

Lark Valley and North Bury Team Ministry

# VIRAL BULLETIN

24 & 31 December 2023

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](http://www.northburychurches.org.uk)



*Aidan Hart's stone carving of Christ and the Virgin Mary*

*Lincoln Cathedral*

***A very Merry Christmas to you all from Andy,  
the Team Rector, and Ali, the Team Vicar***

*In this issue:*

Christmas with Song of the Shepherd: Ali Miller \* Worship this week and next \*  
Gail Bate's 20 years with Lark Valley Magazine \* Christmas Services in Lark Valley and  
North Bury churches \* Patronal Festival at St John's \* Wonder Club at St  
Lawrence, Lackford \* Team Epiphany Carol Service \* Week of Prayer for  
Christian Unity \* Caption Competition results \* Praying Together \*  
Christingle Coffee Morning \* Bel is Zechariah at All Saints', Bury \*  
Once More ... Linda Wicks \* Contacts

# That Old Familiar Story

## Christmas Day (Luke 2.1-20)

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen

Each year we make the journey to Bethlehem and revisit the Christmas story. Each year therefore, we find ourselves a little older (possibly wiser) and a little or a lot different, depending on what the year contained for us and the world around us. This means each time we peek into the crib to see the Christ-child, it is likely a different element of the very familiar story will resonate with us in comparison to other years. I wonder what leaps out at you on this time round?

Christmas morning itself is usually quiet, whether you are in town or country. There is that sense that whether people are believers or not, somehow God's hush of silence has descended to most places. I'm sure in reality that some places will be noisier than others but let's remain in the realm of fancifully poetic for a moment: that lull of silence offers the possibility of hearing something else, something important, something God may wish us to hear. We may have to wait a little though.

A couple of other people waiting include Mary and Joseph and they are not in the most comfortable of surroundings – rather a stable complete with animals, dirt, and straw; they wait alongside their precious newborn, who is wrapped in cloths and to be found sleeping or babbling in a manger.

Mary and Joseph have waited for the birth of this child since that moment when the angelic visitor Gabriel came to Mary to say that she would bear a son, Jesus. They have waited since Mary's resounding 'Yes'. Now, in Bethlehem, they continue to wait, wondering what will happen next? Who can blame them? After the flurry of divine activity at the beginning of all this, God's silence stretches out. Or so it seems ...

Meanwhile, above the fields in that region, the silence of the dark night is about to be pierced by fireworks as God's angelic messenger appears to shepherds doing the night watch, terrifying them in the process.

The shepherds are not quite ordinary folk: to a certain extent they would be considered outsiders for living and working with the animals and not attending worship. If you like, they would be considered 'people-least-likely-to' - and in that sense they will make good company for the teenage girl and her carpenter back at the stable. God seems to delight in picking 'those-least-likely-to'; it is the stuff of Mary's song, the Magnificat.

Returning to the fields, our angel gives to the shepherds God's joyful message of good news for all the people: that in the city of David a Saviour is born, the Messiah, the

Lord. The angel speaks of the sign: that the child is wrapped in cloth and will be found lying in a manger. This is an incredible message for the shepherds to hear but it goes further; for this angel is joined by a multitude of angels and they sing a hymn of praise to God.

That night the shepherds cast aside their usual duties (and in a way they foreshadow the fishermen-disciples who drop their nets and go). The shepherds risk leaving their sheep and now they take on the mantle of God's messengers, hurrying on into the silent darkness of the town, looking for the child.

As soon as they find Mary and Joseph, the shepherds pass on the message from the angel of the Lord; it is a message of confirmation and of comfort, to be pondered and treasured especially if (or rather as we know when) things become difficult. The delivering of the message, and the content too, reveals that God has not forgotten or abandoned Mary and Joseph. Silence does not mean that God is not acting; when ready, God's message will come through - and likely in unexpected ways from unexpected people!

