

## **ST PANCRAS NEWSLETTER – 1 DECEMBER 2020**

Dear friends,

Welcome to Advent 2020. Many of us will be looking forward to the end of this year, but Advent is a reminder that the church is already beginning her new year. This is when, every year, we look forward in hope. This is when we realise that we are waiting. Waiting with hope.

Hope is an essential part of Christian character (along with love, joy and peace). And it is needed this year as much as ever.

Why? Because there is a lot of disappointment around right now. We all share the disappointments of unmet expectations this year. The disappointments over how two lockdowns – however necessary – have impacted livelihoods, communities, friends and family. Many are disappointed with those who have had to take immensely difficult decisions. Then there are the personal disappointments with the ways in which we have or haven't coped throughout the year. Maybe we are also disappointed with God.

Our city is disappointed. Plymouth had big plans for this year's Mayflower 400 celebrations but they have been overwhelmed by COVID. Perhaps we are used to disappointment because following Plymouth Argyle is very often a triumph of hope over experience. Many people in our city feel like they are overlooked or left out and have given up on hope altogether. Grand plans for Plymouth's future are more often met with disillusionment than with hope.

But Christians live with genuine hope.

And the waiting at Advent helps to shape our hope in the proper direction. Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote in one of his letters from prison that:

'Life in a prison cell may well be compared to Advent: one waits, hopes, and does this, that or the other – things that are really of no consequence – the door is shut, and can be opened only from the outside.'

Advent reminds us that true hope does not come from within but only from God. We need to wait on God because we can never be our own saviours. At Advent, we make ourselves wait and look for the promised One. The One who promises to set us free from captivity, to lighten our darkness, and to adopt our orphaned hearts into His great family.

Famously, Desmond Tutu was once asked whether he was an optimist or a pessimist. 'Neither,' he replied. 'I am a prisoner of hope.' I pray that we too can be captured by the hope of God this Advent.

Every blessing in Jesus Christ,

Lawrence

## ADVENT MATERIALS

There are lots of helpful materials at this time to encourage us to stop and spend time with God's word and in God's presence. I have several copies of a new devotional book, *The Radiant Dawn*. Including a short Bible reading from Luke's gospel, a reflection and a prayer for each day of Advent, this is a lovely book to read or give to a friend. Copies are free from the Church office or contact Lawrence and we'll find a way of getting a copy to you.

Alternatively, you may be interested in the Church of England's Advent materials including free, daily devotionals and weekly services. These can be found as an app by searching for 'Comfort and Joy', or by following this link: <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/preparing-advent-christmas-2020-comfort-and-joy>

Can I also encourage you to consider joining our weekly Wednesday Prayer and Praise evenings in Advent when we will be focussed on waiting for God in silence, word and song.

## RETURNING TO CHURCH BUILDING, 5 DECEMBER

With the end of the second lockdown, Plymouth returns to a tiered system of restrictions. This means that, at St Pancras, we will be able to resume meeting in the church building as well as online. We will keep to the same pattern of precautions that we had in place earlier in the year: please wear a mask at all times inside the church, use hand sanitiser when you enter, and maintain physical distance. Despite the weather getting colder we will still need to keep the church well ventilated, so please dress warmly. Finally, may I encourage you to bring your Bibles with you as we look through the wonderful description of Jesus through the eyes of Isaiah the prophet.

This is the pattern of services for this Sunday, and we will continue to have Communion services at 9am on the first and third Sundays of the month.

**6 DECEMBER 9.00AM COMMUNION SERVICE – IN CHURCH**

**10.30AM ALL TOGETHER CELEBRATION – IN CHURCH AND ON ZOOM**

We will continue to stream\* our services online and we're steadily upgrading the equipment in church to do this more effectively.

