

Lark Valley and North Bury Team Ministry

VIRAL BULLETIN

12 January 2025

Epiphany ~ Baptism of Christ

*Please forward this to anyone you know who might not be in our Google group.
For information about us please visit: www.northburychurches.org.uk*



By the River Lark in Bury St Edmunds

January 2025

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Epiphany: Baptism of Christ

Isaiah 43.1-7 Psalm 29 Acts 8.14-17 Luke 3.15-17,21-22

We are still in the season of the Epiphany and we remember that the word Epiphany means *manifestation* or *showing forth*. Each Sunday gospel reading focuses on a particular manifestation or showing forth of Jesus to the world. Last week, we gave thanks for the visit of the wise men to the young Jesus and now our gospel reading tells us of his baptism by John the Baptist.

Luke speaks of the buzz of expectation that surrounds John the Baptist, when all the people are wondering, “Is John the Messiah?” Is John going to be the great leader who will rescue his people from the hated grip of the Romans?

However, John is very modest, very humble, as he says no, he is not the one. He says he isn’t worthy to untie the sandals of the one who is coming. Attending to other people’s sandals and feet was a job that nobody wanted to do, so it was carried out by the slave with the lowest status in the household. When John talks like this, he is making himself even lower than the lowest household slave.

Then Luke tells us what happened to Jesus after his baptism. We might like to bear in mind that Jesus is constantly at prayer, but it is most particularly noted in Luke’s gospel that he prays before the important events in his life. Jesus is praying after his baptism and we are told that the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily, physical form, like a dove. And then the voice of God comes from heaven saying “you are my Son, the Beloved, with you I am well pleased.”

Perhaps we might like to consider how we think of God, the Father of Jesus. For some people, their idea of God may be of someone who loves and cares for them, but for others it can be more problematic.

If someone has had a difficult relationship with their own father, it can be hard not to project these experiences on to God the Father. Perhaps that’s why some people seem to think of God as a kind of frowning ogre, always

on the look-out for the slightest fault so as to condemn and punish their child. This sort of god is always disappointed by his child. But one thing is quite certain, the God and Father of Jesus is our God who takes delight in his Son.

This delight is also found in our reading from Isaiah. To make sense of it, we need to know that the people have been ignoring God. They have been turning their backs on him. But despite the fact that they have been behaving badly and some might think that they deserve to be punished, God doesn't actually do anything of the kind. Instead, he is there for them, he loves them. He calls his people precious and tells them not to fear, for he is with them.

Often in the gospels, Jesus tells people not to be afraid. He follows the example of his Father. Like Father, like Son, we might say. This is not the strict and cruel God that sometimes people imagine, but a God with a warm heart, who loves his people despite everything. They may have given up on him, but he never gives up on them. And he never gives up on us either.

God says to the Israelites, "I have called you by name, you are mine." When we are baptized, Christ claims us for his own and we receive the sign of the cross on our foreheads, the holy sign that signifies that we belong to him. In baptism, we are named because God says "I have called you by name, you are mine."

When we think about our belonging to God, we might like to imagine him saying to each one of us "you are my beloved Son, my beloved daughter, in you I am well pleased." just as he did at the baptism of Jesus. Perhaps, if we were baptized as babies, we find it hard to take this on board. That's where the sacrament of confirmation comes in because it gives us the chance to affirm our commitment to Jesus in the presence of the bishop.

In confirmation, we make the promises that our godparents made for us when we were too young to do this for ourselves. Some people say that our reading from Acts is a very early form of confirmation. We are never too old to be baptized or confirmed. God loves us, that's why he sent his Son Jesus to us, and because of Jesus we are assured of God's love for us.

As we celebrate the baptism of Jesus, we might also like to give thanks for our own baptism and confirmation.

Jesus is God incarnate, God in flesh manifesting himself to the world during his baptism, and so we have the boldness to call his Father our Father too. And every time we say the Lord's Prayer, we remind ourselves of this wonderful truth.

Julia Mann

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity ~ January 2025

The launch service this year is on 19 January at 6pm.

It is hosted by Garland Street Baptist Church and will include a simple Agape meal of bread and soup. To help with catering, it would be helpful if a rough idea of numbers could be sent to Helen h.moore883@btinternet.com or Gavin gshwalter@gmail.com

Do you believe this?