We see this in the way the shepherds behave in response to their angelic chums as they return to their fields (hopefully to find that on this occasion the wolf shall live with the lamb): they continue to proclaim the good news of the Saviour's birth, praising God for what they have seen and heard - and this to everyone they meet!

For me, Mary and Joseph's experience speaks loudly of encouragement in times of waiting: wait with hopeful expectation, for God will be doing something in the silence. There is something here too about learning to live with uncertainty in anxious times and asking for God's peace and patience when it gets a bit frustrating or overwhelming.

Yet the shepherds' experience also shows us that God's message of good news via the angels brings about transformation and action. What does it mean to hear such a message? And will we welcome the messenger? How are we called to respond and proclaim the good news? Well, it will be different in word or deed for each of us depending on our giftings and contexts.

What is undoubtedly true is that however our response to the angelic words manifests, there will be Christmas joy and peace. This is the kind of deep inner joy and peace which lasts long after the decorations are tidied away and the last of the chocolates are snaffled up, lovely as these things certainly are. It is the joy and peace arising from living life in response to the truth to be found when we peek afresh into the crib and gaze on the Christ-child.

'To you is born in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord.'

Wait and listen and respond.

## Song of the Shepherd (Luke 2)

I wonder who taught you to sing?  
Was it your Mum? Or maybe your Dad?

Perhaps it was your teacher, you know the rabbi from the down the road ...  
Not for me – I was never very bright.  
I kept forgetting all the songs we were supposed to remember; that did not go down very well.

Oh, but I did remember one!

The Lord is my shepherd.

I always liked that one and I have to say it greatly influenced what I decided to do with my life.

You see, I never really fitted in and family life was not so good ... so the perfect job for me was to look after sheep.

I liked it ... up on the hills, away from it all.

Caring for these simple woolly creatures: I talked to them, and they trusted me. It might sound silly, but I wanted to be like the shepherd in the song, you know, making sure the sheep were comfortable with green pastures and still waters.

Yet it could be a bit tiring guarding the sheep night and day, so you will be pleased to hear that I was not on my own: there were other shepherds, young and old. We were a bit of a motley crew.

We were quite rough and ready, very grubby in appearance, and we did smell like sheep – all the time.

We had no friends or family other than each other.

People didn't want to come near us, and we didn't go near them.

In fact, we were called 'unclean'. That was upsetting.

Maybe I shouldn't dwell on that.

Let's see! The nights were the hardest part of the job: long and exhausting, always needing to be alert in case a big bad wolf or worse came prowling.

If I am honest, it was a little scary too.

To keep awake we would light a fire and tell stories.

We even attempted to sing, though it didn't amount to much.

Our voices were not tuneful, and left a lot to be desired.

One night though, everything changed.

We were grazing the sheep high on the hills above Bethlehem.

It was pitch black, and so, so, cold.

The sheep were tense, which made us tense.

The air was heavy, and it felt like we were on the brink of something.

In fact, we were!

An angel appeared, and we were terrified.

We could barely look at him, for he shone white and yellow light, so bright that our eyes hurt.

*This was the glory of the Lord.*

When the angel spoke and reassured us, we calmed down - well sort of.

We heard a most beautiful message, about the birth of our Saviour, the Messiah, the Lord.

The Lord who is my Shepherd!

He is here in Bethlehem!

The angel gave us a sign: to look for a tiny child, wrapped in clothes and lying in a manger.

Then to our astonishment the whole sky filled with angels, a heavenly host.

They opened their mouths and music poured out, filling our ears with their song of praise:

‘Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours’.

After this explosion of light and sound, we were once more alone ... but we were changed.

We found we had the angels’ music within us, and we wanted to share their message.

To sing the heavenly song we had to find the child, so we left the sheep and hurried:

Half-running, half-tumbling down the hillside.

After much searching we found a ramshackle hut.

Amidst the animals and the dirt, and the straw, was a young woman and man, weary but happy, watching over a baby.

The scene was like the angels had said, and we told the family of the amazing thing we had witnessed.

My heart leapt for joy, because this child seemed ordinary, just like us, and yet there was something of heaven about him.

