

# Bolingbroke Deanery Team Parishes

*Faithful, Confident, Joyful*

**19<sup>th</sup> December 2021**

## **FOURTH SUNDAY of ADVENT**

**○ Radix Jesse** ○ Root of Jesse, standing as a sign among the peoples; before you kings will shut their mouths, to you the nations will make their prayer: Come and deliver us, and delay no longer. *cf Isaiah 11.10, 45.14, 52.15; Romans 15.12*  
(Purple)

### **Introduction to the Christmas Season**

The celebration of Christ's incarnation at Christmas is one of the two poles of the Christian year. The wonderful mystery of God's dwelling among us in the fullness of humanity, as Emmanuel, foretold by the prophets and born of Mary, provides the material of the feast:

Hark, hark, the wise eternal word,  
like a weak infant cries!  
In form of servant is the Lord,  
and God in cradle lies. (*Thomas Pestel*)

Christmas is much more than simply the celebration of Jesus' birth,  
and neither of the great Christmas morning readings  
(Hebrews I and John I)

is taken from the infancy narratives. The task of the Christmas liturgy is to recall us, amid all the joyful customs and celebrations of Christmas, to this central truth of the Word made flesh for our salvation.

It is, of course, Christ's nativity that has provided the occasion for this festival of the incarnation, since the end of the third century. The Christmas crib and the nativity play can both be said to descend from the tableau of Christ's birth that Francis of Assisi arranged when he celebrated Christmas at Greccio in 1223. Christmas carols are a medieval tradition, which has been notably developed from the end of the nineteenth century. The Festival of Lessons and Carols is itself an influential English creation of the late nineteenth century, made widespread by the choir of King's College, Cambridge, in the first half of the twentieth.



The Christmas season is often celebrated for twelve days, ending with the Epiphany. Contemporary use has sought to express an alternative tradition, in which Christmas lasts for a full forty days, ending with the Feast of the Presentation on 2 February. The days around 25 December are a principal holiday in the secular calendar of Britain, and commercial pressures have led to much of Christmas celebration being displaced into Advent. It has become a still greater challenge to celebrate as they deserve the saints of the Christmas season: Stephen, who first paid with his life for following the incarnate Lord; John, who was believed to have lived to great old age in profound meditation on the Word made flesh; and the Holy Innocents, who draw our attention to the plight of children in a world where the implications of the birth of the Christ-child are not yet manifest. Resources for these days may be found in *Common Worship: Festivals*. New Year's Day is an important moment in the civil rather than the Christian calendar, but it provides the original occasion for the searching Covenant Renewal service of the Methodist tradition.

#### **Advent Candle 4 – Mary**

Jesus said, 'Anyone who does what my Father in heaven wants is my brother or sister or mother.'

**I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be to me according to his word.**

*The fourth candle is lit and this response is used*

Jesus is the light of the world.

**A light no darkness can ever put out.**

**We sing:**

**Advent candles tell their story as we watch and pray, longing for the Day of Glory, 'Come, Lord, soon,' we say. Pain and sorrow, tears and sadness changed for gladness on that Day.**

**Prophet voices loudly crying, making pathways clear; glimpsing glory, self-denying, calling all to hear. Through their message - challenged, shaken - hearts awaken: God is near!**

**John the Baptist, by his preaching and by water poured, brought to those who heard his teaching news of hope restored:**

**'Keep your vision strong and steady, and be ready for the Lord.'**

**Mary's gift, beyond all telling, was to give Christ room. She gave God a human dwelling in a mother's womb. Who could guess the final story? - cross and glory; empty tomb!**

The **Bishop of London, Sarah Mullally**, who leads the Church of England's Covid Recovery Group, said: "As we look forward to celebrating again the coming of Jesus into our world, we can do so with hope.

"Few of us imagined when we first heard of the coronavirus at the beginning of last year that we would now be approaching our second Christmas of a global pandemic.

"The recent emergence of the new Omicron variant and the evidence we've seen already of its rapid spread is a cause of real concern.

