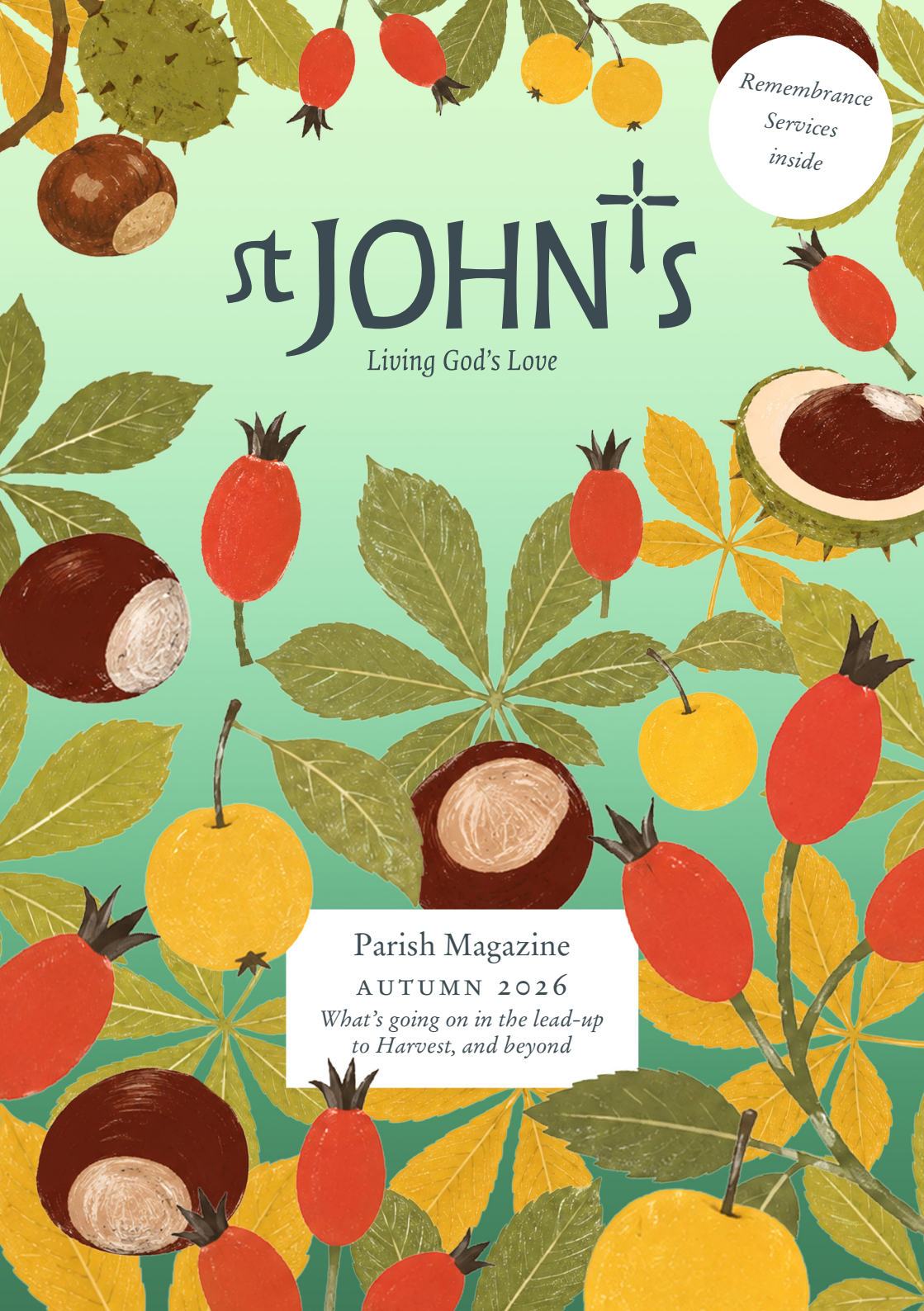




*Remembrance
Services
inside*

st JOHN⁺'s

Living God's Love

Parish Magazine

AUTUMN 2026

*What's going on in the lead-up
to Harvest, and beyond*

last rags of autumn
yellow flutters
on a black bough

Haiku by Susan Lee Kerr. First published in *Blithe Spirit* November 2015. Haiku in English are based on a Japanese form of poetry, briefly conveying a moment of awareness of nature or human life.