## MORE DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

**2 DECEMBER 8.00PM – ADVENT PRAYER AND PRAISE – WAITING FOR GOD  
EVERY WEEK ON ZOOM\***

**12 DECEMBER 9.30AM – MEN'S BREAKFAST – ON ZOOM\***

**14 DECEMBER 7.30PM – BRIDGING THE GAP – ON ZOOM\***

**16 DECEMBER 12.30-4.00PM VERY MERRY FEAST OF FUN FOOD HAMPERS**

**20 DECEMBER 3.30PM – OUTDOOR CAROL SERVICE – ST PANCRAS CHURCHYARD**

**21 DECEMBER 3.20PM – CHRISTINGLE – need to book** (see [Facebook](#) for details)

**23 DECEMBER 3.20PM – CHRISTINGLE – need to book** (see [Facebook](#) for details)

\*Please contact us via 01752 772499 or [admin@stps.org.uk](mailto:admin@stps.org.uk) for details of how to join us on Zoom.

## ADVENT WINDOW TRAIL

Join the Christmas trail through Pennycross and Peverell. Each weekday in December another person will be putting up a special picture on a window in their house related to a Christmas carol or song. The details and map below will help you to walk or drive around the parish and see the windows as they go up. At the weekend we are encouraging people to check out the developing Advent Calendar on the St Pancras Church Centre doors (see more below).

Thank you to everyone who is creating and putting up pictures and especially to Jessica for all the coordination and preparation.



# ADVENT WINDOW TRAIL



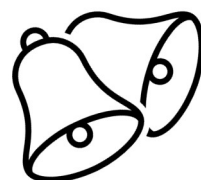
Every day from December 1<sup>st</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup>, a new Advent Window near you will be revealed! Find the addresses below. On the weekends, make your way to the car park in front of St Pancras Church, Honicknowle Lane, PL2 3QX to see the beautiful windows, created by members of the local community and children from Pennycross School.