"And while we are hugely thankful for the rapid development and mass rollout of the vaccines - and the current booster programme - there are important steps we should take now to protect ourselves and each other.

"As Christians we have a duty to care for one another, especially those who are most vulnerable, and the latest measures announced by the Government should offer some extra protection and reassurance for people.

"Caring for one another, sharing, hope, faith and most of all the knowledge that God is with us are at the heart of Christmas.

"This Christmas we will be coming together – whether in person or online – to worship God and celebrate his coming into the world as a human being like us.

"Amid all that we have been through together in the last two years that hope is as strong as ever."

**Please Remember that it is now compulsory to wear face coverings at all times in Church** – singing is still permitted but if you can wear a mask - please.

"Vaccination cannot be the sole means of containing the spread of the virus: good hand and respiratory hygiene, social distancing, face-coverings and good ventilation are also important factors in lessening the spread of the disease and should be recognised as such when planning public worship and other church activities."

**9.00am Sunday Service at Home Watch the service Church online**  
**Join us for our weekly online services, streamed each Sunday at 9am.**



### **Fourth Sunday of Advent**

19/12/2021

Worship at Home for the Fourth Sunday of Advent, a service of Solace.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/church-online>

10.00am **Prayer in our own homes** See below

**4<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY of ADVENT 19/12/2021**

*Services in the Spilsby Cluster*

- 9.30am Spilsby Eucharist (PC) Banns  
3<sup>rd</sup> Phillip Morgan & Chloe Louise Faulkner both St Peter Morley for 22/01/2022 Hagworthingham  
11.15am **Raithby Carol Service (PC)**  
12noon Hundleby Wedding Blessing Tara & Andrew Bray (JC)  
3.00pm **Spilsby Carol Service (PC)**  
3.00pm **Hundleby Carol Service (SH)**  
~~5.00pm **Lt Steeping Carol Service** cancelled~~

5.00pm **Firsby Carol Service (JC)**

*Services in the Marden Hill Cluster*

- 4.00pm **East Keal Carol Service (PC)**  
6.00pm **Hagworthingham Candle Lit Carol Service (PC)**

*Services in the Stickney Cluster*

- 3.00pm **New Leake Carol Service (FJ)**  
6.00pm **Stickney Carol Service (FJ)**

*Services in the Partney Cluster*

6.00pm **Partney 9 Lessons & Carols (TMcL)**

*Services in the South Ormsby Cluster*

3.00pm Tetford Holy Communion (TMcL)

**Bolingbroke Churches on line:**

We will continue to publish a short video on YouTube and link it to our website.

Our Web Site <http://lincoln.ourchurchweb.org.uk/spilsby/index.php>

I have created a YouTube Account **Bolingbroke Team Churches**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u7o5VzGhMNc>

**Monday O Clavis David**

O Key of David and sceptre of the House of Israel; you open and no one can shut; you shut and no one can open: Come and lead the prisoners from the prison house, those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death. *cf Isaiah 22.22, 42.7*

**7.00pm Old Bolingbroke Carol Service**

**Tuesday O Oriens`- O Morning Star**

O Morning Star, splendour of light eternal and sun of righteousness:

Come and enlighten those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death. *cf Malachi*

4.2

**Wednesday O Rex Gentium - O King of the nations**

O King of the nations, and their desire, the cornerstone making both one: Come and save the human race, which you fashioned from clay. *cf Isaiah 28.16; Ephesians 2.14*

- \*\*9.30am Spilsby Eucharist
- 11.00am Spilsby Jim Swanson's Funeral
- 4.00pm Team Meeting

**Thursday O Emmanuel – God with us**

O Emmanuel, our king and our lawgiver, the hope of the nations and their Saviour: Come and save us, O Lord our God. *cf Isaiah 7.14*