Thoughtful, calmly spiritual, this page in the magazine is intended as a space for reflection. St John's Church and its Remembrance Garden is open every day from 10.00am to 5.00pm for anyone who wants a quiet place for personal reflection.

st JOHN'S

Living God's Love

AUTUMN 2026

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Jane Bidder Journalist, Daily Telegraph



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Vicar's Welcome

Welcome to our Autumn issue of St John's Parish magazine. I always find that September feels like a new beginning, and I wonder what you might think about starting or stopping as you start afresh after the holidays? Of course you can do something new at any time and inside you can read about 5 people from St John's taking their next steps in their journey with God, or about the Revd Bliss who decided, aged 68, to visit England for the first time. As always, if you're part of a group or organisation that has something to share with your community, do let us know and we can help.

With blessings,

Revd Tim

www.stjohnsharpenden.org.uk



Canterbury Cathedral: Revd Tim brought Dean Bliss Spillar to meet Canterbury Dean David Monteith, here with his partner David Hamilton.

Come and Sing Evensong at St John's Sunday 13th September

Enthusiastic singers of all ages and voice-parts, do join us!

Rehearsal 3.30pm

Choral Evensong 5.00pm



Led by local organist Russell Tucker, with Matt Harrison accompanying. Music includes Brewer's Magnificat and *Nunc Dimittis* in D, Smith Responses, and 'The Heavens are Telling' from Haydn's *The Creation*.

For further information and to register your interest, please contact
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Harvest Festival

Sunday 4th October 2026 9.30am

All Age Eucharist

Let us fear the Lord our God, who gives the rain in its season, the autumn rain and the spring rain, and keeps for us the weeks appointed for the harvest.

Jeremiah 5:24

Harvest Festival this year is also the Feast of St Francis, patron saint of animals and ecology. As we give thanks for the bounty of creation, Rainbows, Brownies and Guides lead prayers in a special service of thanksgiving, and St John's collects donations for the King's Pantry Foodbank.

Please bring tinned and packaged food, like cereal, coffee and tea bags, tinned fish and meat, cooking sauce in jars, long-life juice and milk, jam, tinned sponge and rice puddings. Donations can also be made at Co-op in Southdown.

The King's Pantry Food Bank was established in 2013 as a community initiative to support local people experiencing financial hardship in the Harpenden area. Originally set up by Bethany Community Church in partnership with Harpenden Money Advice Centre, the project joined forces with The Salvation Army to meet growing community needs.

For anyone who is struggling to afford food, the Food Bank takes referrals through a number of agencies, including Harpenden Money Advice Centre, Harpenden Trust, Citizens Advice and local Church offices. Or see bethanycc.uk

'The good news is that we are seeing households get to the point where they no longer need our support,' reports the King's Pantry. 'Their finances are moving in the right direction, and they are out of debt.'

A month of Sundays

The Reverend Bliss Spillar, Dean of the Anglican Cathedral of the Good Shepherd, Lima was the guest of Revd Tim for the month of June. It was the first visit to the UK for this Texan from Peru.

Highlights for him: The warm, loving people and fellowship that is St John's Harpenden... the quiet solitude of the rectory garden... the visit to St. Albans and stay at Canterbury Cathedral.





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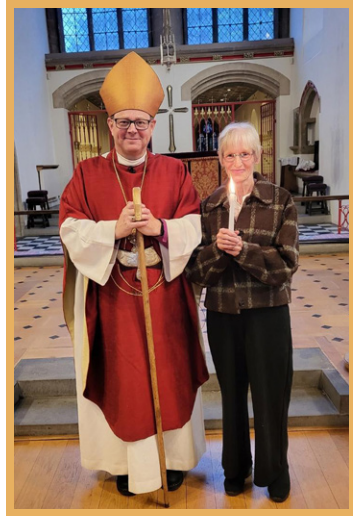
Confirming their vows

St John's hosted the Wheathampstead Deanery Confirmation Service on 11th June. Bishop Rob Wickham confirmed 14 people of all ages and Revd Bliss Spillar (Dean from the Anglican Cathedral in Peru, see p7) preached on the theme of encouragement. Among them were five from St John's: Clemency Venner, Sophie Bygrave, Tracey Bates, Summer Bates and Sophie Gratton.