For 2025, materials were prepared by the ecumenical community at Bose in Northern Italy. As we celebrate 1,700 years since the Council of Nicaea, the worship service has at its heart the Nicene Creed. Reflecting this, the scripture readings for this year focus on belief. We are invited to reflect on the story of Martha's confession of faith in Jesus as narrated in John 11:17-27. We sit with Jesus' question to Martha: "Do you believe this?"

During the following week there will be lunchtime meetings at churches around the town:

Monday 20	St Mary's Church
Tuesday 21	Garland Street Baptist Church
Wednesday 22	Trinity Methodist Church
Thursday 23	St Edmund's Roman Catholic Church
Friday 24	United Reformed Church
Saturday 25	St John the Evangelist

Meetings start at 12:30pm.

Please bring your own lunch, the host church will provide hot drinks.

Lark Valley and North Bury Churches

SERVICES WEEK BEGINNING 12 JANUARY

SUNDAY 12 January Baptism of Christ *First Sunday of Epiphany*

8.00am	Holy Communion (BCP)	Culford
8.00am	Holy Communion (BCP)	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
9.30am	Holy Communion (CW)	St George's, Bury St Edmunds
9.30am	Holy Communion (CW)	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
10.00am	Eucharist (CW)	Lackford
10.00am	Eucharist (CW)	Fornham St Martin
11.00am	Sung Eucharist (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
5.00pm	Epiphany Carol Service	St John's, Bury St Edmunds

Monday 13 January Hilary, bishop, teacher of the faith, 367; *Kentigern (Mungo) missionary bishop, 603; George Fox, founder, Society of Friends (Quakers), 1691*

Tuesday 14 January

6.00pm	A Quiet Space	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
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Wednesday 15 January

8.30am	Morning Prayer (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
9.30am	Eucharist (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
5.00pm	Evening Prayer (CW)	St George's, Bury St Edmunds

Thursday 16 January

9.30am	Holy Communion (BCP)	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
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Friday 17 January *William Laud, archbishop*

5.15pm	Evening Prayer (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
6.00pm	Eucharist (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds

Saturday 18 January Antony of Egypt, hermit, abbot, 356

Charles Gore, bishop, founder, Community of the Resurrection, 1932

SUNDAY 19 January 2nd Sunday of Epiphany

8.00am	Holy Communion (BCP)	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
9.30am	Holy Communion (CW)	St George's, Bury St Edmunds
9.30am	Matins (BCP)	Timworth
10.00am	Eucharist (CW) <i>gathering at 9.15am</i>	West Stow
10.00am	Eucharist (CW)	Fornham All Saints
10.30am	All Age Worship	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
11.00am	Sung Eucharist (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds

Lark Valley and North Bury Churches
St John the Evangelist, Bury St Edmunds



Epiphany Carol Service

Candlelit people's procession

Epiphany carols

Readings and reflections

Seasonal refreshments

Sunday 12 January 2025 at 5pm

St John the Evangelist Bury St Edmunds IP33 1SN

Diarmaid MacCulloch back in Bury St Edmunds



ACCLAIMED HISTORIAN Professor Diarmaid MacCulloch is to make a return visit to St John's church in Bury St Edmunds on Thursday 6 February to speak about his recent book ***Lower than the Angels: A History of Sex and Christianity*** a major new assessment of one of the most controversial topics in history.

Thursday 6 February 2025 at 7.30pm

Admission £12 + 10% booking fee

Advance tickets from *We Got Tickets*

<https://wegottickets.com/event/642413>

Few matters produce more public interest and public anxiety than sex and religion. Much of the political contention and division in societies across the world centres on sexual topics, and one-third of the global population is Christian in background or outlook. The issue goes to the heart of present-day religion.

In a single lifetime, Christianity or historically Christian societies have witnessed one of the most extraordinary about-turns in attitudes to sex and gender in human history. There have followed revolutions in the place of women in society, a new place for same-sex love and a public exploration of gender and trans identity. For many the new situation has brought exciting liberation – for others, fury and fear.

Diarmaid MacCulloch seeks to calm fears and encourage understanding through telling the 3000-year-long tale of Christians and their forbears encountering sex, gender and the family, with noises off from their sacred

texts. The message of *Lower than the Angels* is simple, necessary and timely: to pay attention to the glorious complexity and contradictions in the history of Christianity. The reader can decide from the story told whether there is a single Christian theology of sex, or many contending voices in a symphony that is not at all complete. Oxford's Emeritus Professor of the History of the Church introduces an epic of ordinary and extraordinary Christians trying to make sense of themselves and of humanity's deepest desires, fears and hopes.

