to be registered. So Joseph set out from the town of Nazareth in Galilee and travelled up to Judaea, to the town of David called Bethlehem, since he was of David's House and line, in order to be registered together with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to a son, her first born. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them at the inn. In the countryside close by there were shepherds who lived in the fields and took it in turns to watch their flocks during the night. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone round them. They were terrified, but the angel said, 'Do not be afraid. Listen, I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared by the whole people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. And here is a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.' And suddenly with the angel there was a great throng of the heavenly host, praising God and singing:

'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace to men.'

*At the end of the Gospel*

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

All **Praise to you, O Christ.**

**Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.**

### **THE SERMON**

*We are a Eucharistic community - united around word and sacrament. Through the readings God has spoken to his people of his redeeming love and of the nourishment which his Spirit gives. The sermon reflects on our readings and relates them to our Eucharistic celebration and to our ordinary daily life.*

*After the sermon there may be a short period of silent reflection.*

### **THE PROFESSION OF CHRISTIAN FAITH - THE CREED**

*We make the profession of faith in response to the word of God written in the Gospels and spoken in the sermon. We testify that God is our Father who gives us new life through his Son and who calls us together in the power of his Spirit to be a Eucharistic people, a 'thanksgiving people', a living community of his abiding self-giving love.*

All **We believe and trust in God the Father who made the world.**

**We believe and trust in his Son, Jesus Christ, who redeemed the world.**

**We believe and trust in the Holy Spirit who gives life to the people of God. Amen**

## THE PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL OR GENERAL INTERCESSION

*We are invited to pray for all people and for all creation and for the needs of the Church's mission in bringing Christ's Gospel to the world. Through baptism we have been made one with Christ, our great high priest, and we share in his prayer before the Father for the needs of the Church's mission to the world and for of people. Our prayer flows from our listening to the Gospel and sermon by which we have been made more aware of our Christian commitment.*

*This Prayer of the Faithful, or General Intercession, is announced and consists of a series of intercessions; we pray for the universal Church and its mission and for our bishop and for our benefice - our parishes and our two Church schools; for the world, for our Queen and country, for our local communities, families and friends; for the sick and suffering and for all in pain; and we remember those who have died. And in communion with Mary, St John the Evangelist, St John the Baptist and all the Saints of God we entrust one another and all people and all creation to God's saving love.*

**Priest:** Let us pray to our heavenly Father in the power of the Holy Spirit of God and in union with Jesus Christ whose birth we celebrate this holy night..

*The deacon or minister continues:*

For the Church throughout the world, that with one heart and voice we may rejoice in the Word incarnate;  
for Justin our Archbishop, for Steven our Bishop, for Olivia our area Bishop and for all our brothers and sisters in Christ;  
for our benefice, for our parishes, for our two Church schools of St Mary's and St John's and for all our ministries and missions.

We pray to you O Lord.

Lord, hear us.

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

For good will in the hearts of all people, and for the peace of the world;  
for those who lead the nations, and for all in authority that they may govern with justice, wisdom and compassion; for Elizabeth, our Queen; for our government;  
for our members of parliament; and for our district and village councillors, that they may work for the common good and the well-being of all people.

We pray to you O Lord.

Lord, hear us.

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

For our homes, our families and friends and all who are dear to us;  
for our village community and for all the villages, towns and cities of this world.

We pray to you O Lord.

Lord, hear us.

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

For the poor and for the outcast; for the homeless and for all refugees;  
for the helpless, the lonely and those who feel unloved;  
for the bereaved and all who mourn;  
for all who suffer in body, mind or spirit;  
for those who know not the love of Christ;  
for the lapsed and those who deny the Church Christ came to build.

We pray to you O Lord.

Lord, hear us.

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

For all who have died this day; for all past parishioners,  
for all who have kept alive the light of faith in this place;  
for our loved ones gone before us and that we may be reunited in heaven.

*In a moment of silence let each one of us quietly offer our own prayerful intention.*

We give you high praise and hearty thanks for all our blessings,  
and in communion with Mary, the Blessed Mother of our Lord, St. Joseph, St. John the Evangelist, St. John the Baptist and all the host of heaven, we offer these our prayers.

We pray to you O Lord.

Lord, hear us.