My favourite part of confirmation was the sessions beforehand. I could express my opinions freely and that helped me learn about confirmation. I also loved the service as it was really beautiful and I felt one with God.

Clemency Venner



It was such a thoughtful, personalised service. Everyone was so friendly and welcoming as we had people from other churches all together with the same purpose. It meant a great deal.

Tracey Bates

Bags of blessings

Sunday 6th September 2026 9.30am

All Age Eucharist

Back to school, back to work, off to university, revving up your creativity. Returning to normal, or a new adventure? Bring your school bags, backpacks, briefcases, laptops for a blessing at the altar on the first Sunday in September.



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SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

Can you find 8 differences between these two pictures?

Look closely!



Ever wonder what Harvest is like in other countries?

Along with the 8 differences in these two pictures, try to identify the Peruvian crops.

Some shown here are native to Peru, some are grown as crop products. Fruits: pineapple, papaya, mango, oranges or sweet limes, aguaymanto (goldenberries), blueberries. Vegetables: corn (maiz choclo), sweet potatoes (camote), chili peppers (aji), bell pepper (capiscum), ginger root, chard. Now colour them in. Name the background location and the people who lived there.

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DID YOU KNOW?

You may have passed this little 'chapel' along Grove Road near the Oakley Road playground and allotments - a small white building set back a bit from the road and surrounded by a fence. Whatever is it and how did it get there?

Harpenden History Society member David James was told its background by his father: in the 1930s when there was building going on in Grove Road and the adjoining roads, the houses near the end of Grove

Road were too low to be able to make use of the sewer tunnel. Instead they had septic tanks. But eventually a pumping station was installed to pump the sewage into a higher-level pipe that would drain by gravity down to the sewage tunnel at the bottom of Piggottshill Lane.

Not a chapel, but a pumping station! It's still there and in use. You may see water company vehicles parked outside, giving a clue to its purpose.



Not for prayer but good clean air - the curious 'chapel' on Grove Road.

Young Composers' Christmas Carol Competition

Do you know a young person who loves music or enjoys being creative? St John's is delighted to launch its Young Composers' Christmas Carol Competition 2026, open to all school-age children, up to sixth form.



Entrants are invited to compose an original Christmas carol for choir, inspired by the Christmas story. No previous composing experience is needed, and entries may be submitted individually or in small groups. The winning carol will be performed by the choir at our Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols on Sunday 20th December 2026, with the winning composer also receiving a £50 voucher and certificate.

The closing date for entries is Friday 16th October 2026. Scan the QR code for full details, or contact Matt Harrison, Director of Music, at music@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk.



Meaning of Life Discussion Group

Continuing our thoughtful new discussion group! Monthly after church on Sundays. Meets in the committee room at 11.00am after the 9.30am

Eucharist. Lasts an hour.

Everyone welcome!



27th September:
'Are We Souls, Bodies or Both?'

25th October:
'Does Death Give Life Meaning –
or Take It Away?'

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Repair Fair and Share

Eco church hosted another Repair Fair at St John's run by the St Albans District Fixers in May. Many people brought along broken electrical items and clothing in need of repair, and the team of skilled amateur fixers worked their magic and mended 33 items including powered and not powered. They also offered advice on 15 they couldn't mend. Repair Fairs are held each month in St Albans and Harpenden, they are a lot of fun, and you might learn how to fix things yourself. To find out when the next one is, or to be a volunteer fixer, see sustainablestalbans.org

Sustainable St Albans also has a 'Library of Things' called Share St Albans.

