

Lark Valley and North Bury Team Ministry

VIRAL BULLETIN

Christmas 2024

4th Sunday of Advent & Christmas

*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*



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Advent 4

Micah 5.2-5a

*Magnificat
or Ps 80.1-8*

Hebrews 10.5-10

Luke 1.39-45[46-55]

Left:

A sky for Gaudete Sunday
following the Nine Lessons
and Carols at Timworth

Hurrying, Greeting, Leaping, and Singing

Hurrying, Greeting, Leaping, and Singing. In the story of the Visitation, we encounter plenty of activity. Previously in Advent: we have pondered the words of prophets and an adult John the Baptist, we have engaged in strengthening our hearts internal work as we watch and wait ... not totally passive, but an actively prayerful and contemplative way of being. But when we arrive at the Fourth Sunday of Advent? Well, as we draw closer to the Nativity the focus shifts from the themes of judgement and Christ's return. Rather through the meeting and greeting of Mary and Elizabeth we ready ourselves to contemplate the Word made flesh, Christ's first coming, the mystery of the Incarnation – and here, here it turns out there is a little more movement to be had. Activity. Beginning with

Hurrying. There goes Mary, the barely teenage girl. Scurrying on by as only the youthful can. Leaving the curtain twitchers of the little village of Nazareth behind. It is safer to get away. Away from pointing fingers, accusatory voices, and threat of clattering stones.

Hurrying. There goes Mary, striding with purpose. Hailed and favoured, grace-filled girl. Energised by an angelic visit. Emboldened by her firm and faithful 'yes' to God.

Hurrying. There goes Mary, haring off to see Elizabeth.
Desperate to visit her elderly relative
who has an extraordinary story of her own.
Mary will find confirmation of the angel's words and her own reality.

Hurrying. There goes Mary, covering ground and into the hills.
Quick pace matched by the quickening within. Female disciple literally bearing
Good News. Quite the way to make an entrance.

Greeting. Here is Mary, on the threshold of Zechariah's home.
Curious and hopeful, waiting for Elizabeth to appear.
She does. Mary was right to be expectant.
The angel has delivered. Thanks be to God.

Greeting. Here is Mary, surprising Elizabeth. Young and old together.
Rejoicing in each other's company, while Zechariah is lost for words.
Marvelling at grace instead of shame. You see in those days,
there was shame. Shame from being barren.
Shame from pregnancy during betrothal.
It seems then - as now - women could not get it right.

Greeting. Here is Mary, welcomed by Elizabeth.
Pregnancy prominent as her bump emerges, with the rest of her following,
from inside the house.
A swollen belly with 6 months of baby wriggling and forming inside,
yet an old lady with a mass of grey hair and a ton of knowledge.
This is a joy filled home
and the Holy Spirit has made herself comfortable in the lives
of Mary and Elizabeth. A liberating light in the darkness of shame and disgrace.

Leaping. Here is Mary, astonished and feeling flutters within, as Elizabeth
fills her lungs with the holiest of breaths ... and cries words of wonder.
Mary watching amazed as Elizabeth's stomach contorts, bulges, moves,
when the child leaps within.
Both mother and child recognising the holy package of Mary and her Son.
Life is tinged with gold when the Divine enables the impossible.

Leaping. Here is Mary, witnessing an *in utero* dance of praise
as woman greets girl and pronounces a blessing
which will be echoed down the ages.
'Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb.'
Makes a nice prayer when coupled with the angel's greeting,
as many of the faithful know. Hail Mary, indeed!

Leaping. Here is Mary, the God-bearer and guardian of the Incarnation.
She may well jump for joy if she knew the titles and devotion she will go on to
inspire, but despite the magnitude of the call, right now

she humbly and gratefully accepts the hospitality of Elizabeth, who is honoured to receive the mother of her Lord. Through the love Mary receives and the energy and excitement of her relative she is inspired into song.