It seemed so natural to sing and praise God.

Afterwards we left to return to the sheep, telling anybody and everybody on the way all that had happened.

We did not, could not, stop singing songs of praise,

for the angel had put the song of heaven onto our lips.

And all these years later, I’m still singing.

*The Revd Ali Miller*

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## Lark Valley and North Bury Churches

### SERVICES WEEK BEGINNING 24 DECEMBER

#### SUNDAY 24 December 4th SUNDAY of ADVENT

8.00am	Holy Communion (BCP)	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
10.00am	Benefice Eucharist (CW)	Culford
11.00am	Parish Eucharist (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds

#### 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	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
11.30pm	Midnight Mass	West Stow

#### Monday 25 December CHRISTMAS DAY

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

#### Tuesday 26 December Stephen, deacon, first martyr

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

8.30am	Morning Prayer (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
10.00am	Patronal Festival Eucharist (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds

#### Thursday 28 December The Holy Innocents

9.30am	Eucharist (CW)	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
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#### Friday 29 December Thomas Becket, archbishop, martyr, 1170

7.30am	Eucharist (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
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#### SUNDAY 31 December 1st SUNDAY of CHRISTMAS

8.00am	Holy Communion (BCP)	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
9.30am	Parish Communion (CW)	St George's, Bury St Edmunds
9.30am	Parish Communion (CW)	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
10.00am	Eucharist (CW)	Flempton
11.00am	Sung Eucharist (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds

### LIVE-STREAMED WORSHIP

*The Parish Eucharist is usually live-streamed from St John's on Sundays at 11am on Facebook [@StJohnsBSE](#) and later posted onto [www.northburychurches.org.uk](http://www.northburychurches.org.uk)*

## Lark Valley and North Bury Churches

### SERVICES WEEK BEGINNING 31 DECEMBER

#### SUNDAY 31 December 1st SUNDAY of CHRISTMAS

8.00am	Holy Communion (BCP)	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
9.30am	Parish Communion (CW)	St George's, Bury St Edmunds
9.30am	Parish Communion (CW)	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
10.00am	Eucharist (CW)	Flempton
11.00am	Sung Eucharist (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds

#### Monday 1 January Naming and Circumcision of Jesus

11.00am	Solemn Eucharist (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
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#### Tuesday 2 January Basil the Great and Gregory of Nazianzus, bishops, teachers of the faith, 379 & 389; Seraphim, monk, spiritual guide, 1833; Vedanayagam Samuel Azariah, bishop, evangelist, 1945

8.30am	Morning Prayer (CW)	St George's, Bury St Edmunds
6.00pm	A Quiet Space	St John's, Bury St Edmunds

#### Wednesday 3 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 4 January

9.30am	Eucharist (BCP)	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
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#### Friday 5 January

6.00pm	Eucharist (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
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#### Saturday 6 January

#### SUNDAY 7 January EPIPHANY

8.00am	Holy Communion (BCP)	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
9.30am	Parish Communion (CW)	St George's, Bury St Edmunds
9.30am	Parish Communion (CW)	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
9.30am	Holy Communion (BCP)	Timworth
10.00am	Eucharist (CW)	West Stow
10.00am	All Age Service	Fornham All Saints
11.00am	Sung Eucharist (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
2.30pm	The Wonder Club	Lackford
5.00pm	Epiphany Carol Service	St John's, Bury St Edmunds

### LIVE-STREAMED WORSHIP

The Parish Eucharist is usually live-streamed from St John's on Sundays  
at 11am on Facebook [@StJohnsBSE](https://www.facebook.com/StJohnsBSE)  
and later posted onto [www.northburychurches.org.uk](http://www.northburychurches.org.uk)





**Gail Bate** is seen here receiving the gift for having done the Lark Valley magazine for over 20 years!

Gail would like to say a big thank you to you all for the generous gift received at the Culford Carol Service on her retirement from producing the Lark Valley magazine. She would also like to thank all the other people who distribute, contribute and help to run this publication as well as those of you who support the Lark Valley churches by subscribing to it.