Did you know that you can borrow household equipment, DIY and gardening equipment, games and party stuff? By borrowing something for a small fee, you can save money, save on storage and help to reduce consumption and waste. Well worth investigating. You can also donate items in good condition. See www.sharestalbans.org

*Margaret Charlston,
St John's Eco Church.*



A troubled toaster comes up well at the Repair Fair - I'll toast to that!

Join St John's Junior Choir!

Do you enjoy singing? Children from Year 2 to Year 8 are warmly invited to join St John's Junior Choir.

We usually sing at one Sunday service each month, as well as occasional special services and events. Rehearsals take place after the Sunday morning service, helping to avoid clashes with many after-school clubs and activities. Children are supported in developing musical skills and confidence step by step. To find out more, contact music@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk



"I like singing with everybody as it makes a lovely sound!"

"We get to sing at weddings!"

"We get paid!"



© Michael Readman

A warm welcome



St John's Harpenden, a friendly Anglican church with a warm welcome. This photo was taken at the celebration of the birthday of our patron saint, St John the Baptist, on Sunday 21st June 2026. For our Patronal Festival, a barbeque followed! PS, please note, his actual birthday is 24th June.

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SPACe Southdown Performing Arts Centre

Phase 1 of our building work at Southdown Performing Arts Centre (SPACe) has been completed giving step-free access into the building, an automatic door and an additional toilet. We have a busy programme this Autumn. Do check our website for the very latest information.

Friday Afternoons at SPACe

2.30pm For tea, cake and musical entertainment, on 11th September, 2nd October, 6th November, 4th December. Tickets £5, from Southdown Hardware or online at ticketsource.co.uk

More Events!

Saturday 26 th September	Quiz night with fish and chips
Friday October 10 th	Jazz café
Friday 13 th November	Putteridge Bury Gilbert & Sullivan Society event (tickets via www.pbgs.org)
Friday 27 th November	Southdown Christmas Lights Switch on. SPACe will be open so do come in for a mince pie and more!

Stage Explorers Drama Club

Starts Monday September 14th with two groups, 4.00 – 5.00pm for children aged 7 – 11 and 5.15 – 6.15pm for children aged 11 – 16. For fun and to develop skills including physical theatre, devising, and immersive theatre led by our professional Drama course leader Emma Hart. Cost £100 per term; assisted places to some children. Email for more information.

Our aim at SPACe is to be a Christian performing arts centre offering an affordable and inclusive venue with events which build community and explore life and faith.

Email: office@southdownspace.org
www.southdownspace.org



Need a prayer?

St Luke's Cell Prayer Group are always happy to pray for you (confidentially if needed). The group is named after the disciple and physician Luke, who is the patron saint of doctors. A request can be as simple as a name, if preferred. We don't need to know details in order to pray. Members pray individually and also meet monthly to pray for anyone in the parish who asks for prayers for themselves or for their loved ones.

If you would like us to pray for you or someone else then please contact Michael Hughes 01582 765576

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Thought for Autumn

Although I am decades away from being a student, and years away from being a classroom teacher, I always want to buy some new crayons and a fresh pad of paper at this time of year. To me, Autumn feels more like a new year than New Year does! It is good for us all to consider a fresh new season and to refresh our commitment to worshipping together.

Our church liturgical year marks this season as 'Creationtide', including Harvest and the feast day for St Francis, both of which remind us of our connections to God's glorious creation and our responsibilities towards it. We will be celebrating Harvest on October 4th and warmly invite you to join us!

We hope to see you soon, with or without the new crayons.

*Lauryn Awbrey,
Reader at St John's*



Socialise this Autumn!

Scrabble Third Saturdays

Scrabble, board games and cards
1.30pm from 19th September

T@3 Fourth Fridays

Tea and cake for Southdown elders
3.00pm 25th September, 23rd October

Soup Lunch Thursdays

Weekly warming in the chill.
Free, but donations welcome.
12 - 2.00pm from 1st October

Pints of View at the Queen's Head

Mix, mingle and talk lively topics.
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Little Acorns

Little Acorns is a friendly toddler group for babies, pre-school children and their carers. Parents and carers have a chance to enjoy coffee, homemade cake and chat. The children have a healthy snack, activities, a story and singing. We meet in St. John's Hall on Tuesdays in term time, 10.00 – 11.30am.



