

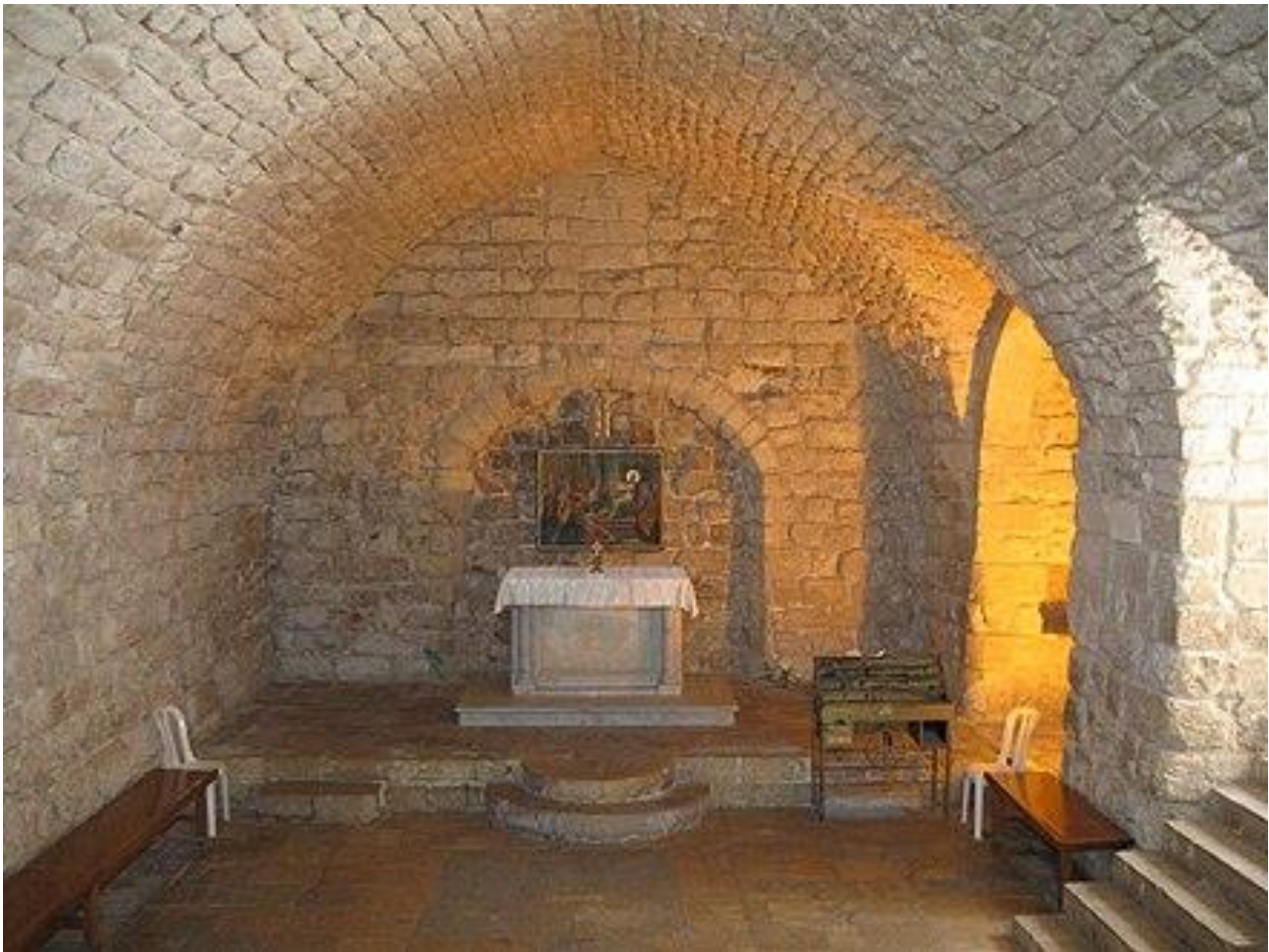
Lark Valley and North Bury Team Ministry

VIRAL BULLETIN

26 January 2025

3rd Sunday of Epiphany

*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*



The Synagogue Church is a small Christian church in Nazareth known by this name due to a tradition claiming that it is the location where the village synagogue stood in Jesus's time. It is administered by the Melkite Greek Catholic Church.

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Length of Preaching

Nehemiah 8.1-3,5-6,8-10 Psalm 19 I Corinthians 12.12-31a Luke 4.14-21

Seeing as we are still in Epiphany, an extension of the Church's Christmas season, I will tell you about one of my favourite scenes from a favourite Christmas film – and I make no apologies if I have told you about it before!