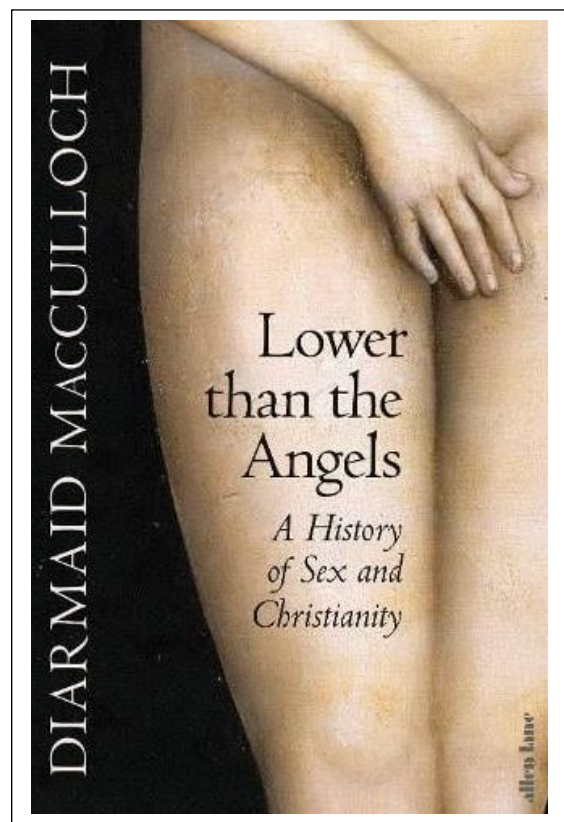
Diarmaid MacCulloch spent his childhood at Wetherden, where his father was rector. He is Emeritus Professor of the History of the Church at Oxford University. His *Thomas Cranmer* (1996) won the Whitbread Biography Prize, the James Tait Black Prize and the Duff Cooper Prize; *Reformation: Europe's House Divided 1490-1700* (2004) won the Wolfson Prize and the British Academy Prize. *A History of Christianity* (2010), which was adapted into a six-part BBC television series, was awarded the Cundill and Hessel-Tiltman Prizes. He was knighted in 2012 and was awarded the Norton Medlicott Medal by the Historical Association in 2022.

“Magisterial ... Diarmaid MacCulloch offers a history of sex and Christianity that is both confronting and reassuring in its detail and complexity, taking biblical scholarship and theological development seriously at the same time as insisting on the historian's independence. A thrilling read.”

Lucy Winkett, Financial Times

Contact: Adrian Mann
adrian.mann@btinternet.com
01284 753984
07771 593403

You can book by sending Adrian an email and paying on the door.





Big Garden Churchyard Birdwatch

Saturday, 25th January, 2025

2pm at St Lawrence, Lackford

Come and join us counting birds, making wildlife crafts and drinking hot chocolate. Please wear outdoor appropriate clothes.

Beetle Drive Supper

at

West Stow Hall

Saturday 25th January - 6.00pm



IN AID OF ST. MARY'S CHURCH, WEST STOW

FABRIC FUND

Tickets £13 for adults, £5 for children, to include baked potatoes with meat or
vegetarian chilli

Tickets available from

Eileen Gilbert eileengilbert54@aol.com Tel: 01284 728127

PLEASE BRING YOUR OWN BOTTLE!

Names for Charlie Haylock

At All Saints', Bury we are planning for a talk by **Charlie Haylock** on Saturday 8 February, 2025 in the afternoon, more details later. However, Charlie is going to be talking about the origins of surnames and would like some surnames to work on. If you are definitely coming to the talk, please send Sheila any names that you would like investigated at: shegreen60@googlemail.com

These can be your family name, Maiden name etc. Sheila will give them to Charlie on a first come first served basis for him to choose the ones to research. So please contact Sheila promptly!

We hope you will come along and find out more about our names, including maybe yours!

Contacts

Revd Dr Andy Miller	01284 728714	teamrectorlvnb@btinternet.com
Revd Ali Miller	01284 728714	teamvicarlvnb@btinternet.com
Team Office	01284 700400	NBTLVB@outlook.com

We also have assistance from priests within the benefice with permission to officiate.

Please don't forget ...

to let Julie Hooton NBTLVB@outlook.com
and the 'Viral Bulletin' adrian.mann@btinternet.com
have news and details of events which have happened
as well as events which are coming up at your church.

And your photographs are always welcome.
