

**Welcome!**

We are so glad you are here with us today. We welcome those who are new to the Church. If you would like more information about us, please take and complete a slip in the Welcome Area and give it to a Steward or a Minister, or scan the QR code, also in the Welcome Area.

**Collect for This Sunday**

Almighty God, you show to those who are in error the light of your truth, that they may return to the way of righteousness: grant to all those who are admitted into the fellowship of Christ's religion, that they may reject those things that are contrary to their profession, and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same; through our Lord Jesus Christ, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

**Today at St. John's**

8.00am	Communion	Reading: Matthew 19:1-12 <i>Preacher: Peter Chamberlin</i>
10:00am	Morning Worship (APCM and lunch after)	Reading: Matthew 19:1-12 <i>Preacher: Peter Chamberlin</i>
6:30pm	Evening Worship	Is the Spirit really a person? <i>Preacher: George Belfield</i>

**Emmanuel will join St. John's at 10am.**

**Next week at St. John's**

8.00am	Communion	Reading: Matthew 19:13-30
10:00am	Communion	Reading: Matthew 19:13-30
6:30pm	Evening Worship	Did Adam really exist?

**Next week at Emmanuel**

**(Emmanuel service times will change to 4pm from April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025)**

9:30am	Morning Worship	Reading: Matthew 18:15-35 (video)
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*Gluten free wafers are available for communicants. Non-alcoholic alternative is available during communion.*

## Events This Week:

Mon 17 <sup>th</sup>	9:30am	Ladies' Bible group	Church lounge
Tues 18 <sup>th</sup>	6:00pm 7:15pm 8:00pm	Dangerous Kids Club (7-10s) Youth groups (11-18s) Music group rehearsal	Youth Centre Youth Centre Church
Wed 19 <sup>th</sup>	10.00am 2:00pm 7:45pm	Men's Bible group Knit&Natter <b>Lent Courses</b>	Church lounge Emmanuel Church
Thurs 20 <sup>th</sup>	9:30am	First-steps toddler group	Youth Centre

It is not too late to join one of our **Lent Courses, sign-up or just turn up!**

**Garden Tools:** If you have tools that you no longer use, the volunteers who help maintain the church grounds would really appreciate them. Please speak to Ken.

**Ladies Curry Night, Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> March, 7:30pm:** Join us for an evening of food and fellowship. The event is aimed at building relationships amongst women, so we are not having a long talk. Guests are very welcome. Cost £15. Food and soft drinks provided, please bring your own alcohol. Sign up on the sheet in the welcome area or by emailing [chamberlin.joanna@gmail.com](mailto:chamberlin.joanna@gmail.com) by **Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> March**.

**Easter Weekend Choir 2025 - Singers needed!** We will be forming a choir to sing on Good Friday afternoon (2pm) and Easter Sunday morning (10am) and welcome all ages and abilities. There is no requirement to read music or to have sung in the choir before. Please contact [robin@stjohnswoking.uk](mailto:robin@stjohnswoking.uk) to register your interest or find out more.

**Rehearsals: Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> April - 8pm and Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> April - 3pm**

**Finance flash update:** After 2 months in 2025, inward giving is £45,000 and other incomes such as lettings is £10,000, giving total income of £55,000. Total costs were £57,000.

*Can you do the sums, to work out our financial position is not healthy?!*

**SGP Prayers: CRANLEIGH BAPTIST CHURCH:** Pray for a series of outreach events we are running under the banner of Share LIFE through life. All welcome if you would like to join us or recommend to people you know local to Cranleigh. Pray for our recent gift day. Give thanks for God's provision and the generosity He inspires in His people but our prayer is for a higher percentage of income to come through regular giving rather than one-off gifts.

**Are you new to St. John's church? We would love to get your name and contact number. This QR code will take you to a secure online form.**



## **"Where two or three come together in my name..."**

**16<sup>th</sup> March**

Last week when preaching, there was a verse I skipped over - time didn't allow me to say anything about it at all. It's probably one you've heard Christians quote many times – *"where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."* – Matthew 18:20.

Several points seem to be implied by Jesus' words.

- It is a striking claim to divinity – God alone can be in more places than one at the same time, and always present with His people.
- That to stay at home and fail to assemble for public worship is to miss out on the special meeting of Christ with his people – a strong incentive to be present!
- Most often I hear this verse referred to when only a small number have turned up at a prayer meeting or church event. It's a consolation and encouragement for us that although we're small in number, Jesus, the King of kings, is nevertheless present, and the seeming feebleness of our numbers belies the true nature of what is happening! I've almost certainly used the verse to make this point myself!

Does Jesus intend to make all of these points? I wonder whether we have a case of 'right doctrine, wrong passage' here. It is certainly true – we know it from other teachings of Jesus – that he is present with the individual believer, and specially with his gathered church (e.g. Matthew 28:20 "And surely I am with you always, even to the very end of the age"; John 14:18 "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you").

I'll admit that verses 18-20 are not straightforward to understand. But in the context of Matthew 18, the gathering of two or three has already been mentioned just four verses earlier: *"16 But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'"* This verse concerns the process for confronting a brother or sister who has sinned against another member of the church fellowship, so that they may confess and repent of their sin and the damaged relationship may be restored. The footnote in our Bible points us to Deuteronomy 19:15, which confirms the idea that the 'two or three' in view are witnesses – not (in this instance) to the initial sin, but to how the process of reconciliation goes.

That suggests that verses 19 and 20 are about the agreement of witnesses in a situation where one brother or sister in the church has wounded another. The presence of Jesus with them ratifies the matter. In the words of the bible scholar Don Carson "his [Jesus'] point in this context is that heaven is in accord (v.19) with believers who follow his instructions regarding church discipline" which some sinful action by one believer against another has necessitated.

Or to put it positively in the words of another writer, "Jesus is saying that whenever the church is pursuing and is involved in a reconciliation process with someone who has refused to repent, they can rest assured that God's blessing is with them in their efforts."

Does this mean that Jesus isn't present when a few believers gather to pray? No. But it does mean that we (and especially I!) should read carefully – which very often means reading the verse in its context, not in isolation.

May we all grow in our ability to correctly handle the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15)!

Peter

## Sermon Notes

*Someone from our Prayer Ministry Team (with **blue lanyards**) will be available after the 10am service to pray with those who would like prayer.*

Our Parish Safeguarding Officer, Mary Kirkman, is available for advice or to talk through concerns relating to safeguarding.

Tel 07763 456015 or email: [safeguarding@stjohnswoking.uk](mailto:safeguarding@stjohnswoking.uk)

*Recordings of our livestreamed services are available on our website.*

### **St. John the Baptist Church**

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