It is the Muppet's Christmas Carol where Kermit plays the role of Bob Cratchit, Miss Piggy is his wife, Fozziewig is Fezziewig, Michael Caine (obviously not a Muppet!) is Scrooge and the character of Jacob Marley is turned into Marley and Marley played by the grumpy heckling muppets Waldorf and Statler.

In the film, these two curmudgeons attend Fezziewig/Fozziewig's Christmas party where Fozziewig gives a speech. The grumps get ready to heckle; however the speech is incredibly short. This surprises them somewhat, hence their response: "That was the speech? It was dumb; it was obvious; it was pointless; it was...short...I loved it!"

Today we hear of Jesus entering the synagogue in Nazareth on the Sabbath day and he preaches. It is one sentence long.

"Today, this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Now, at theological college we are taught how to preach – I'll leave you to judge the fruits of that endeavour. Mostly we are encouraged to *not* sell you short. Most churches I have been involved with desired a good solid 10-15 minutes on an average Sunday morning. Now all preachers get used to hearing feedback which will range from polite to down-right rude to simply weird. Anything from "lovely sermon" to "you lost me at..." but sometimes simply as "it was short". Is that good or bad? Well, perhaps it depends on the message. Perhaps.

You see, in Jesus's case, there are a number of things going on. Firstly, his sermon is delivered to those worshipping in the synagogue and they are already familiar with the scriptures so perhaps he doesn't feel the need to expand on it. Perhaps such familiarity is less so for us and therefore we have more in common with the people who gathered at the Water Gate, people mentioned in the reading from Nehemiah. They had not long returned from exile and as they listened to Ezra reading from the book of the law, there were others present to help explain the scripture, hence the lovely sentence 'they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading'.

Secondly, Jesus delivers his sermon with a quiet commanding confidence borne out of the previous months' experiences. To give you a re-cap: Jesus was baptized by John and heard God's voice "this is my Son, the Beloved" and the Holy Spirit descended upon him; immediately after this he experienced 40 days in the wilderness where he faced temptation.

Now, sure of his identity and what his mission is, Jesus strides back to Galilee filled with the power of the Spirit to teach and preach and heal and spread the Good News. Keep this in mind and remember that we are still in the season of Epiphany. Each week our scriptures reveal something of God's glory. Well, today there is a big reveal, and Jesus delivers it as a measured performance. His choice of scripture, his movement, his actions, his own words, and his timing are deliberate for clarity, for effect and to make a point. Pure drama.

Jesus stands up. He is handed a scroll from the prophet Isaiah. He unrolls it, reads from it, rolls it back up, sits down again. As all eyes are fixed upon him, he begins to preach. His sermon, as I mentioned a moment ago, consists of one short sentence but one big reveal.

“Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

So, to find out what has been revealed we look at what Jesus chose to find and to read in the scroll of the prophet Isaiah: words, slightly amended, from chapter 61, words that carry quite a resemblance to what Jesus's own mother Mary sang while she was pregnant with Jesus, words revealing a radical upturning of the world as we know it, words we know as the Magnificat.

It is often said that babies react to music when in the womb...it seems Jesus is still dancing to this same beat, for he quotes Isaiah. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour”. Lest there be any doubt concerning Jesus's sermon, his big reveal is that he is the one to do this radical stuff, he is the one fulfilling the scripture.

He comes to bring good news: that God's promise of salvation is for all, and to show that there is another way to be, to live, and it is God's way of compassion and love and mercy. Not for nothing is this passage from Luke known as Jesus's Nazareth Manifesto. A manifesto relevant for today just as much as it was then. In Luke's Gospel we fast come to realise that Jesus is always, *always*, on the side of the outsider, the marginalised, the poor, the unloved, the sick, the prisoner; this is who he has come to help or to be with.

His ministry is one of 'release' both literally and figuratively. Good news is for the poor – he will encourage his disciples to look after and care for those who are without, but it is also looking to those who are poor spiritually even if rich in material terms. Think of it too as restoring a balance in what is most important, to encourage an equality in living for everyone. Release to the captives: yes, Jesus has a heart for the prisoner but also the sort of prisons of our own making or constructed by those around us...what or who holds our hearts captive?

Maybe too issues of social justice come to mind. Those imprisoned, held back in society, because of their gender or sexuality or ethnicity or religion. Jesus tears down those barriers and encourages us to do so...let the oppressed go free.