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All Saints', Bury St Edmunds

## **Crib Service**

**CHRISTMAS EVE** Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> December at 3.30pm

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Fornham St Martin

## **Crib Service**

**CHRISTMAS EVE** Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> December at 4pm

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St George's, Bury St Edmunds

## **'Bethlehem' Midnight Mass**

**CHRISTMAS EVE** Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> December at 9.30pm

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Fornham All Saints

## **‘Bethlehem’ Midnight Mass**

CHRISTMAS EVE Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> December at 9.30pm

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West Stow

## **Midnight Mass**

CHRISTMAS EVE Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> December at 11.30pm

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St John’s, Bury St Edmunds

## **Midnight Mass**

CHRISTMAS EVE Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> December at 11.30pm

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All Saints’, Bury St Edmunds

## **Christmas Day Eucharist**

CHRISTMAS DAY 25<sup>th</sup> December at 9.30am

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Timworth

## **Christmas Day Communion**

CHRISTMAS DAY 25<sup>th</sup> December at 9.30pm

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Fornham St Martin

## **Christmas Day Eucharist**

CHRISTMAS DAY 25<sup>th</sup> December at 10am

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Lackford

## **Christmas Day Eucharist**

CHRISTMAS DAY 25<sup>th</sup> December at 10am

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St John’s, Bury St Edmunds

## **Christmas Day Eucharist**

CHRISTMAS DAY 25<sup>th</sup> December at 11am

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**St John's, Bury St Edmunds**

**St John's Day  
Sung Eucharist  
27<sup>th</sup> December  
at 10am**

**Followed by suitably  
festive refreshments - all welcome!**

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# **The Wonder Club**

**Story  
Wondering  
Craft  
Prayer  
Cake**



**St Lawrence  
Lackford  
7<sup>th</sup> January  
2.30pm**

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*Lark Valley and North Bury Churches  
St John's, Bury St Edmunds*

## **TEAM EPIPHANY CAROL SERVICE**

**Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> January 2024 ~ 5pm**

**Candlelit procession, carols  
and seasonal refreshments**

*All are welcome!*

*Volunteers to read or sing are especially welcome.*

*To read please contact the Revd Ali Miller*

*01284 728714    [teamvicarlvnb@btinternet.com](mailto:teamvicarlvnb@btinternet.com)*

*To sing please contact David Honeyball*

*07827 668964    [dhoneyball@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:dhoneyball@hotmail.co.uk)*

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## **WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY**

**Churches Together in Bury St Edmunds and District**

**Launch service ~ Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2024 at 6.30 pm**  
**St Mary's Church, Honey Hill, Bury St Edmunds IP33 1RT**

*Lunchtime Prayer, 12.30-1.30pm,  
during the following week at various venues:*

Monday 22 <sup>nd</sup>	('Day 1')	at the Cathedral
Tuesday 23 <sup>rd</sup>	('Day 2')	at Garland Street Baptist Church
Wednesday 24 <sup>th</sup>	('Day 3')	at Trinity Methodist Church
Thursday 25 <sup>th</sup>	('Day 4')	at St Edmund's RC Church
Friday 26 <sup>th</sup>	('Day 5')	at the United Reformed Church
Saturday 27 <sup>th</sup>	('Day 6')	at St John's Church

***Churches will provide hot drinks, please bring your own lunch.***

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# CAPTION COMPETITION RESULTS

*Another good crop of entries this week!*



Valerie and Sara were amazed. They rubbed the jar and the Team Rector appeared. Now they just had to decide on their first wish ...

*Gina Robertson*

After mulling things over, the Rector felt a bit more booze would bring a smile to everyone's faces.

*Mr Edwin L Lear*

Unimpressed by the Rector's chair balancing trick, Valerie and Sara pretend to find something interesting in the milk.

*Julie Morrison*

"Sara, do you think if I hit him with this jug that will get the Rector to stop pouring?"