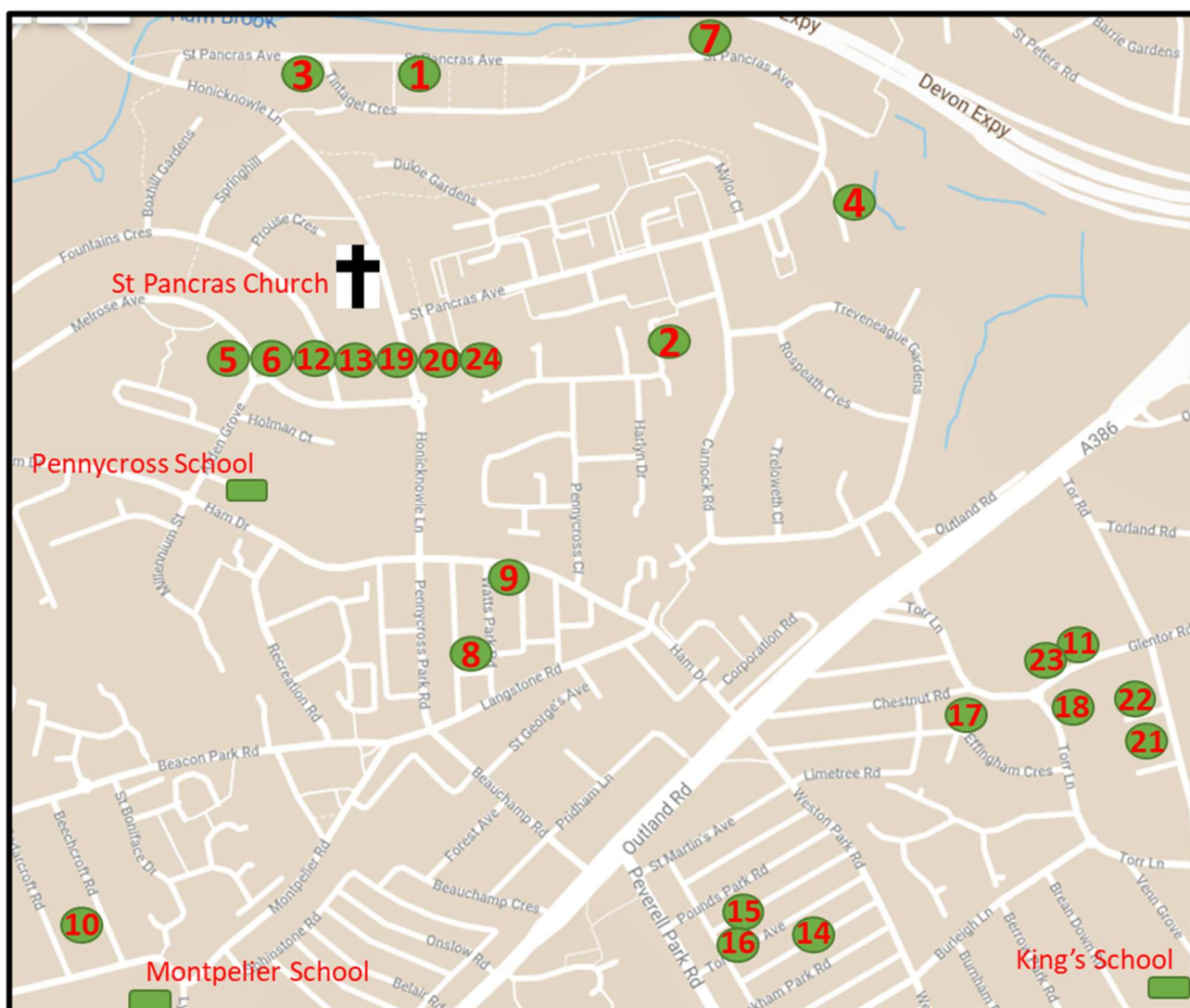


- 1 205 St Pancras Avenue
- 2 50 Marazion Way
- 3 217 St Pancras Avenue
- 4 13 Downgate Gardens
- 5 *St Pancras Church*
- 6 *St Pancras Church*
- 7 136 St Pancras Avenue
- 8 5 Watts Park Road
- 9 32 Watts Park Road
- 10 7 Beechcroft Road
- 11 66 Glentor Road
- 12 *St Pancras Church*



- 13 *St Pancras Church*
- 14 30 Torr View Avenue
- 15 18 Pounds Park Road
- 16 13 Torr View Avenue
- 17 1 Chestnut Road
- 18 88 Torr Lane
- 19 *St Pancras Church*
- 20 *St Pancras Church: outdoor Carols by candlelight 4pm*
- 21 10 Tor Close & **Christingle**
- 22 3 Tor Close
- 23 66 Glentor Road & **Christingle**
- 24 St Pancras Church Windows





## CHURCH ADVENT CALENDAR WINDOW

Counting down to Christmas? We can't promise you chocolates or whiskey but come and see the church's advent calendar on the Church Centre doors. Every day at 4pm a new picture will be unveiled on the door and online, connected with the Christmas story. Thanks so much to Sarah who has worked on this together with people in the congregation, Feast of Fun families and local schools.





## EMOTIONAL LOGIC

By Mariska Minter

It has been a tough, strange year for all of us hasn't it? Under COVID we have all struggled ... If you class suffering as being either, something you do not have but long for or something you do have but wish with all your heart that you did not, then we can say that this year, and in our lives as a whole, we all suffer.

For me, my particular suffering has centred around my second marriage breaking down during lockdown, my younger daughter leaving home for university and exploring old pains from my childhood – which was bleak and difficult in many ways.

I have been caught up in a maelstrom of emotion – circling through grief, shame, rage, guilt, denial, shock, sorrow, bargaining, depression and loss. It has made me feel a tangled mess, as if I am caught spinning in a whirlpool that is determined to drag me down. I have experienced this truth: emotions of grief go round and round – you can't feel two of them at the same time but you can certainly jolt unhelpfully through them back and forth and it can feel endless.

