

## The Churchyard and COVID

With the corona virus pandemic resulting in strict lockdowns, including the closing of church buildings, it seemed important to spread the message that although the building was closed, the church was not. The All Saints churchyard is a beautiful space and many people, taking advantage of the fact that outdoor exercise was still allowed, walked through it.

During Advent, the North Porch was transformed into the stable awaiting the birth of Jesus. Renée Booker's grandson made an authentic stable, Fiona Earle and Mihaela Wraith transformed the area, with animals peering over the stable walls and Mary, Joseph and a shepherd taking their places. As we neared Christmas, the baby arrived, followed later by the wise men.

A Christmas trail with links to videos of the Christmas story supplied by Scripture Union and accessed via QR codes was set up. A second trail of carols was made up of boards painted by students from Simon Balle School, and members of the Hertford Art Society. Canvas posters with illustrations depicting Christmas carols were fastened to tree trunks, and many trees were festooned with decorations which stood up to the weather remarkably well. This was a community effort with the Dean family, Fiona Earle, and the All Saints Art Group decorating specific trees, and many other families contributing to the general effect, providing decorations and Christmas lights. Children from Messy Church, and from the Dell (Abel Smith) also decorated trees.

With lockdown continuing during Lent and Easter, we decided to focus once again on the churchyard as a means of sharing the message of God's love. The theme was Love of God, Love of our neighbour, Love of self and Love of our planet. This time, members of the congregation shared their paintings and photographs, and posters were printed using Biblical verses. Hearts were hung from the trees and shrubs. Luella, Mario, Soraia and Isabel were responsible for much of the background work for both of these projects.

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