**Friday CHRISTMAS EVE**

- 3.30pm Spilsby Christingle & Crib Service
- 4.00pm Stickney Crib Service
- 6.00pm South Ormsby 9 Lessons & Carols
- ~~10.00pm Hundleby Bethlehem Service cancelled~~
- 11.30pm Spilsby MIDNIGHT MASS
- 11.30pm Partney MIDNIGHT COMMUNION
- 11.30pm Stickney MIDNIGHT COMMUNION

**Saturday CHRISTMAS DAY**

- 9.30pm Halton Holegate Christmas Eucharist
- 9.30pm East Keal Christmas Eucharist
- 9.30am Tetford Christmas Holy Communion
- 10.00am Stickney Celebration of Christmas
- 10.30am Old Bolingbroke Methodist Christmas Service
- 11.00am Skendleby Christmas Holy Communion

**1<sup>st</sup> SUNDAY of CHRISTMAS 26/12/2021**

*Services in the Spilsby Cluster*

- 9.30am Spilsby Eucharist (PC)
- 11.15am Little Steeping Eucharist (JC)

*Services in the Marden Hill Cluster*

*Services in the Stickney Cluster*

*Services in the Partney Cluster*

- 11.15am Langton Holy Communion (TMcL)
- 11.15am Sausthorpe Morning Prayer (PMcL)

*Services in the South Ormsby Cluster*

9.30am Somersby Holy Communion (TMcL)

**Private Prayer in the Following Churches:**

St James Spilsby	Daily	08.00 to 16.00
St Mary Hundleyby	Daily	10.00 to 14.00
St Helen East Keal	Daily	10.00 to 15.00
St Helen's West Keal	Saturday and Sunday	10.00 to 16.00
St Nicholas Partney	Thursdays	11.30 to 12.30
St Mary Tetford	Wednesdays	11.30 to 12.30
St Luke Stickney	Daily	10.00 to 16.00
St Helen Stickford	Daily	10.00 to 16.00

**Spilsby Daily 8am Morning Prayer & at Noon**

**God of love, turn our hearts to Your ways and give us peace. Amen**

***The sick at home or in hospital,***

Nigel Worth, Kathleen, Molly, Veronica, Dorothy, Maggie J. Betty Brawn, Tristan, Michael P, Joan T. Mark, Jossie Lee, June, Hilary, Michael, Harriet, Rose L., Abby, Sheila Janes, Fleur, Mary, Jeff Mason, Rosie, Bob, (Baby) Chloe Lear, Lawrence, Ann Howman, John Prince, Sylvia Bonsey, Anthea B, Jo & John, Bessie Reddin, Mary Julyan, Norman Huntingford, Kerry Brown.

***The Departed:*** Pauline Towler, Clarica Thacker, Jim Swanson, Dorothy Sykes.

**Anniversary:** Nancy Sorfleet, Peter Blanchard, John Burman, Doris Cash, Gordon Churchward, Louie Barker, Stella Godsmark, Wendy Cobb, Dora Boyle, Elsie Maddison, Betty Griffin, Tyler Boucher, Stephen Adkins(p), Robert Nixon, Wilfred Parsons, Kneale Whittom, Audrey Dunncliffe-Smith, Harold Penson, David Churchyard, David Lambert, Ken O'Riordan(p), Alma Leverton, Brian Walker, Kay Wooley, Nelson Mandela, John Dorie, Jo Woodgate, Joyce White, Baby Baxter, Barbara Clarke, Mary Hampson, Norah Walls, Maurice Nicoll, Ben Ely, Winifred Ashley, Doris Collingwood Lillian Hunter, William Dracas, John Turner, Roy Dobbs, Dr A., Debra Martin, Christina Litster, Joan Brough, Phylida Upex, Frederick Marshall, Carol Panrucker, Florence Green, Ivor Bogg, Tim Sumner-Wilson, Roy Cornall, Vera Lawrence, John Spalding, Jean Scott, Doreen Legsda, Peter Weston, Patricia Hales, Hazel Futter, Alan Toplis. Charles Leighton, Sarah Smith, David Sawyer, Ada Ashton, Helen Kinnon, Mick Clark, Derek Tayles, Des Woodford, George Atley, Noel White, Pam Hine, Fran Ness, Matt Soloman. Stephen Smith, Eric Thomas, Gill Maxim, Keith Hinds, Alana Poulton, John Tasker, Bill Birrell, Betty Edwards, Charles Wright, Gordon Brocklebank, Michael Hall, Barbara Warner, Pat Clarke, Margaret White (Spilsby), Barbara Hicks, Rita Lenton.