Recovery of sight to the blind: yes, Jesus performed miraculous physical cures, but it goes beyond this as he tears off the blinkers of prejudice and hate and replaces them with lenses of love and healing so that society and all God's children can flourish. The year of the Lord's favour finds its roots in passages in Deuteronomy and Leviticus where 'sabbath' years and 'jubilee' years are spoken of - in such years, land is returned, debts are left behind, the enslaved released.

What we discover Jesus fulfilling is truly incredible. And for the people gathered in the synagogue who hear his sentence-long sermon it must feel just like it did for those gathered round the scribe Ezra with his book of the law: "this day is holy". That's what they said: "this day is holy". But...and there is always a 'but'...remember I said a number of things are happening with Jesus's preaching.

Here is the third: in this passage Jesus's sermon is well received however what we don't hear today is that following this great reception Jesus then gives Sermon part II. And in Sermon part II he tells those present that - contrary to what they say or imply - he knows they don't really get the message, and they don't really accept him. In a flash, eyes that were fixed on Jesus with captivated wonder are now fixed on him with rage. The people chase Jesus out of the town in order to hurl him off a cliff.

Jesus fulfilling Isaiah's words is a challenge because it changes the status quo, the power dynamics of the world as it was back then (and is even now). It seems the joy of Jesus's short sermon is short-lived when the implications of a Gospel of liberation are pronounced. Some don't want to share power, resources, energy; some want to keep captive those they perceive as 'other'.

So yes, it is challenging. Yet the revelation that Jesus fulfils the scripture is life to many - especially when it stirs us all into living Good News in a way that encourages us to stand up to injustice, to enable voices to be heard that are not normally heard, to hold those in authority accountable for their actions, and to give proper support and dignity to the poorest and most vulnerable in society. Jubilee living.

I am deeply aware of the irony in preaching a longish sermon on Jesus's short sermon, but consider and know this.

Today and every day, Jesus fulfils this scripture in our hearing and we must lay our hearts and minds open to the challenge and reality of his mission: to pray and to listen to how Jesus inspires us to challenge injustice, and to be his Gospel of liberation in our communities.

In doing so, we reveal God's glory and help to build God's kingdom with the strongest materials of radical love, compassion, justice, and acceptance.

"Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Amen.

Ali Miller

Lark Valley and North Bury Churches

SERVICES WEEK BEGINNING 26 JANUARY

SUNDAY 26 January 3rd 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	Holy Communion (CW)	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
10.00am	Eucharist (CW)	Culford
10.00am	Eucharist (CW)	Fornham St Martin
11.00am	Sung Eucharist (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
12 noon	Holy Communion (BCP)	Flempton

Monday 27 January

Tuesday 28 January Thomas Aquinas, priest, philosopher, teacher of the faith, 1274

6.00pm	A Quiet Space	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
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Wednesday 29 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 30 January Charles, king and martyr, 1649

9.30am	Holy Communion (CW)	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
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Friday 31 January John Bosco, priest, founder of the Salesian Teaching Order, 1888

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

Saturday 1 February Brigid, abbess, c525

SUNDAY 2 January Candlemas

Presentation of Christ in the Temple

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 (BCP)	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

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY SERVICE IN THE ABBEY GARDENS

On Monday 27 January, St Edmundsbury Cathedral will hold a special service in the Abbey Gardens to mark Holocaust Memorial Day. This National Day of Remembrance is in honour of victims of genocide.

The service takes place in the Abbey Gardens' Peace Garden at 10.30 am.

This year marks the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest Nazi concentration camp complex, and the 30th anniversary of the genocide in Bosnia. The theme for this year's Holocaust Memorial Day is 'For a Better Future' – creating opportunities for people to come together, learn from and about the past, and take actions to make a better future for all.

All victims of genocide are remembered during Holocaust Memorial Day, including from more recent genocides. Joining the Cathedral for the service will be local schools who will contribute readings and music.

BISHOP MARTIN SEELEY SERVICE OF FAREWELL



Bishop Martin's Farewell Service will be held at St Edmundsbury Cathedral on Sunday 2 February at 3.30pm. It will be livestreamed, and available to watch through the Cathedral's YouTube page:

<https://www.youtube.com/@stedscathedral/streams>

Coffee

Donations to

my **WISH**

Cardiac Unit charity
West Suffolk Hospital

Morning

Tuesday 4th February

10:00 - 11:15 am

Coffee or tea, cake and chat

All Saints Church

All Welcome

Lark Valley & North Bury Team Ministry

www.northburychurches.org.uk

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.