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

**Priest** Merciful Father,

**All** Accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, Our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

## THE LITURGY OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST

*At the Last Supper Christ 'took some bread and when he had given thanks, broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying "This is my body which will be given for you; do this in remembrance of me". He did the same with the cup...' (Luke 22:19-20). The Church, joyfully obedient to the Lord's command, celebrates the Eucharist taking care that our 'liturgy' corresponds to the words and actions of Christ: 1) Taking bread and wine - we take our own gifts to the Altar, such as our time and talents and our money for the poor and for ministry. 2) Giving thanks (the meaning of the word Eucharist) - in the Eucharistic Prayer the priest, in the name of us all, says the great hymn of our thanksgiving to God for the whole work of salvation, in which the offerings become the Body and Blood of Christ. 3) The breaking of the one bread is a sign of the unity of the faithful - a sign of the unity which comes through sharing in Christ. 4) And in Holy Communion we receive Christ. In this way, Sunday by Sunday and day by day, the Church tries to carry out what the Lord asked his disciples to do in remembrance of him.*

## THE PEACE

*We acknowledge and give thanks for our unity with one another in Jesus Christ our Lord, which his death and resurrection have brought to us. He is the peace between us. The sign of peace echoes Christ's own resurrection greeting to his disciples. Before we share in the same bread we express our love for one another in Christ and pray for peace and unity (cf Luke 1.78,79).*

Priest            *Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given,            cf Isaiah 9: 6  
and his name shall be called the Prince of Peace.*

**All**                The peace of the Lord be always with you  
**And also with you.**

## THE PREPARATION OF THE ALTAR

*The peoples' gifts of bread and wine are brought to the altar. The offerings of money is made and promised to support the wider ministry and work of the Church. Taking the Gifts: We give thanks to God for the gifts in the following words.*

Priest            **BREAD**  
Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have this bread to offer,  
which earth has given and human hands have made. It will become for us the bread of life.

**All**                **Blessed be God for ever.**

### WINE

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have this wine to offer,  
fruit of the vine and work of human hands. It will become for us the cup of salvation.

**All**                **Blessed be God for ever.**

### OUR TIME, TALENTS AND TREASURE/MONEY

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have the gifts of our  
time, talents and money to offer. May our offerings of our gifts be a sincere sign of our  
gratitude and our dedication to your service.

**All**                **Blessed be God for ever.**

*The priest prays quietly: Lord God, we ask you to receive us and be pleased with the sacrifice we offer you with humble, contrite and thankful hearts.  
The priest washes hands as an expression of the desire for inward purification, praying quietly: Lord, wash away my iniquity; cleanse me from my sin.*

## PRAYER OVER THE GIFTS

Priest            Pray my brothers and sisters, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God,  
the Almighty Father.

**All**                **May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of his name,  
for our good, and the good of all his Church.**

Priest            Amen.

Lord, accept our gifts on this joyful feast of our salvation.  
May our holy communion strengthen us that we may become more like him  
who joins our lives to yours,  
for he is Lord for ever.

**All**                **Amen.**

## THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

*The Eucharistic Prayer is the centre and high point of the whole Christian celebration. This great prayer of praise and thanksgiving proclaims the wonderful works of God and through it we join ourselves with Christ in praise and thanksgiving to God the Father and in offering ourselves to him in union with Christ's self-offering on the cross. We express our share in the prayer, which is said by the priest on behalf of all the people, by listening inwardly and joining in the acclamations (joyful shouts or songs) and the Sanctus (the Holy, Holy, Holy which concludes the preface), the memorial acclamation and the great 'Amen' which concludes our Eucharistic Prayer.*

Priest        The Lord be with you.  
All            **And also with you.**

                 Lift up your hearts.  
All            **We lift them to the Lord.**

                 Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
All            **It is right to give thanks and praise.**

*In the Preface we praise God for his mighty acts:*

We give you thanks and praise for your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ,  
who for love of our fallen race humbled himself, and was born of Blessed Mary  
by the power of your Spirit, and lived as one of us.

In this mystery of the Word incarnate you have caused the light of his love  
to shine in our hearts, that we may behold the glory of your goodness  
in the face of Jesus Christ.

Therefore with all the company of heaven we lift our voices  
to proclaim the glory of your name and sing our joyful hymn of praise:

All            **Holy, holy, holy Lord,  
God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.**

*We pray to the Father for the sending down of the Holy Spirit and recall the Lord's Supper.*

Priest        We praise and bless you, loving Father through Jesus Christ, our Lord,  
and as we obey his command, send your Holy Spirit, that broken bread and wine outpoured  
may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.  
On the night before he died he had supper with his friends, and, taking bread, he praised you.  
He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:  
+Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.  
When supper was ended he took the cup of wine. Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:  
+Drink this, all of you: this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for  
many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in remembrance of me.  
So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,  
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross.  
Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,  
we proclaim his death and resurrection until he comes in glory.

*The acclamation of faith.*

Priest        Christ is the bread of life.  
All            **When we eat this bread and drink this cup,  
we proclaim your death, Lord Jesus,  
until you come in glory.**

*The priest continues the Eucharistic Prayer.*

Lord of all life, help us to work together for that day when your kingdom comes  
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people, gather us together in to your loving arms  
and bring us with the Blessed Mother, St. Joseph, St. John the Evangelist, St. John the Baptist,  
and all the saints to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
all honour and glory are yours O loving Father, for ever and ever.