Autumn term dates:

8th September – 15th December

Harvest Celebration 29th September!

No meeting on Tuesday 27th October as it is half term

All are welcome. No booking necessary. A voluntary donation is all that is asked. For more information, please contact parish.office@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk
Telephone 01582 712776

Toddler Service

Thursdays, 10.15am

Autumn term: 10th September – 17th December

Half-term holiday: 29th October

You and your toddler are invited to St John's inclusive, relaxed toddler service Thursdays at 10.15 in term time. We start in church with a beverage and cake, then tell a Bible story with an interactive craft. You don't need to be baptised or a member of St John's to come. It's a welcoming space, do join us! To find out more, email the Vicar at vicar@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk



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150 years! Arise, Shine, Get Up and Glow!

There have been many services, fund raising activities and celebrations around the world in honour of the 150th anniversary of Mothers' Union, which included a wonderful service led by the Archbishop of Canterbury at St Paul's Cathedral on June 10th.

On Sunday September 13th at our 9.30am Eucharist members of St John's Branch will parade the MU banner, lead the Prayers of Intercession, read the lesson and talk about this mass global movement for change which addresses poverty, illiteracy and gender-based violence, amongst other things.

Help us to celebrate all that has been achieved and to reflect God's glory and the light of Christ so that we continue the legacy of Mary Sumner and light the way for generations to come.

On first Thursdays we meet in the church Committee room at 2.30pm and all are welcome.

October 1st Andrew Ballard: The Life and Legacy of Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy, the WWI Army Chaplain and hero known as 'Woodbine Willie'.

November 5th Carol Cooke: The Life and Work of John Bunyan with extracts from *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

Carol Cooke, Branch Leader. Contact parish.office@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk



The Diocesan lunch in St Albans in July celebrated 150 years of Mothers' Union. Joined by Carol and Alison, the MU card stall run by Brenda and Sandra was very popular as always.



St John's Junior and Mini Church

St John's expanded provision for children is tailored around school term dates. Junior and Mini Church meet at 9.25am in the church hall and rejoin their families half-way through the service so we share in Communion together.

Junior Church - For primary school ages, reception and up. Children learn about God in a fun and inclusive way, exploring arts and crafts and playing games for greater understanding.

Mini Church - For preschool children under 5 years old with their adult. A chance to explore, play and hear the story that Junior Church is learning.

All Age Eucharist - At 9.30am we are all in church together, in a Communion service with the sermon and hymns geared for younger members.

Autumn Term Dates 2026

6th September All Age Eucharist (and Bag Blessing, see p9)

13th September Junior and Mini Church

20th September Junior and Mini Church

27th September Junior and Mini Church

4th October All Age Eucharist - Harvest Festival

11th October Junior and Mini Church

18th October Junior and Mini Church

No meeting 25th October & 1st November due to Half Term

Term resumes 8th November – 20th December

There is generally no special children's provision on Sundays either side of half-term and on Sundays in school holidays, but we always have children's books and colouring sheets at the back of church.

For more information contact

parish.office@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk

Telephone 01582 712776

Local Treasures: Paul Ramsay

Paul Ramsay has been fixing computers in Harpenden and the surrounding area for over 22 years — long enough to have sorted out machines for parents, and now their grown-up children too. Harpenden Computer Services business moved from Thrales End Farm to Southdown Industrial Estate back in 2019 and has been located in Unit 17 ever since.

Paul started from a simple conviction: that nobody should have to bin a perfectly fixable laptop just because they didn't know who to ask. That idea still drives everything HCS does today.

'People either don't know there's an alternative to just buying new, or they feel embarrassed about what went wrong,' Paul says. 'My job is to reach both groups.' He will look over a computer or laptop you bring in and tell you honestly what's wrong and what your options are, with no obligation.