Singing. Mary and Elizabeth join the women who have gone before: be they singing, dancing or pronouncing a blessing. Think Miriam chanting about an army defeated and the Lord's glorious triumph. Hear judge and prophetess Deborah, blessing Jael, yes she of tent-peg in the handbag fame, such that the land had rest for 40 years. Listen to Judith's song of thanksgiving and praise, when the oppressed people are delivered ... but don't lose your head. And as for Hannah, as her heart exults in the Lord, well Mary picks up a chord of the familiar here. These are the original revolutionary songs.

Singing. Here is Mary, inspired into melody by this meeting and greeting. She is worthy of a soprano at La Scala, when she projects the Song of the Kingdom into being. From out on the edge of society in the middle of Nowhere-ville, she enunciates:

Magnificat!

She begins her hymn of praise from the handmaid's perspective of the personal, of the lowly.

Of what it is like:

to be noticed ... to be favoured ... to be blessed ... to be trusted to get the job done even when it pierces the soul.

Even so, this is all to magnify the Lord.

Singing. Here is Mary, taking the song into the realms of mercies as she reveals the Lord's activities:

bringing down the mighty,

lifting up the lowly,

humbling those who need it,

feeding the hungry.

And as she continues to sing, the song stretches out to many generations

with a melody of promises fulfilled.

And with another breath,

it reaches across all times and spaces,

to challenge and to comfort.

Good News projected as she protects the growing life within.

Singing. Here is Mary, singing for all her worth,
which in the eye of her society is little
and in the eternal eye of God is great.
She captivates Elizabeth.
Together they hope for difference for change
with a world turned upside down.
And as they sway to this new tune
two boys, John and Jesus, absorb it in the womb
ready to be revealed when the Spirit prompts.
On Jordan's banks for one man,
and for the other man, in a holy place,
fulfilling in the people's hearing his Nazareth manifesto.

Singing. Here is Mary ... for love of the Lord,
she will sing and teach us to sing
while we're sitting
in the wooden pews of rural places
in the stone grandeur of cathedrals
in places of plenty
in places of need
with our unruly wild voices, expertly trained choirs
and in every tongue.
The song will be heard.
And at times it will be banned and yet it will be restored.
It is a radical song which will plant seeds of justice and peace and compassion.
And her Son will nurture something new into being.

Hurrying. Greeting. Leaping. Singing. Alternative Advent activities.
Two pregnant women meet and deliver a tune of liberation.
The Visitation is joyfully subversive.
And as we prepare to celebrate Christmas:
God's activity in the world,
through the unique way of humility that is the Incarnation,
when Jesus, our Saviour, is born,
let us give thanks for the faithfulness and hospitality of Elizabeth
and let us give thanks for the trust, obedience and commitment of Mary.

Mary - who is Jesus's first earthly home
the God-bearer
a disciple and a proclaimer.
Can you hear her singing?
Will you join in?

Amen.

Lark Valley and North Bury Churches

SERVICES WEEK BEGINNING 22 DECEMBER

SUNDAY 22 December Fourth Sunday of Advent *O Rex Gentium*

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)	Fornham St Martin
10.00am	Eucharist (CW)	Culford
11.00am	Sung Eucharist (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
12noon	Holy Communion (BCP)	Flempton
3.00pm	Community Carols	St George's, Bury St Edmunds

Monday 23 December *O Emmanuel*

Tuesday 24 December CHRISTMAS EVE

3.30pm	Crib Service	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
4.00pm	Crib Service	Fornham St Martin
9.30pm	'Bethlehem' Midnight Mass	Fornham All Saints
9.30pm	'Bethlehem' Midnight Mass	St George's, Bury St Edmunds
11.30pm	Midnight Mass	West Stow
11.30pm	Midnight Mass	St John's, Bury St Edmunds