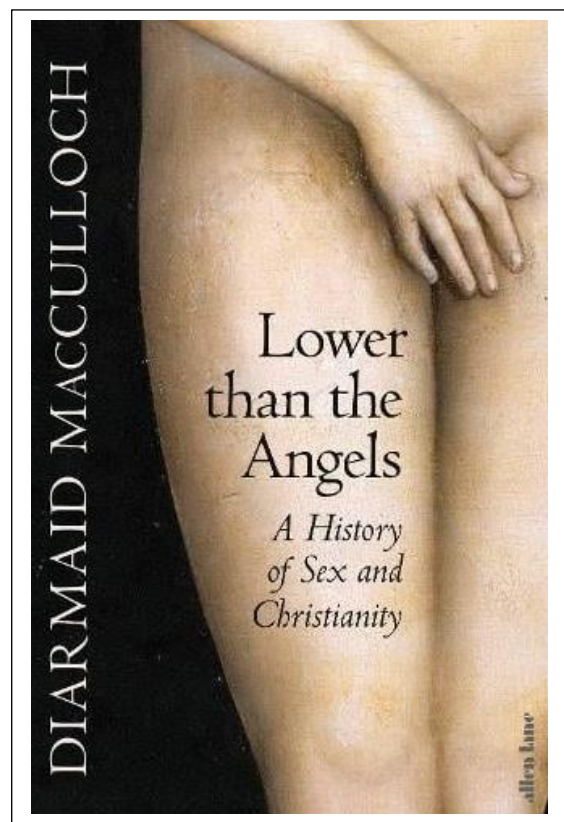
Diarmaid MacCulloch spent his childhood at Wetherden, where his father was rector. He is Emeritus Professor of the History of the Church at Oxford University. His *Thomas Cranmer* (1996) won the Whitbread Biography Prize, the James Tait Black Prize and the Duff Cooper Prize; *Reformation: Europe's House 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.



EPIPHANY CAPTION COMPETITION RESULT

As exemplified below, the canine theme produced more entries than we've received since we featured dinosaurs in the Cathedral.



Those gathered showed an air of expectation appropriate to the Epiphany.

Henry Allen

'Manger'? – did somebody say 'Just Eat'?

Sam Morrison

Welcome to the House of Dog.

Henry Allen

The liturgical paws

Steve Robertson

Caspantha, HENCHIOR and Beauthazar.

Valerie Wilde

After church, the biscuit tax should always be paid before any refreshments are served.

Mary McGuire

Would you believe it - none of the dogs were wearing dog collars!

Gina Robertson

Local band seeks new lead springer.

Sam Morrison

But it's extra biscuits for this week's winner (featured left above)

'Hey Google, take us east by another road – avoiding A14 ... at Angel Hill turn righteous onto Eastgate Street, continue for millennia'

Sam Morrison

Lark Valley and North Bury Churches

Praying Together ~ February 2025

For the wider community and church

- 1 S For all in financial difficulties

- 2 S The sugar beet factory
- 3 M The Job Centre Plus office
- 4 T Bury St Edmunds Library & The Lark Valley Library van
- 5 W Bury Market
- 6 T Springfield Road housing area
- 7 F The Suffolk Regiment museum; The Territorial Army centre
- 8 S The Leisure Centre

- 9 S The Westley Estate
- 10 M County High School (formerly Westley Middle)
- 11 T Adults and children with special needs
- 12 W Social Care Services & for all caring for relatives at home
- 13 T The emergency services, fire, police & ambulance
- 14 F The East Anglian Air Ambulance
- 15 S The Railway Station

- 16 S The Bus Station
- 17 M Local public transport
- 18 T Spring Lane & Thingoe Hill housing areas
- 19 W All who live in Hengrave
- 20 T St John Lateran, Hengrave
- 21 F Hengrave Hall
- 22 S Beetons Way, Tollgate Lane & Fornham Road areas

- 23 S The Howard Estate; Newbury Community Association
- 24 M Tollgate Primary School
- 25 T County High School (formerly County Upper)
- 26 W St Benedict's School
- 27 T Howard Community Primary School
- 28 F For all affected by family breakup

All Saints' Church

Saturday 8th February

Scones and Speaker

Doors open 3pm for a prompt 3.30pm start



Photo courtesy of Two Sisters Arts Centre, Trimley



The brilliant speaker **Charlie Haylock** and his talk

'The history of surnames'

An entertaining look at
the different types of surnames
- their origins and meanings

Please note: This is not a talk on family history backgrounds

Tea and scones

All welcome

Tickets £10

Book with Sheila on

01284 762774 (answerphone)

07815 504991

Lark Valley & North Bury Team Ministry

www.northburychurches.org.uk

Wonder Club

Story
Wondering
Craft
Prayer
Cake



St Lawrence, Lackford

9th February, 3pm

Contacts

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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.