## [Disasters Emergency Committee \(DEC\)](#)

[lu9 cuhrpns20s62ecgd](#) ·

Aid is already reaching those in need through DEC member charities in Afghanistan, but as the winter weather worsens, families are in desperate need of food assistance and winter supplies to help keep them warm.

Please help by donating today.

<https://www.facebook.com/donate/627499191707233/10159534722290977/>

DEC Secretariat

1-6 Tavistock Square

London, WC1H 9NA

Switchboard: 0207 387 0200\*

### Prayer for Afghanistan

Come, Jesus... Come, our Saviour,  
come to all the people in Afghanistan,  
in this bleakest of winters.  
Come, with food and water,  
to feed the hungry and refresh the thirsty ones.

Come, once a child yourself,  
come to the children and the babies,  
when so many cry with hunger pangs  
and parents would give everything to feed them.

Come, the peace bearer,  
come and bring your shalom to this land  
after forty years of brutal war.  
Come to those displaced and uprooted,  
to a people fearful and vulnerable to violence.

Come, the light in our night,  
come to families cold and shivering,  
when infection passes from one to another,  
while the economy is broken,  
and creation groans in pain.

For all people, of all faiths,  
to all children of every family,  
in all the places where mothers weep and children cry,  
come, God made vulnerable flesh,

to touch your world with true hope once more.

Turn our sorrow at the suffering of children,  
and our determination that hate will not win,  
into something we can do.

Take the money we give and the prayers we pray,  
and stir in us, and in all your people,  
whatever is needed for a new world to come.

From the depths of a bitter winter,  
may hope spring. Amen.

*Written by Revd Dr Susan Durber  
Moderator, Faith and Order Commission, WCC*

<p>Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> <b>Local Authorities</b></p>	<p>When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Luke 1: 41 <i>The Church of the Province of Central Africa</i></p>
<p>Monday 20<sup>th</sup> <b>MPs and Local Councillors (District &amp; Parish),</b></p>	<p><b>Deeping St James – Revd Mark Williams</b> We are ordinary people who seek to follow Jesus Christ in whom we find meaning and purpose to our lives, and we seek to serve our community in his name. Pray for the people of the community we will meet at our Christmas Services <i>The Diocese of Ikwano – The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) (Aba Province)</i></p>
<p>Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> <b>Musicians and those in the Arts</b></p>	<p><b>The Glen Group – Revd David Sweeting</b> Pray for the people who will join us for our Christmas Celebrations in all our Churches this weekend, that they will catch a glimpse of the love God has for them. <i>The Diocese of Ilaje – The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) (Ondo Province)</i></p>
<p>Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> <b>Nature Conservation</b></p>	<p><b>Gosberton Gosberton Clough and Quadring – In Vacancy</b> Pray for our congregations still adjusting to life in vacancy as we approach our first Christmas, giving thanks for everyone who is helping us to look forward with hope. <i>The Diocese of Ile - Oluji – The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) (Ondo Province)</i></p>
<p>Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> <b>Police and Fire Services</b></p>	<p><b>Market Deeping – Revd George Holding</b> As we move into a new year, pray for the outworking of our new Mission Action Plan arising out of our Vision Statement: Reaching out in love, growing in faith, welcoming all. <i>The Diocese of Ilesa – The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) (Ibadan Province)</i></p>