"I don't know Valerie, but it's worth a try!"

*Mr Edwin L Lear*

And the winner is **Fr Bob Torrens** with:

**"Slip this into his tea – he'll never notice."**

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# Lark Valley and North Bury Churches Praying Together ~ January 2024

## For the wider community and church

- 1 M For God's blessing on us all at the start of the New Year
- 2 T Moyse's Hall Museum
- 3 W The Apex venue
- 4 T The town centre shops; The Arc shopping centre
- 5 F St Edmundsbury Cathedral
- 6 S St Edmund's Place sheltered housing
- 7 S** Northgate Lodge sheltered housing
- 8 M Cryspen Court sheltered housing
- 9 T The housing, shops and businesses in and around St John's Street
- 10 W The Society of Friends
- 11 T The Salvation Army
- 12 F St John's church
- 13 S *Growing in God* worship, work & witness at St John's
- 14 S** The Centre in St John's Street
- 15 M The Old School Café
- 16 T King Edward VI School
- 17 W St Edmundsbury CEVAP School
- 18 T Sexton's Manor School, our *Open the Book* ministry there
- 19 F Thingoe Lodge housing for independent living
- 20 S All who live in Fornham All Saints
- 21 S** Fornham All Saints church
- 22 M *Growing in God* worship, work & witness at Fornham All Saints
- 23 T Fornham All Saints Centre for Creative Learning
- 24 W Fornham All Saints Community Centre
- 25 T Fornham All Saints Village Hall
- 26 F Heath Farm Business Centre
- 27 S For all refugees & asylum seekers; Suffolk Refugee Support
- 28 S** For all belonging to other faiths and better understanding  
between different faiths
- 29 M For those facing religious persecution
- 30 T For those with no faith
- 31 W For all adversely affected by the cost of living crisis



## Christingle Coffee Morning

Val Gagen

Thank you to all those who came to this event at St George's church on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> December.

We were able to raise the sum of £63,50 for the Children's Society, which as you know helps vulnerable children and teenagers.

Thank you, too to Iceland who kindly gave us the oranges!



All Saints', Bury  
All Age service  
on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup>  
December

Here is a photo  
of Bel dressed by  
Val (Gagen) as  
Zechariah.

There were many  
layers, and the  
top one, like a  
breast plate, had  
twelve 'precious  
jewels' to  
represent the  
tribes of Israel.

Claire Rose

Once  
more ...

Once more we stand at the gate  
And there is no going back.  
All must pass through this gate  
Which swings open  
As the old year  
Ceases upon the midnight.

On we go  
Out into the darkness now,  
Some with confident strides,  
Many with more hesitant steps ...  
... Feeling lost and alone.

We need to stop awhile  
And look for the Holy places,  
Seek the quiet places,  
Simply take time  
To sit in the presence of God  
And share all things with Him.  
Put your hand into His hand.  
For the gatekeeper is right,  
'That shall be to you better than light  
And safer than a known way'.

Abridged from a poem by Linda Wicks

Quotation from *The Gate of the Year* by Minnie Louise Haskins (1875-1957)

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## Contacts

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Revd Ali Miller .....	01284 728714	<a href="mailto:teamvicarlvnb@btinternet.com">teamvicarlvnb@btinternet.com</a>
Revd Val Gagen .....	01284 361963	<a href="mailto:rev.valgagen@gmail.com">rev.valgagen@gmail.com</a>
Team Office .....	01284 700400	<a href="mailto:NBTLVB@outlook.com">NBTLVB@outlook.com</a>

We also have assistance from priests within the benefice with permission to officiate.

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## Please don't forget ...

to let Julie Hooton [NBTLVB@outlook.com](mailto:NBTLVB@outlook.com)  
and the 'Viral Bulletin' [adrian.mann@btinternet.com](mailto:adrian.mann@btinternet.com)

have details of events which have happened  
and events which are coming up at your church.

And your photos are always welcome, jpeg format preferred.

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