

Lark Valley and North Bury Team Ministry

VIRAL BULLETIN

8 & 15 December 2024

2nd & 3rd Sundays of Advent

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



Advent rings were made at Advent Wonder Club in Lackford

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2nd & 3rd Sundays of Advent

2nd Baruch 5 Benedictus Philippians 1.3-11 Luke 3.1-6

3rd Zephaniah 3.14-end Isaiah 12.2-end Philippians 4.4-7 Luke 3.7-18

John the Baptist

Some animals don't get the rub of the green when it comes to our opinions of them - or so it seems to me. Whilst people go gooey over man's best friend the dog, and not least when they are puppies, or coo over their feline rivals cats, especially when they are cute little kittens, few people, if any, warm to the likes of cockroaches, spiders, worms, slugs and rats.

And yes, as you may have guessed, I would say snakes fall into this category as well. For, barring a few notable exceptions, such as an old housemate of mine when I was studying at university who had one as a pet, most people I know find these scaly legless reptiles, with their slithering manner and flicking tongues, at the very least creepy. Indeed many, knowing that amongst their ranks can be found some of the most efficient predatory killers in our world, with coils that can squeeze the life out of a person in minutes, or fangs that can inject venom that can do the job even quicker, fear these creatures greatly.

The Bible is one place that this efficiency in killing is found and described. It was snakes who entered amongst the people of God in the wilderness to wreak havoc and bring death to those who were disloyal to God and Moses, for example. And maybe the most notable appearance of snakes in the Bible takes this downward view of them even further. For one of these crafty creatures was responsible for the very downfall of humanity, as it was the serpent who conned Adam and Eve into eating fruit of the forbidden tree such that they were expelled from Eden in Genesis chapter 3.

And so it is that when we hear of John the Baptist, once again the star of the show during the season of Advent, calling those who come to receive his baptism "a brood of vipers," we can be sure that this is not a term of endearment. Not here is he winking and chuckling at those who have come

to him, shaking his head at them and saying something akin to “you cheeky monkeys” or “you little tinkers” - but instead what we have is a full-blooded naming and shaming.

So once again John the Baptist does not appear to be the bearer of good news in this piece of Scripture from the Gospel of St Luke. Rather people are warned of their folly and in the most venomous of terms. And this is then scary stuff that appears to be a million miles away from contemplating where to put our Christmas tree, lights and tinsel, that may well be filling our minds as we await the arrival of Jesus during this season of Advent.

But most scary perhaps is that once again at Advent the Jesus described as coming by John is not a new born baby wrapped in swaddling clothes meekly and quietly lying in a manger. No, this Jesus is armed to the teeth with axes and forks and has plans involving burning fire in mind. So, snakes, forks and fire – one could be led to wonder who exactly it is that is coming and why exactly it is good when we hear these words on the approach to Christmas.

But that this is good is undoubtedly true as our reading from Zephaniah makes clear. “Rejoice and exalt with all your heart” the prophet tells us. And indeed, rejoice is what we do on this third Sunday of Advent, often called Gaudete Sunday because of this and the other reading also associated with this day in the church year – Paul’s letter to the Philippians that exclaims “rejoice” – and is the reason that in many churches we move from penitent purple to happy pink on our Advent Wreath.

And the prophet is clear that we should rejoice, for there are happy days to come when fear shall be gone, when disaster will be removed and when the oppressed, the lame and the outcast can expect an upturn in their fortunes. People who stand very much alongside those to whom Jesus says that he came to bring good news in his so-called Nazareth Manifesto, based upon the words of another prophet Isaiah, also in Luke’s Gospel (4.18-19).

But how then do we square this circle? How do we see that we should rejoice when John seems to be pointing a finger at us, calling us names and threatening us with a Jesus that we just may not want to meet? Well, to begin

with, by knowing that the Jesus he describes is the Jesus that we know. The Bible throughout makes no bones about the fact that judgement by Jesus is involved in all our futures.

And whilst perhaps we can read John's words as overplaying the negative, what he makes clear are the benefits that Jesus offers. Repentance seeing a slate wiped clean and the Holy Spirit being the reward, to fire us up with the power of God. And so, regardless of how he says it, what John is clear on is that those things that Zephaniah describes, those things that makes Paul say rejoice, are what the returning Jesus offers.