<p>Friday 24<sup>th</sup> Christmas Eve</p> <p><i>Press/media</i></p>	<p>God has brought to Israel a Saviour, Jesus, as he promised; before his coming John had already proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. <i>Acts 13: 23 – 24</i></p> <p><i>The Diocese of Ilesa South West – The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) (Ibadan Province)</i></p>
<p>Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> Christmas Day</p> <p><i>Prisons</i></p>	<p>But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. <i>John 1: 12 - 13</i></p> <p><i>The Diocese of North East India – The (united) Church of North India</i></p>
<p>Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> Stephen, Deacon, First Martyr</p> <p><i>Social Services</i></p>	<p>When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you at that time; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. <i>Matthew 10: 19 - 20</i></p> <p><i>Iglesia Anglicana de la Region Central de America</i></p>

## Bolingbroke Team Ministry Carol Service 2021



○ come let us worship and lift our hearts . . .  
Not because the world is good and last week was awesome,  
but because the earth is the Lord's and everything in it,  
the God of the whole Earth.

○ come let us worship and raise our hands . . .

Not because our lives are all sweetness and light,  
But because even those who walk in darkness can see a great light,  
the Bright and Morning Star

O come let us worship and bow down . . .  
Not because God gives us what we want,  
But because God gives us what we need –  
the holy child Jesus, God's Unspeakable Gift.

**Once in royal David's city stood a lowly cattle-shed,  
Where a mother laid her baby in a manger for His bed:  
Mary was that mother mild, Jesus Christ her little Child.**

**He came down to earth from heaven, who is God and Lord of all,  
And His shelter was a stable, and His cradle was a stall;  
With the poor, and mean, and lowly, lived on earth our Saviour holy.**

**And our eyes at last shall see Him, through His own redeeming love;  
For that Child so dear and gentle is our Lord in heaven above,  
And He leads His children on to the place where He is gone.**

**Not in that poor lowly stable, with the oxen standing by,  
We shall see Him; but in heaven, set at God's right hand on high;  
Where like stars His children crowned all in white shall wait around.**

*(Words: Cecil Frances Alexander 1818 - 1895)*

*Welcome and Introduction*

*A Reading from the Prophet Isaiah: The Righteous Reign of the Coming King*

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;  
those who lived in a land of deep darkness - on them light has shined.  
For a child has been born for us, a son given to us;  
authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty  
God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne  
of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with  
righteousness from this time onwards and for evermore.  
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

**Thanks be to God**

**Angels from the realms of glory wing your flight over all the earth**

**Ye, who sang creation's story, now proclaim Messiah's birth  
Come and worship Christ the newborn King  
come and worship, worship Christ the newborn King**

**Shepherds in the fields abiding watching o'er your  
flocks by night**

**God with man is now residing yonder shines the  
infant light**

**Come and worship Christ the newborn King  
come and worship, worship Christ the newborn King**



**Sages leave your contemplations brighter visions beam afar  
Seek the great Desire of Nations ye have seen his natal star  
Come and worship Christ the newborn King  
come and worship, worship Christ the newborn King  
Saints before the altar bending, watching long in hope and fear  
Suddenly the Lord, descending, in his temple shall appear  
Come and worship Christ the newborn King  
come and worship, worship Christ the newborn King**

*(Words: James Montgomery 1771 - 1854)*

*A Reading from the Gospel of Luke: The Birth of Jesus foretold*

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.' But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' The angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.' Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her.

**Thanks be to God**

*Carol: The angel Gabriel*

The angel Gabriel from heaven came,  
his wings as drifted snow, his eyes as flame;  
"All hail," said he, O lowly maiden Mary,  
"most highly favoured lady." Gloria!

"For known a blessed Mother thou shalt be.  
All generations laud and honour thee.  
Thy son shall be Emmanuel, by seers foretold,  
Most highly favoured lady, Gloria!

Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head;  
"To me be as it pleases God," she said.  
"My soul shall laud and magnify his holy name."  
Most highly favoured lady, Gloria!  
Of her, Emmanuel, the Christ, was born  
in Bethlehem, all on a Christmas morn,  
and Christian folk throughout the world will ever say,  
"Most highly favoured lady." Gloria!