Wednesday 25 December CHRISTMAS DAY

8.00am	Holy Communion (BCP)	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
9.30am	Eucharist (CW)	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
9.30am	Holy Communion (BCP)	Timworth
10.00am	Eucharist (CW)	Fornham St Martin
10.00am	Eucharist (CW)	Lackford
11.00am	Sung Eucharist (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds

Thursday 26 December Stephen, deacon, first martyr

9.30am	Solemn Eucharist (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
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Friday 27 December John, Apostle and Evangelist

10.00am	Patronal Festival Eucharist (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
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Saturday 28 December The Holy Innocents

9.30am	Solemn Eucharist (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
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SUNDAY 29 December First Sunday of Christmas

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	Benefice Eucharist (CW)	Flempton
11.00am	Sung Eucharist (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds

Lark Valley and North Bury Churches

SERVICES WEEK BEGINNING 29 DECEMBER

SUNDAY 29 December First Sunday of Christmas

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	Benefice Eucharist (CW)	Flempton
11.00am	Sung Eucharist (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds

Monday 30 December

Tuesday 31 December *John Wyclif, reformer, 1384*

Wednesday 1 January Naming and Circumcision of Jesus

8.30am	Morning Prayer (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
9.30am	Solemn Eucharist (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds

Thursday 2 January Basil the Great and Gregory of Nazianzus, bishops, teachers of the faith, 379 and 389; *Seraphim, monk, spiritual guide, 1833;* *Vedanayagam Samuel Azariah, bishop, evangelist, 1945*

9.30am	Holy Communion (BCP)	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
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Friday 3 January

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

Saturday 4 January

SUNDAY 5 January Epiphany *transferred from 6 January*

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
9.30am	Holy Communion (CW)	Timworth
10.00am	Eucharist (CW)	West Stow
10.00am	All Age Worship	Fornham All Saints
11.00am	Sung Eucharist (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
3.00pm	Wonder Club	Lackford

Christmas Day

Set I Isaiah 9.2-7 Psalm 96 Titus 2.11-14 Luke 2.21-14[15-20]

Set II Isaiah 62.6-end Psalm 97 Titus 3.4-7 Luke 2.[1-7]8-20

Set III Isaiah 52.7-10 Psalm 98 Hebrews 1.1-4[5-12] John 1.1-14

Candles and crackers, holly and hats, robins and reindeers, icicles and ivy, shepherds and snowmen, tinsel and turkey, mistletoe and mince pies, angels and Advent calendars, Santa and sprouts.

Put all these things together and what do you get? Well for me, and I imagine quite a few people, put these together and what you get are the makings of a good Christmas. You have the food - the turkey, sprouts and mince pies to eat. You have the fun - the crackers and hats and tinsel to enjoy. And you have the magic - the angels and Santa with all his reindeers.

But if you put these all together in the way that I did just now, then what you get is more than just the makings of a good Christmas, what you get is literally Christmas, the word Christmas from the initials. C for Candles, H for Holly, R for Robins, I for Icicles, S for Shepherds, T for tinsel, M for Mistletoe, A for Angels and S for Santa. C H R I S T M A S – put them all together and you get the word Christmas. And for me that makes so much sense, not least because these things of Christmas are all about being together. A festive meal shared - a cracker pulled with a friend - a present from Santa exchanged with a loved one. Christmas then sees togetherness. And it has done from the very beginning, from the very first Christmas itself, as we know from that Nativity story.

For those 2000 years ago we have Mary and Joseph travelling to and then staying in Bethlehem, together. We have the angels gathering to sing together as a great multitude of the heavenly host praising God for his majesty and glory as described so beautifully in St Luke's Gospel. We have the shepherds huddled together on the hillside to see this and then heading off together to see the Christ child in Bethlehem. And if we take the story further to Epiphany and include the wise men, we have these Magi following the star together, to offer their gifts to that same Son of God as they meet with Mary and Joseph – who are now a new family, together with Jesus.

