

Lark Valley and North Bury Team Ministry

VIRAL BULLETIN

14 December 2025

3rd Sunday 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



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3rd Sunday of Advent

*Isaiah 35.1-10 Psalm 146.4-10 or Magnificat
James 5.7-10 Matthew 11.2-11*

Dark Sacred Night¹

Sarah Gull

This week marks the Feast of St Lucy², whose name signifies light. The winter solstice is nearly here and it is dark in this part of the world for more than sixteen hours a day. Within the town, it is easy to be distracted by lights, but once out in the countryside, the world is enfolded in darkness.

Many of us have mixed feelings about the night: part of this may come from a long way back. I remember being afraid of the dark when very small - fear of being on my own, and fear of the sound of the owl in the small wood beside our house.

How do we respond? Some hibernate, some migrate. It may be a time of melancholic reflection, or simply a time to hunker down.

Scriptural references to night-time abound. In the beginning, the night was separated from the day³. The vocabulary of Night and Dark (as opposed to Day and Light) is frequently used to describe the absence of God, sinfulness or Death.

Lights would separate the day from the night as *signs for seasons, for days and for years*⁴. Such signs appear from time to time as a pillar of fire⁵, perpetual fire at the altar⁶, and as a star, which settled over Bethlehem⁷. Darkness and night become metaphors as Jesus enters our world as a light to cast away the darkness⁸ of our ignorance and sin.

The night itself is not always considered evil. It may become a time of meditation, instruction, and connection with God. The psalms, in particular,

¹ Bob Thiele (George Douglas) and George David Weiss *What a Wonderful World* 1967, sung by Louis Armstrong
[Louis Armstrong - What A Wonderful World \(At The BBC\) - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=033333333333)

² St Lucy, from Inside the Vatican Magazine https://insidethevaticanpilgrimages.com/st-lucy/?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=23323812925&gbraid=0AAAAADTJJIBA9TTP4JHJWHd-uABMJQAn&gclid=CjwKCAiA0eTjBhBaEiwA-Pa-hY0Ca4E_2Q06Ux1w2ErSo00EPMgMdxdgOvjDuydfZBTfoTCrerqAc7BoCfboQAvD_BwE

³ Genesis 1:5

⁴ Genesis 1:15

⁵ Exodus 13:21

⁶ Leviticus 6:13

⁷ Matthew 1:9-10

⁸ John 8:12

speaking of the night as a vehicle for lamentation⁹, searching¹⁰ and becoming aware of God's presence¹¹: without day-time distractions we are able to commune in the *watches of the night*¹². The terrors of the night are not denied as we reach out our hand to Him¹³.

Within the dark, God remains ultimately un-knowable and the path difficult to see, yet our faith may deepen as we let go of our outer world and own sense of control. Here is a blessed time, a sacred space, where we can place our vulnerability, including our own mortality.

The night, and its complex beauty, is a subject for music. Chopin's Nocturnes¹⁴ were inspired by the night, as were many love songs. There is often a sense of sadness as well as joy and intimacy - the lover may remain only in memory, as in Cole Porter's *Night and Day*¹⁵. When Louis Armstrong sings of the *dark sacred night* he does so as part of the whole, *wonderful world*.

During Advent, the Church invites us to meditate on the Four Last Things: Death, Judgement, Heaven and Hell, noting that most of us are generally reluctant to do so. The Advent Collect calls us to *cast away the works of darkness and put on the armour of light*. The Christian Life gives structure and direction to that effort.

Local artist John Williams has been creating an art-work which deliberately looks towards his own mortality. The process provided a way of reflecting on the different layers of his experience, which make up the whole.

He carved a series of wood planes, which, when held together, revealed the shape of his own face in space. Through a transformative process the wooden pieces were digitalised and reproduced by 3-D printing.

John writes:

"Without being conscious of "it", there has always seemed to have been an inner mental structure directing me; it's not a malevolent force, just an ever present, insistent one.

"In this work the "I" which is me, my core, was fully present from the start to its finish; I was still (there)."