All            **Amen.**

## HOLY COMMUNION

*The communion rite lays strong emphasis on peace, unity and our prayer for forgiveness. We come together to the Lord's table in accordance with the Lord's command, 'Take, eat... take, drink', as a community bound together by the love of God manifest in Christ. We can all be confident in Christ's mercy as we respond to his call to come to his table. Our communal recitation of the Lord's Prayer - the prayer he taught us - prepares us for Holy Communion with our Lord.*

### THE LORD'S PRAYER

Priest Looking for the coming of his kingdom, as our Saviour taught us, so let us pray:

All **Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.**

### THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD

*The priest takes the host and breaks it over the cup, praying quietly: 'May this mingling of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ bring eternal life to us who receive it.' 'Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread' (1 Corinthians 10:17)*

*Christ's gesture of breaking bread with his disciples at the Last Supper gave the Eucharist the name of the 'breaking of bread.'. This gesture signifies that we who share one bread and one cup are made one. The breaking of the Eucharistic bread becomes a sign of unity and charity as the one bread is distributed to the family of God's people.*

Priest We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

All **Though we are many, we are one body, because we all share in one bread.**

*The priest prepares quietly for Holy Communion. We may all join quietly in this prayer:*

*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, by the will of the Father and the work of the Holy Spirit your death brought life to the world. By your holy body and blood free me from all my sins and from every evil. Keep me faithful to your teaching, and never let me be parted from you. Amen.*

### PREPARATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION

Priest Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. *cf. John 1: 29*

Blessed are those who are called to his supper.

All **Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word, and I shall be healed.**

*The sign of communion is more complete when given under both 'kinds' since then the sign of the eucharistic meal appears more clearly. However, we live in exceptional times when communion can only be given in one 'kind.'*

*The priest takes the host, raises it a little and shows it saying: The Body of Christ. And the same with the cup saying: The Blood of Christ. When receiving Holy Communion the response and assent to Christ is:*

+ **Amen.**

## DURING HOLY COMMUNION

### THE ANTHEM

**Ave Maria**

### THE CAROL

**O holy night,  
the stars are brightly shining,  
it is the night of the dear Saviour's birth.  
Long lay the world in sin and error pining,  
till he appeared and the soul felt its worth.  
A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices,  
for yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.  
Fall on your knees!  
Oh, hear the angel voices!  
O night divine! O night when Christ was born!  
O night divine, O night, O night divine!**

Led by the light of faith serenely beaming,  
with glowing hearts by his cradle we stand;  
so, led by light of a star sweetly gleaming,  
here came the wise men from the Orient land.  
The King of kings lay thus in lowly manger,  
in all our trials born to be our friend;  
he knows our need,  
he guardeth us from danger.  
Behold your King! Before the Lowly bend!  
Behold your King! Before the Lowly bend!

*After Holy Communion we may keep a further period of silence.*

### **PRAYER AFTER HOLY COMMUNION**

Priest            Let us pray

*The priest invites us all to pray that the Holy Eucharist will have its effect in transforming our lives and bring us all to God's kingdom. We pray together silently for a while before the Post Communion prayer.*

Priest            God our Father, whose Word has come among us in the Holy Child of Bethlehem:  
may the light of faith illumine our hearts and shine in our words and deeds;  
through him who is Christ the Lord.

All                Amen.

### **THE CONCLUDING RITE**

All                The Lord be with you.  
**and also with you.**

### **THE BLESSING**

Priest            May the Father, who has loved the eternal Son from before the foundation of the world,  
shed the light of that love upon you his children.

All                Amen.

Priest            May Christ, who by his incarnation gathered into one things earthly and heavenly,  
fill you with joy and peace and goodwill towards all people.

All                Amen.

Priest            May the Holy Spirit, by whose overshadowing Blessed Mary became the God-bearer,  
give you grace to bear the Gospel of Christ to all the world.

All                Amen.

Priest            +And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be among you and remain with you always.

All                Amen.

All                Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God.**

### **CAROL**

Hark! the herald-angels sing  
Glory to the new-born King,  
Peace on earth and mercy mild,  
God and sinners reconciled.  
Joyful, all ye nations, rise,  
Join the triumph of the skies;  
With the angelic host proclaim,  
'Christ is born in Bethlehem.'  
Hark! the herald angels sing  
Glory to the new-born King.

**Christ by highest heaven adored,  
Christ, the everlasting Lord,  
Late in time behold him come,  
Offspring of a Virgin's womb.  
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see!  
Hail, the incarnate Deity!  
Pleased as Man with man to dwell  
Jesus, our Emmanuel.**

**Hark! the herald-angels sing  
Glory to the new-born King.**

**Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!  
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all he brings,  
Risen with healing in his wings.  
Mild he lays his glory by,  
Born that man no more may die,  
Born to raise the sons of earth,  
Born to give them second birth.**

**Hark! the herald angels sing  
Glory to the new-born King.**

# Happy Christmas

**Please donate regularly to support the Church's mission and work.** *The church here needs your help in order to serve our villages, our diocese, our nation and our world in the future. Our doors have been closed due to Covid 19 and with no regular Government or Church of England funding we have lost significant income. Please see the website to see how to give efficiently.*