And this togetherness is there in so many other ways in this story as well. For this is a story of people of all sorts – a story that pulls together people of all kinds and types. All the kinds and the types of people that there are in our world are found together in this first Christmas. Young people and old, rich people and poor, men and women, those from nearby and those from afar. All sorts of people who are all brought together - brought together by what happened at that first Christmas.

But of course, that is exactly what that first Christmas was all about; that was God's plan at that first festive time. God wanted things to be brought together, brought together in Jesus. Because that first Christmas saw God brought together with his creation through Jesus, the divine entering the world. It saw God and humanity brought together as one, in Jesus, the Word made flesh. It saw God and humanity brought together - reconciled and eternally together, thanks to Jesus, what he has done, and what he will do for all people – together. Jesus who grew from this child at Christmas to give all people a heavenly home for all eternity through the things that we recall him doing at that other great feast of the church year that is Easter.

And this togetherness of Christmas, this desire of God for us to be together and with him and each other for eternity is God's Christmas present to our world – or it should be. It is certainly what God gave us on that first Christmas Day. For God did not want that togetherness to be just for and about that first Christmas, but he wanted us to take it and use it still today. God wanted that togetherness to lead us at all times - indeed, lead all people for all time, and at all times as Jesus made so clear throughout his life.

For as Jesus said, it is only through being together in God's love – it is only by being together in our loving thoughts and minds and actions with the people around us, and by looking to cherish people around as God revealed through him, that we and they and indeed all people can be kept safe. It is only by looking to our togetherness that all those that Jesus came into the world at Christmas to save may live lives of comfort. This togetherness – this desire to be together in love – this truth about God sending his Son into the world, is why we celebrate that baby being born in a stable and laid in a manger. And we celebrate not least by doing all we can to live in that love, and to spread that love that God revealed and gave to us in Jesus ourselves.

Each year then, Christmas is about things coming together – coming together in love. It is about remembering each year what it was that brought people together so long ago. And it is about remembering that this still brings people, literally all people together now. Because Christmas is about the one who brought and still brings the whole world together, all people no matter who they are, through a love that knows no bounds. It is about the one who brought God and the world, the whole world together in love for all eternity. It is about Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, the Saviour of the world, the Son of God. God's gift of love to us, born on Christmas Day. And what better way to celebrate this amazing gift of love that we have received, than by giving it at this Christmas time – by sharing it together with others? But more than this what better way can we celebrate Jesus than by showing his love together in how we live our lives, not just at Christmas time, but all the time. Merry Christmas. Amen.

Andy Miller

CAPTION COMPETITION RESULT



Before and after.

Mary McGuire

The director explained the concept of her new movie, 'Harry Potter and the Twig of Disaster'.

Henry Allen

Marilyn hoped Sarah was joking when she said whoever drew the short straw had to bring the viper.

Gina Robertson

"I tried to tell Gandalf he was in the wrong picture, but then he went and fell off the folding table."

Henry Allen

"I think you misheard me Sarah. I said this church is in the sticks".

Steve Robertson

But the winner is **Mary McGuire** with

"Here's one I prepared earlier."

ST GEORGE'S CHURCH

Anselm Avenue, IP32 6JZ

issues a warm welcome to you all
to join us on

SUNDAY 22nd December

at 3.00pm

for

Community

Christmas Carols by

Candlelight

featuring the

**NORTON SALVATION
ARMY BAND**

~

refreshments to follow

A Christmas Miracle from Flempton

It was Mark who rescued them - he had been cleaning a little stable in Flempton Church ready for Christmas and was looking for the figures to go inside. There, in a forgotten corner behind a pew, they had been made into a nest for mice. This was not a pretty sight: it was encouraging the wildlife too far!



I will spare you the close-up pictures of the condition of the Holy Family. Baby Jesus was, mercifully, intact, but Joseph needed major abdominal surgery and poor Mary was now lacking her left arm and (yes) her face. The shepherds had also suffered a similar fate. The entire group needed serious help.