What can you do when you feel like this? My only hope has been to cling to the rock which is my faith, my love of Jesus and my determination to keep believing and seeing that he loves me. Slowly I have looked for the light, researching, reading and pondering – searching for “tools” that I can hold in my hands and use to find my way out.

I want to share with you here some thoughts from a talk that was hosted by Christians Together in Plymouth by Trevor and Marian Griffiths from the Centre of Emotional Logic (<https://www.emotionallogiccentre.org.uk/>). These truly have been a “tool” that has helped me and reshaped much of my thinking.

They started by explaining that we need to come into harmony with God's word when we talk or think about emotions. Emotions are a catalyst for connection with God and with each other – both in church and with our community. In particular, they connect us with those who are in stress, need and hurt. It never helps to be self-critical about our own emotions – because that only encourages others to be critical about their emotions. It is only when we accept and process our own emotions that we can learn to look truly at others who are emotional and see past the mess, beyond the emotion.

Emotions connected with loss are not comfortable. Loss, yearning, sadness, grief and anger feel terrible, but they were placed in us by a loving God for good. You only grieve if you have loved – it is the complementary other half to joy

Unfortunately, we can become stuck in our loss emotions. However, Trevor and Marian urged us that we shouldn't see them as a place where we stay but rather as stepping-stones onwards. They pointed out that the root of the word “emotion” is motion – God placed them in us to help movement from the place of loss to healing. This is often not the teaching of the ‘world’. When we ask what we should do with our loss emotions the world says we should ignore them (stuff them down) or feel them then throw them away

As Christians however we have a very different model – that of God. The most cursory glance through the Bible shows us that God gets angry (though he is slow to anger), broken (see Ezekiel 6.9), he grieves and feels sadness and loss. Look at Jesus in the Temple – he got angry BUT, he got angry for a reason and he did not stay angry.

So, we need to learn how to use our emotions constructively. In the gospels we see that is what Jesus models. For example, when he heard of his cousin, John the Baptist's death, he was shocked and he needed time away for himself to deal with the shock and process his grief. He took his shock and did something with it that helped him. He took the time for himself that he needed before he could move on, he did not ignore it.

Can we learn to see that God intends each one of the loss emotions to be used as a stepping stone out of grief to healing, and that when we move from one stepping stone to the next these are for all of us times when we can grow?

Here is an example they gave of a process you can use to start untangling the mess – an action plan

1) List your losses

2) Note down what emotions are attached to each loss

3) Take one loss from your list (don't pick the biggest loss for the first loss you look at – pick something that is measurable and achievable)

4) Think of "bargaining" – we could use bargaining on a path to acceptance. Ask yourself "What can I do to recover from this loss?" Decide to use the energy created when you "bargain" to take risks and deal with things in new ways

Other examples of stepping stones and growth points they gave were: –

Shock – I need to stop and feel safe – give yourself time for processing the loss

Denial – Shelve the problem for a while – conserves your energy to get things done

Anger – Take action to deal with the anger – this can provide the energy to change things for the better and move on

Guilt – Use this to think "what went wrong?" – this helps you learn what to do to prevent it happening again. (Note - guilt is not necessarily meaning you did something wrong but more a self-question – could I have done things differently or what have I learnt – don't let the enemy make you believe lies about yourself and therefore trap you in guilt)

Depression – Is inbuilt - it is unpleasant to feel but it has a good and useful purpose - you feel empty, limited and powerless. This means we see we have limits, and we don't like it, but once you have recognised and owned your limits you move into a place of decision. We recognise we have limits but we are part of a bigger plan and purpose – we can now move on and humbly explore. You can choose to move to a healthy sadness of acceptance, accepting you have limits and letting go of things – seeing your limits might allow you to stop trying to do the impossible.

Finally I am learning this. Sadness may remain but I don't have to "live in" the sadness. In true acceptance the sadness is balanced by the will and energy to carry on exploring life. 'Healthy' sadness is something we feel when we think about the loss, but it is not there all the time. It is possible to feel glad to be alive even though bad things have happened - life is forever renewed.