*(Words: Sabine Baring-Gould 1834 – 1924)*

*A Reading from the Gospel of Luke: The Birth of Jesus*

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

**Thanks be to God**

**Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,  
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.  
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,  
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.**

**The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,  
but little Lord Jesus no crying he makes.  
I love thee, Lord Jesus; look down from the sky,**

**and stay by my side until morning is nigh.**

**Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask you to stay  
close by me forever and love me, I pray.  
Bless all the dear children in your tender care,  
and fit us for heaven to live with thee there.**

*(Words: William James Kirkpatrick 1838 – 1921)*

*A Reading from the Gospel of Luke: The Shepherds and the Angels*

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

'Glory to God in the highest heaven,

and on earth peace among those whom he favours!'

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.' So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

**Thanks be to God**

**While shepherds watched their flocks by night,  
all seated on the ground,  
an angel of the Lord came down,  
and glory shone around.**

**"Fear not," said he (for mighty dread  
had seized their troubled mind)  
"glad tidings of great joy I bring  
to you and all mankind.**



**"To you, in David's town, this day**

**is born of David's line  
a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord;  
and this shall be the sign:**

**"The heavenly babe you there shall find  
to human view displayed,  
all meanly wrapped in swathing bands  
and in a manger laid."**

**Thus spake the seraph and forthwith  
appeared a shining throng  
of angels praising God, who thus  
addressed their joyful song:**

**"All glory be to God on high,  
and to the earth be peace;  
good will henceforth from heaven to men  
begin and never cease."**

*A Reading from the Gospel of Matthew: The Visit of the Wise Men*

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, 'Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.' When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

"And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,

are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;

for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel."

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, 'Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.' When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

**Thanks be to God**



*Carol: Love came down at Christmas*

Love came down at Christmas, Love all lovely, Love Divine,  
Love was born at Christmas, Star and Angels gave the sign.

Worship we the Godhead, Love Incarnate, Love Divine,  
Worship we our Jesus, But wherewith for sacred sign?

Love shall be our token, Love shall be yours and love be mine,  
Love to God and all men, Love for plea and gift and sign.

*(Words: Christina Georgina Rossetti 1830 – 1894)*

*Prayers of Intercession*

To the bidding: Lord, come to your people.

The response is: **In your mercy set us free.**

Unlooked for, Christ comes.

To shepherds, watching their sheep through the long, dark night, he comes with the  
glory of the angels' song and in the humility of the manger.

*Silence*

Loving God, we pray for our community. In the midst of our everyday lives, surprise  
us with glimpses of your glorious, humble love, at the heart of existence.

Lord, come to your people. **In your mercy set us free.**

Searched for, Christ comes.

To the wise and powerful, star-led to Bethlehem, seeking a king, he comes, child of  
Mary, crowned with meekness, worthy of every gift.

*Silence*

Loving God, we pray for the leaders of the world. Guide them with your light to  
seek wisdom, justice and peace.

Lord, come to your people. **In your mercy set us free.**

Longed for, Christ comes.

To Anna and Simeon, whose days are lived in faithful expectation, he comes, a new life to the old, a living prophecy of hope.

*Silence*

Loving God, we pray for the Church in all the world. Unite us by your Spirit, and make us faithful witnesses to the hope we have in you.

Lord, come to your people. **In your mercy set us free.**

Prayed for, Christ comes.

To men and women, girls and boys, crying out in darkness, pain and loneliness, he comes, at one with us, our Saviour, healer and friend.

*Silence*

Loving God, we pray for those whose lives are hard and painful or whose existence is sorrowful, bitter or empty. In their need, may they know your healing touch, reaching out to comfort, strengthen and restore.