The most common problems Paul sees:

- Laptops running slowly — usually junk and old files, not a hardware problem
- Viruses and malware picked up without the owner realising
- Broken or cracked laptop screens — more common than people think, and often repairable
- Machines that have never had an update or clean-up in years
- Devices written off as 'dead' that are perfectly fixable

Paul's advice: 'If something's been playing up for months and you've just been living with it — just give us a call on 01582 769 207 and bring it in. That's what we're here for.'



Screen legend Paul Ramsay



Remembrance Services

All Souls' Service

Remembering departed loved ones
Saturday 31st October 2026 3.00pm



Everyone is welcome.
The service is followed by refreshments.

Names to be remembered can be added on the day, but ideally please email the Parish Office in advance

parish.office@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk



Remembrance Sunday

Sunday 8th November 2026 9.30am
Parish Eucharist



CHRISTIAN AID WEEK May 2026 results



Many thanks to all who contributed to Christian Aid Week in May 2026, especially the dedicated band of volunteers who delivered the familiar red collection envelopes to many of the houses in the parish. St Johns raised £994 plus £187 in gift aid, a total of £1,181. The total for the whole of Harpenden was £4,269, including gift aid.

We are so grateful for the generosity of all who contributed. This year's collection supported urban farming projects in cities in Kenya, providing tools and training to help parents grow food to feed their families by growing crops in the heart of the city.

*Margaret Charlston,
St John's Christian Aid Week co-ordinator*

Parish registers

Baptisms

Welcome to the family of God

19th April 2026

Florence Joel

31st May 2026

Libby Dunn

14th June 2026

Alex Garnett

Amelia Garnett

Funerals in Church

May they rest in peace

4th June 2026

Marjorie Mansfield

Confirmations

Confirming promises made at baptism

11th June 2026

by Bishop Rob Wickham

Clemency Venner, Sophie Bygrave,

Tracey Bates, Summer Bates,

Sophie Gratton

Marriages

Joined by God

6th June 2026

Alexander Charles Smith and

Paige Olivia Tompkins

Christening at St John's

Are you interested in having
your child christened?

If you live in Southdown you can have
your child christened at St John's (even
if you're not a regular church goer)

If you'd like to have a chat about what's
involved please email
parish.office@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk



Regular Services at St John's

Sundays

- 8.00am Holy Communion in the Lady Chapel
9.30am Parish Eucharist (*also live streamed*) followed by coffee in the hall.
All Age Eucharist, *normally first Sundays of the month*
5.00pm Evening service, please see website, weekly e-newsletter, pewsheet or church porch

Wednesdays

- 10.30am Holy Eucharist is celebrated in the Lady Chapel

Monday - Friday inclusive

- 9.30am Morning prayer is said

Church is open every day from 10.00am to 5.00pm.

Service times may change so please check the calendar on our website or sign up there to our weekly or monthly newsletter www.stjohnsharpenden.org.uk

Watch our Parish Eucharist and other special services on our YouTube channel - search for "St John's Church, Harpenden" or visit:

<https://www.youtube.com/StJohnsChurchHarpenden>

The Parish Office is open Monday – Thursday 10.00am - 2.00pm



PARISH OFFICE

For enquiries, including marriages, baptisms, funerals and hall bookings, please contact the parish office.

OPEN

MONDAY - THURSDAY

10.00am - 2.00pm

Amanda Knights

Telephone: 01582 712776
parish.office@
stjohnsharpenden.org.uk

If you are in need of help or know anyone in need of support, please contact support@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk

Parish Directory

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Our magazine is published four times a year and is delivered free to all homes and businesses in the parish.

We are very grateful to those who write contributions and the many volunteers who distribute and deliver the magazines, come rain or shine, to everyone in the parish.

We welcome advertisements and are delighted to be able to provide full colour.

St John's PCC takes no responsibility for statements made in advertisements or other content in this magazine nor linked websites, nor for any matter arising therefrom.

To protect privacy, personal email addresses do not appear in the web edition, unless requested.

*Remembrance
Services
inside*



What's going on in the lead-up to Harvest, and beyond

www.stjohnsharpenden.org.uk

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Parish Office 01582 712776



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