This brought out a combination of girlish enthusiasm for dolls and surgical challenge in the curate. With Mark's agreement they were taken by Fiat Panda to the Nativity Rescue Centre, where their treatment began with brushing off mouse droppings, followed by immersion in a washing machine.

The figures emerged from this experience looking much better and smelling a good deal sweeter. One by one they went for surgery. The magi were fine - who knew that mice didn't want them?! The Shepherds, however, had been more edible. Their crooks needed strengthening with willow sticks, and their overcoats needed patching. One got a new apron, too. The curate's knitting skills had been dormant since the days of the lower fifth form when she made squares to make into a blanket. Gradually the difference between plain and pearl returned, and one by one the figures were restored, not to perfection, but with fresh style and character.



Mary was left to last - she was the most badly injured, and critical to the story. A new hand, then a sleeve, then a face, and finally a new hairstyle! She seemed delighted.

The figures will return shortly to Flempton, where they can enter their stable with pride and joy. Many thanks to Mark for their discovery, and Happy Christmas to All.



Lark Valley and North Bury Team Ministry

Praying Together ~ January 2025

For the wider community and church

- 1 W For God's blessing on us all at the start of the New Year
- 2 T Moyse's Hall Museum
- 3 F The Arc shopping centre and the Apex venue
- 4 S The town centre shops

- 5 S St Edmundsbury Cathedral
- 6 M St Edmund's Place sheltered housing
- 7 T Northgate Lodge sheltered housing
- 8 W Cryspen Court sheltered housing
- 9 T The housing, shops and businesses in and around St John's Street
- 10 F The Society of Friends
- 11 S The Salvation Army

- 12 S St John's church
- 13 M *Growing in God* worship, work & witness at St John's
- 14 T The Centre in St John's Street
- 15 W The Old School Café
- 16 T King Edward VI School
- 17 F St Edmundsbury CEVAP School
- 18 S Sexton's Manor School, our *Open the Book* ministry there

- 19 S Thingoe Lodge housing for independent living
- 20 M All who live in Fornham All Saints
- 21 T Fornham All Saints church
- 22 W *Growing in God* worship, work & witness at Fornham All Saints
- 23 T Fornham All Saints Centre for Creative Learning
- 24 F Fornham All Saints Community Centre
- 25 S Fornham All Saints Village Hall

- 26 S Heath Farm Business Centre
- 27 M For all refugees & asylum seekers; Suffolk Refugee Support
- 28 T For all belonging to other faiths
- 29 W For better understanding between different faiths
- 30 T For those facing religious persecution
- 31 F For those with no faith

Wonder Club

Story
Wondering
Craft
Prayer
Cake



St Lawrence, Lackford

5th January, 3pm

From the Registers

Holy Matrimony

14th December Alice Roche and Ross Alexander

Fornham All Saints

Funerals

22nd November David Rogers

All Saints' BSE followed by WSC

25th November Raymond Pollard

St George's BSE followed by WSC

9th December Barbara Kingston

WSC

10th December Pearl Keeble

WSC

WSC - West Suffolk Crematorium

St John's Church, Bury St Edmunds



St John
the
Evangelist
PATRONAL
FESTIVAL

Friday 27 December

10 am Sung Eucharist

followed by a

Celebration Breakfast

Guaranteed a turkey-free zone

***** ALL ARE WELCOME *****

CAPTION COMPETITION



This dramatic action photograph, taken by Ali Miller at The Rectory in West Stow, is the subject for the Christmas issue's Caption Competition.

A choice of fairtrade wine or chocolate awaits the person who can contribute the winning caption.

Please send your entries by Monday 30th December to the Viral Bulletin at adrian.mann@btinternet.com



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!

Lower than the Angels

Professor Diarmaid MacCulloch will speak about his recent book *Lower than the Angels* at St John's on Thursday 6 February 2025 at 7.30pm. Admission is £12 + 10% booking fee with advance tickets from We Got Tickets at <https://wegottickets.com/event/642413>

“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*

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.