Lord, come to your people. **In your mercy set us free.**

Unlooked for and not searched for, longed for and prayed for, loving God, you come to us now as you have come to your people in every age. We thank you for all who have reflected the light of Christ. Help us to follow their example and bring us with them to eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*Collect*

Eternal God, as Mary waited for the birth of your Son, so we wait for his coming in glory; bring us through the birth pangs of this present age to see, with her, our great salvation in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Rejoicing in the presence of God here among us, let us pray as Jesus taught us:

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours  
now and for ever. Amen.**

When Jesus was born he became the Saviour of the world. After 30 years he was killed, because he called God 'Father', and said that everyone who believed in him would have eternal life. He said God didn't send him to judge the people, but to save them. Although he was killed, God raised him again. And he is here today – in the hearts of those who believe and trust in him. One day we will see him again, in all his glory, when he comes back to earth. The Jesus of the Nativity story is the Jesus who brings us new life with God, and is at the centre of our existence.

**Hark the herald angels sing "Glory to the new born King!  
Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled"  
Joyful, all ye nations rise, join the triumph of the skies  
With the angelic host proclaim: "Christ is born in Bethlehem"  
Hark! The herald angels sing "Glory to the new born King!"**

**Christ by highest heaven adored, Christ the everlasting Lord!  
Late in time behold him come, offspring of a Virgin's womb  
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, Hail the incarnate Deity  
Pleased as man with man to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel  
Hark! The herald angels sing "Glory to the new born King!"**

**Hail the heaven-born prince of peace! Hail the son of righteousness!  
Light and life to all he brings risen with healing in his wings  
Mild He lays his glory by, born that man no more may die  
Born to raise the sons of earth, born to give them second birth  
Hark! The herald angels sing "Glory to the new born King!"**

*Blessing*

God of all people, who gave us your Son Jesus Christ,  
not as judge but as Saviour,  
grant that as we make room for him in our hearts,  
you will give us peace in our lives,  
so that we may be reconciled and comforted.  
And the blessings of the God of heaven, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
be with us and all we love, this Christmas and always.  
Amen.

## **An act of Spiritual Communion**

*You may wish to find a space for prayer in front of a cross, a candle, or a special place. You might choose to make your Spiritual Communion at a particular time of day, or after viewing a live streamed service.*

*Reflect on the day and on your relationships.*

- *What good things have come from God today?*
- *Where have I fallen short?*
- *What might I do tomorrow?*

*You may wish to say or pray*

*Lord, have mercy.*

*Christ, have mercy.*

*Lord, have mercy.*

*Read the following words from Scripture. If you have access to today's readings for Holy Communion, you may wish to read and reflect on them.*

*Jesus said, 'I am the bread of life.*

*Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.'*

*John 6.35*

*Pray for the needs of the world, for your local community, and for those close to you. End with the Lord's Prayer.*

*Our Father...*

*Give thanks for the saving death and resurrection of Jesus and ask him to be with you now.*

*Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits you have given me, for all the pains and insults you have borne for me. Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.*

*O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother, may I know you more clearly, love you more dearly, and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.*

*after the Prayer of St Richard of Chichester Conclude with the following:*

*The Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil, and keep us in eternal life.*

**Amen.**

## **A prayer for all those affected by coronavirus**

Keep us, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy.

Sustain and support the anxious, be with those who care for the sick, and lift up all who are brought low; that we may find comfort

knowing that nothing can separate us from your love

in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Amen.**

### **Clergy Team**

**The Rev'd. Canon Peter Coates**  
**The Vicarage, Church Street, Spilsby,**  
**PE23 5EF**

**email: [peter.coates50@yahoo.com](mailto:peter.coates50@yahoo.com)**

**Tel: 01790 752526**

**The Rev'd. Ms. Fran Jeffries**  
**The Rectory, Horbling Lane, Stickney**  
**PE22 8DQ**

**email: [revfjeffries@outlook.com](mailto:revfjeffries@outlook.com)**

**The Rev'd Judith Simons**  
[revjudithsimons@hotmail.com](mailto:revjudithsimons@hotmail.com)

Or Contact via Stickney Rectory – As  
above

**The Rev'd. Mrs Joan Thornett**  
email: [fctjw@btinternet.com](mailto:fctjw@btinternet.com)  
Tel: 01790 754151

**The Rev'd Mrs Jean Coates**  
Contact via Spilsby Vicarage – As above

email: [coatesjean@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:coatesjean@yahoo.co.uk)