But what John tells us here is that we need to be ready to receive them and receive them in the correct manner. The people John criticised were those who assumed that they were right with God, or certainly would be. What he suspected was that these people were seeing what he offered as a surety, as a kind of insurance policy. Something that was done to keep them safe, but crucially that then meant they could happily move on with their lives, but unchanged and unmoved by what they had experienced. Rather like you or I putting a home contents or motor insurance policy away in the file and hoping we never need to look at what it says ever again – and perhaps not changing our poorly secured front door, or reckless way of driving based upon what we have read.

But this John knew was wrong. And it was this behaviour that John named and shamed as sneaky and deceitful – crafty like the serpent in the Garden of Eden. However, whilst John is most definitely from the “kick up the pants” school of motivation, it is motivation in the right direction that he gives today to these people. The snakes he describes, those who perhaps he sees as trying to win the gifts of Jesus without any attempt to try, are taken in hand and gently shown how to receive what it is that Jesus has to offer.

And significantly no one is turned away. Those who are perhaps selfish are shown the need to share. Those who may be cheats are shown the need to be honest. Those who could resort to violence and threats are shown the need to be at peace and be satisfied. These vipers are not rejected outright but instead shown how to shed their scales, blunt their fangs and given the antidote to their venom.

And what this passage reveals then, through the response to John's words that the people show, is our own right response to them. We, just like they, need to think about our lives and change what does not fit with the Jesus that is coming at Christmas and again. And this is, after all, what Advent is all about. Whether Jesus is armed with an axe or fork, whether he has fired the furnace up, those things that Zephaniah saw in the future will be true for all of us, no matter who we are, or what we have done.

So, we should rejoice on Gaudete Sunday, the third Sunday of Advent, as Christ's return moves ever closer. Rejoice, because the one worth rejoicing over is on his way. But rejoice because, just like that brood of vipers all those years ago, we listen to John the Baptist if we need to.

Listen, not least because there is time for us, and indeed the whole world, to not simply treat what John is talking about as an insurance policy, a surety that will see us safe, but instead to turn – to turn in the right direction. Turn in the right direction, that is into the loving arms of Jesus Christ our Lord. The loving arms of the one who came and is coming again at Christmas. The one who is coming with the power of the Holy Spirit and with fire.
Amen.

Andy Miller



ST MARY'S CHURCH
WEST STOW IP28 6ET

CAROLS ROUND THE TREE

FRIDAY 13TH DECEMBER

6.00PM

PLEASE BRING A MUG AND A TORCH.

MULLED WINE, HOT CHOCOLATE, MINCE PIES

Lark Valley and North Bury Churches

SERVICES WEEK BEGINNING 8 DECEMBER

SUNDAY 8 December Second Sunday of Advent

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)	Fornham St Martin
10.00am	Eucharist (CW)	Lackford
11.00am	Sung Eucharist (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
5.00pm	Benefice Advent Carol Service	St John's, Bury St Edmunds

Monday 9 December

Tuesday 10 December

6.00pm	A Quiet Space	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
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Wednesday 11 December Ember Day

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
7.00pm	Nine Lessons and Carols	Culford

Thursday 12 December

9.30am	Eucharist (CW)	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
6.00pm	Adoration and Benediction	St John's, Bury St Edmunds

Friday 13 December Lucy, martyr, 304; Samuel Johnson, moralist, 1784; Ember Day

5.15pm	Evening Prayer (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
6.00pm	Eucharist (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
6.00pm	Carols round the tree	West Stow

Saturday 14 December John of the Cross, poet, teacher of the faith, 1591; Ember Day

SUNDAY 15 December Third Sunday of Advent

8.00am	Holy Communion (BCP)	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
9.30am	Holy Communion (CW)	St George's, Bury St Edmunds
10.00am	Eucharist (CW)	Fornham All Saints
10.00am	Said Communion (Gathering for breakfast at 9.15am)	West Stow
10.30am	All Age Worship	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
11.00am	Sung Eucharist (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
3.00pm	Nine Lessons and Carols	Timworth
5.00pm	Nine Lessons and Carols	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds

Lark Valley and North Bury Churches

SERVICES WEEK BEGINNING 15 DECEMBER

SUNDAY 15 December Third Sunday of Advent

8.00am	Holy Communion (BCP)	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
9.30am	Holy Communion (CW)	St George's, Bury St Edmunds
10.00am	Eucharist (CW)	Fornham All Saints
10.00am	Said Communion (gathering for breakfast at 9.15am)	West Stow
10.30am	All Age Worship	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
11.00am	Sung Eucharist (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
3.00pm	Nine Lessons and Carols	Timworth
5.00pm	Nine Lessons and Carols	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds

Monday 16 December

Tuesday 17 December *O Sapientia.*

Eglantyne Jebb, social reformer, founder of 'Save the Children', 1928

6.00pm	A Quiet Space	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
7.00pm	Nine Lessons and Carols	Fornham All Saints

Wednesday 18 December *O Adonai*

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 19 December *O Radix Jesse*

9.30am	Eucharist (BCP)	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
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Friday 20 December *O Clavis David*

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

Saturday 21 December *O Oriens*

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

Advent Wonder Club at Lackford



Ali Miller writes

At Wonder Club we heard how Advent is the time the Church sets aside to get ready to enter the great mystery of Christmas. We listened to a story, spent time wondering, then engaged in all kinds of crafts: making willow wreaths and stars, creating origami hearts, fashioning advent wreaths out of paper plates, plus Christingles. Ages from just under 2 to 80+ years old came together (and survived fire, cocktail sticks, and sweets!). A holy and hectic hour and a half with moments of stillness and candlelight. Deo gratias!



**u3a Choir
Christmas
Concert**

**a feast of
Christmas music**



All Saints Church

Park Road, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 3QW

Friday 6th December

7.30pm Refreshments

Tickets: £7.00, available on the door

Contact Sheila, telephone 01284 762774 for details



Lark Valley & North Bury Team Ministry

www.northburychurches.org.uk

John the Baptist ~ St John's Eve

Malcolm Guite

Midsummer night, and bonfires on the hill

Burn for the man who makes way for the Light:

‘He must increase and I diminish still,

Until his sun illuminates my night.’

So John the Baptist pioneers our path,

Unfolds the essence of the life of prayer,

Unlatches the last doorway into faith,

And makes one inner space an everywhere.

Least of the new and greatest of the old,

Orpheus on the threshold with his lyre,

He sets himself aside, and cries, ‘Behold

The One who stands amongst you comes with fire!’

So keep his fires burning through this night,

Beacons and gateways for the child of light.

*From *Sounding the Seasons*, published
by Canterbury Press, Norwich, 2012*

St John's Church

St John's Street Bury St Edmunds IP33 1SN

ADVENT CAROL SERVICE



Sunday 8 December
at 5pm

Candlelit procession, carols
and seasonal refreshments

All are welcome

Lark Valley and North Bury Churches

CAPTION COMPETITION RESULT



In order for the limbo class to start, the altar frontal needed removing.

Will M Rearden

We can't have it wonky donkey, come on straighten it up.

Julie Hooton

'Two's company - three's a crowd.'

Bob Torrens

'Are you sure you got permission from the Archdeacon to use the altar as a snooker table, Rector?'

Will M Rearden

Andy: 'Has anyone ever done this before?
I'm not sure how it goes.'

Gail Bate

Having said Abracadabra - the team whipped away the frontal to reveal that the Team Vicar had miraculously reappeared!

Will M Rearden

'Funny,' they thought 'how the Rector has contrived to position himself at the warmer end of the altar.'

Henry Allen

Pivot!

Gina Robertson

Pivot! Pivot!

Julie Hooton

Extensive editorial research suggests that the famous furniture moving scene from the sit-com Friends contains at least 6 pivots, which puts

Julie Hooton, who offered 2 pivots, narrowly in the winning position in this week's notable photo finish.

Service of 9 lessons
and carols

St Mary's, Culford.

7pm December 11th

Followed by mulled wine and
refreshments



Please park in the hockey car
park up the track opposite
the church and bring a torch

Disabled parking only outside the church.
Please drive slowly & carefully
on the grass.



A NEW VENTURE

at

WEST STOW CHURCH

THE 3RD SUNDAY OF EACH MONTH

9.15AM: BREAKFAST

(bacon rolls, yogurt, fresh fruit mix,
pain au chocolat, croissants,
tea, coffee etc etc)

followed by

10.00AM: SAID

COMMUNION SERVICE

(Common Worship)

DO JOIN US!



CAPTION COMPETITION



With kind permission from Marilyn and Sarah, this photo from Wonder Club at Lackford is provided by Ali Miller for this 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 16th December to the Viral Bulletin at adrian.mann@btinternet.com

**STAGECOACH AND THE
MEAD SINGERS
PRESENT**



**A
CHRISTMAS
CELEBRATION**

**18th DECEMBER AT 7pm
In Culford Village hall**

**Seasonal refreshments after the
performance**

**DONATIONS TO THE MOTOR
NEURONE SOCIETY**

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

Contacts

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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.
