

The Smestow Vale Team Ministry

St Benedict Biscop and the Venerable Bede

Keeping in Touch with our Church Family

Sunday 20th December

4th Sunday of Advent



A reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans

To God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith – to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory for ever! Amen.

Romans 16:25-end

Mary has an unexpected visit from an angel.

Luke 1.26–38 Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke Glory be to you, O Lord 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, '

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.

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.

Luke 1.26–38

A Reflection from Laurie Gainer

Around nine months ago, on March 25th (or the nearest Sunday) we would (had we been allowed to) have celebrated the Annunciation - the visit of the Angel Gabriel to Mary to tell her that she was about to bring to birth the Son of God: the child was to be called "Emanuel" which means "God with us." Now, almost nine months later, the time to fulfil this prophecy was drawing close. Mary was very heavily pregnant and contemplating a difficult, slow journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem. I don't know how long the journey takes - perhaps she and Joseph were already on their way. But she would have had plenty of time to recall the words of the Archangel, as we do this morning. Despite the words of Gabriel, she would have been very concerned for the health of the child she was carrying, and wondering where she would be when the time came.

We too have gone through a time of waiting: nine months when we were told that vaccines against Covid 19 were under development, but nothing seemed to be happening. Now, for us too, the time is drawing near

when our waiting will be over - not by Christmas Day, but perhaps early in the spring. As Mary trusted in God and in Joseph to bring about a safe delivery, so we are trusting in God and in the NHS for a safe and effective vaccine to bring to an end the scourge of Covid 19.

I expect the last few weeks of Mary's pregnancy - big and heavy and slow-moving - were the most difficult part, but she had patience and trust to follow all the safety rules. Let us pray that we too will have trust and patience to follow the rules to protect ourselves and others as we wait for our vaccinations (and after). Meanwhile, we have the glorious season of Christmas to look forward to - that time when God came into our world to live for a time among us. Praise the Lord. Amen.

Laurie

Prayers for the Fourth Week of Advent

Sunday

Pray that we may have the humility and obedience of Mary. (Luke 1: 38a)

Monday

Pray for those working hard to distribute and administer the new vaccine.

Tuesday

Pray for all suffering from S.A.D., who find dark days depressing at the best of times.

Wednesday

Pray for patience to wait until the virus is no longer a threat.

Thursday

Christmas Eve Pray that the light of Christ may pierce our darkness. (Luke 1: 78, 79)

Friday

Christmas Day Pray that we may journey to Bethlehem in our hearts with the Shepherds. (Luke 2: 15b)

Saturday

Saint Stephen Pray for those who still face persecution today for the sake of Jesus Christ. (Matthew 10: 22)

Please remember those who have asked for our prayers

Lisa, Morgan, Margaret Ward, Joy Waistell, Sarah Aldridge, Jane, Delma Scriven, George Moorhouse, Joan Edwards and Carl Baker.

Those who have died

John Fogarty, Iris Pardoe, Michael Concannon, Jeanette Owen, Michael Waldron and Keith Wilson. Please send requests for prayers to the Parish Office.

Christmas Services

St Benedict's will be open for private prayer through out the week.

A Carol Service, the Crib Service and Midnight Mass will be on Facebook and YouTube

On Christmas Morning it is essential to book for the 8.00am and 10.30am Communion Services
There will be a 10.30am Parish Communion on the 27th. Please come to either Christmas morning or on the 27th to make your Christmas Communion.

Sunday after Christmas at St Benedict's in Tier 3

Next Sunday there will be:
10.30am Parish Communion.

Our Christmas Charity is The Honey Pot Children's Charity. For young carers.

Don't forget that restrictions are still in place so it is **very** important to book with Hilary on 01902 892856 or by email hilmoore@gmail.com. Please telephone by 12noon on Saturday. There will be a service led by Paul on Facebook and on You Tube this Sunday.

From the Government Guidelines

In Church " , you must not mingle with anyone outside of your household or support bubble."

"A household is a person or a group of people who live together in the same accommodation."

"A support bubble is where a single adult living alone, or a single parent with children under 18, can form an exclusive network with one other household where social distancing does not have to be observed."

"The 2 households that form a support bubble count as one household for the purposes of this guidance."

Christmas cards

Due to the continuing Covid 19 restrictions and the advice on the handling of paper please do not leave Christmas Cards for collection in church.

Zoom Prayer Meeting

Tuesday 22nd December at 8.00pm for 35 minutes
Please contact Sue Watson if you would like to join.

Thank you

To those who have decorated the Church for our Christmas celebrations