**Rev'd. Mrs Teresa McLaughlin &  
Mr Paul McLaughlin** – Community  
Chaplain

**The Rectory, Scremby Road Partney  
PE23 4PG**  
[tmclaughlin@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:tmclaughlin@tiscali.co.uk)  
01790 752344

## **Saints on Earth ¶ December**

### **Incarcerated for the incarnation**

Author: David Kirk Beedon

ONE of the highlights during my six years ministering as a prison chaplain was the annual carol service in the chapel. It was an ecumenical affair, shared with my Roman Catholic and Free Church colleagues, and with prison residents from various Christian traditions (and none), as well as community guests from churches near by.

The format resembled many found in churches during the festive season: the customary collection of readings from the nativity accounts of St Luke's Gospel, and carols that would be familiar from primary school. Slightly self-indulgently, we would always have John 1.1-14 as the fourth and final reading.

I was aware that, for many residents, the nativity may have been little more than a vague memory from school festive events in childhood. So, throughout Advent each year, a weekly study group would look in turn at each of the four readings, by way of preparation for Christmas.

It was always a privilege to accompany the men I served on this Advent journey. The way in which they brought the incarnation to life was both humbling and inspiring. In the service, as we concluded the reflections, the reader would declare, 'Emmanuel!', and the worshippers would respond, with gusto, 'God is with us!' (with a pronounced emphasis on the 'is'). LAST year, after a colleague expressed reluctance to use the fourth reading, I began to question whether John's Prologue might be theologically too 'highbrow' for this context, and came to the conclusion that it was for the men themselves to decide. At the penultimate Advent meeting, the group spent their time looking at the reading, and I asked them, 'Do we want this in the carol service?' I suggested that it might be thought too 'philosophical' or 'theological'.

After reading the passage, I let them think about the task in hand, but, immediately, one of the group declared, 'No, we've definitely got to have this,' and others nodded

vigorously. I gave some background to the reading, and pointed out its deliberate scriptural resonances with the opening of Genesis.

When I asked them which parts of the reading appealed to them, they identified ‘the power to become children of God’; ‘in the flesh’; and ‘the light shines in the darkness.’ One participant said: ‘I just love ‘the Word’ bit.’ I explained that the Greek word logos — translated in our Bibles as ‘Word’ — also meant ‘logic, meaning, or purpose’, and described how the reading posits that everything (including us) that has being, and has come into existence, has done so through what we see embodied in Jesus.

At this, one participant from the south of England smiled, nodded his head, and declared — in appreciation, if with conflicted understanding — ‘That’s proper mad, that is!’

The Service of Nine Lessons and Carols introduces the Prologue to St John’s Gospel in terms of the unfolding of the great ‘mystery’ of the incarnation.

In his poem ‘Christmas’, John Betjeman twice asks of ‘this most tremendous tale of all’, ‘And is it true?’, and I am sure that many of us can relate to the notion — so eloquently expressed by my group member — that the doctrine of the incarnation is ‘proper mad’. Yet he, with others on that Advent journey and in the subsequent carol service, experienced something profound: a belief that they are ‘children of God’. This band of seekers after something to hope in — a group made up of the abandoned, dysfunctional, neglected, abused, marginalised, dangerous, and unloved — had a faith stirred in them: that the one who became the human face of God provides them with a light to shine in their darkness: a light that cannot be overcome.

Prisons, and those who are held in them (83,000 at the time of writing), are going through challenging times. This Christmastide, I invite you to hold close these places and people in your prayers.

Although there were many harrowing encounters during my time as a priest behind bars, I also frequently experienced the best of days. For it is in such dark places that it is, paradoxically, often easiest to witness the light of God’s love transforming lives, and to rediscover that incarnational truth that ‘God is with us.’

Far from turkeys, trees, and tinsel, God is at work in the unlikeliest of places (unlikely, that is, if we take as our reference traditional Christmas card scenes). To recognise this is to realise — of the incarnation, and in the best of ways — ‘That’s proper mad that is!’ Thank God.