⁹ Psalm 6:6

¹⁰ Psalm 77:6

¹¹ Psalm 42:8

¹² Psalm 63:6

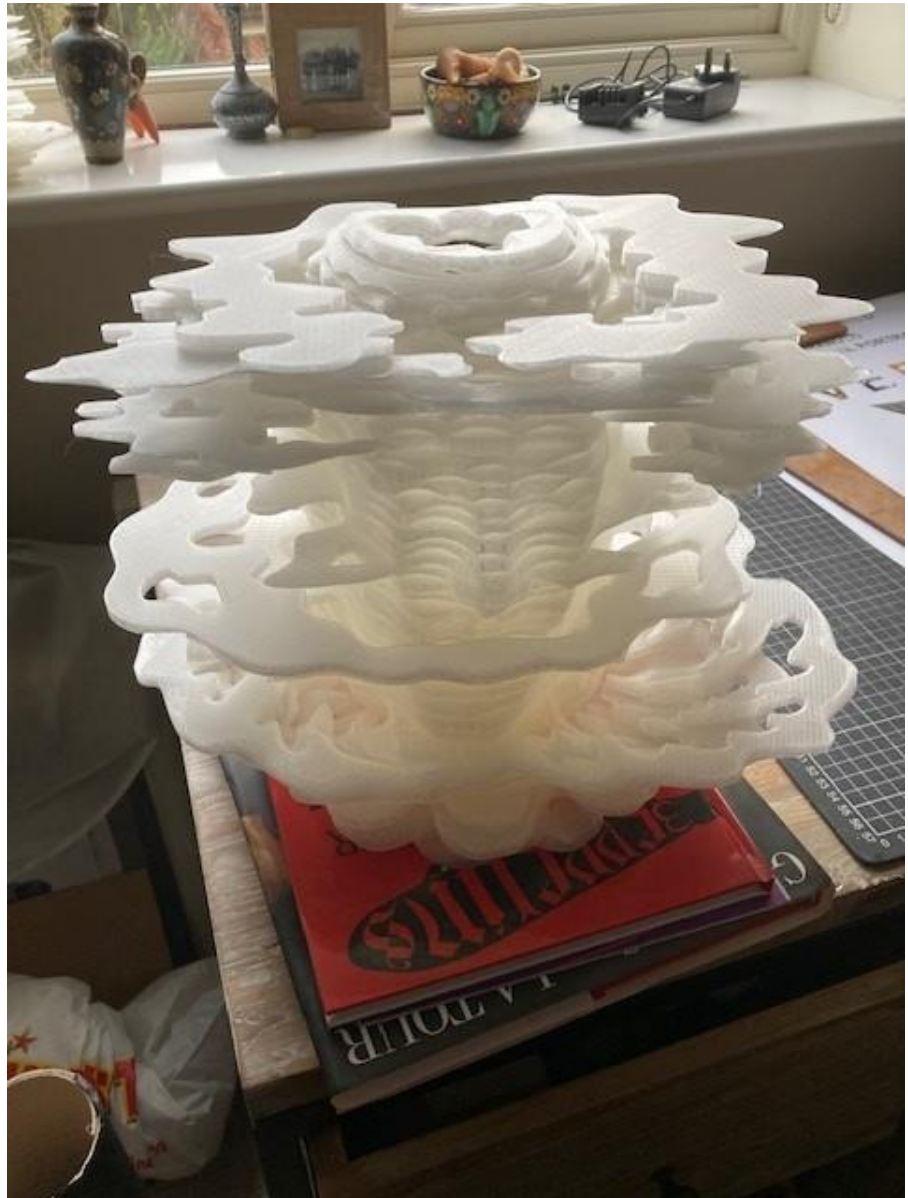
¹³ Psalm 77:2

¹⁴ [Chopin: Complete Nocturnes - YouTube](#)

¹⁵ [Night And Day - Cole Porter](#)

John's finished work, *Shroud*, lies in the tradition of John Baret's Cadaver Tomb at St Mary's, from around 1463 CE¹⁶. The expectation then was to prepare for purgatory as best as possible before death. This preparation is now seen as a lifetime, created by the imprint of all that has gone before. We are not passive recipients in this process, and can make active choices, as we reach out to God in the dark.

We live towards our death as the dark sacred night, part of the eternal whole.



Above: *Shroud* by John Williams

Below: *John Baret's Tomb*, St Mary's, Bury St Edmunds



¹⁶ Church Conservation Trust. *The Tomb of John Baret at St Mary's, Bury St Edmunds*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=opPNP0Kvg4U>

Lark Valley and North Bury Churches

SERVICES WEEK BEGINNING 14 DECEMBER

SUNDAY 14 December 3rd Sunday of Advent

8.00am	Holy Communion (BCP)	Culford
8.00am	Holy Communion (BCP)	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
9.30am	Holy Communion (CW) <i>said</i>	St George's, Bury St Edmunds
9.30am	Holy Communion (CW)	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
10.00am	Eucharist (CW)	Lackford
10.00am	Eucharist (CW)	Fornham St Martin
11.00am	Sung Eucharist (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
3.00pm	Community Carols	St George's, Bury St Edmunds
3.00pm	Wonder Club	Lackford

Monday 15 December

Tuesday 16 December

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

Wednesday 17 December *O Sapientia ~ O Wisdom*

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

8.30am	Morning Prayer (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
9.30am	Eucharist (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds

Thursday 18 December *O Adonai ~ O Lord*

9.30am	Holy Communion (BCP)	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
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Friday 19 December *O Radix Jesse ~ O Root of Jesse*

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

Saturday 20 December *O Clavis David ~ O Key of David*

SUNDAY 21 December 4th Sunday of Advent *O Oriens ~ O Dayspring*

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) <i>said</i>	West Stow
10.00am	Eucharist (CW)	Fornham All Saints
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

St John the Evangelist

St John's Street Bury St Edmunds IP33 1SN

Francis Young



Terrors made flesh:

M. R. James and the theology of the Christmas ghost story

Friday 12 December 2025 at 6pm

Admission £10 + 10% booking fee

Tickets from We Got Tickets at <https://wegottickets.com/event/677163>
or contact Adrian Mann on 01284 753984 or at adrian.mann@btinternet.com

Francis Young is a historian and folklorist who was born and brought up in Bury St Edmunds. He is the author of over 20 nonfiction books including *Twilight of the Godlings* and *Silence of the Gods*, as well as a couple of collections of ghost stories. He lives in Peterborough and is a lay canon of St Edmundsbury Cathedral, a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, and an editor for Cambridge University Press, as well as a Reader in the Church of England.

Locating fear.

When did terrors stir in this antiquarian's mind?

Sitting in a pew perhaps.

Hearing Father beseech the Lord to 'lighten our darkness' and
contemplating the 'perils and dangers' of the night.

Childhood crepuscular fantasies.

Shadows in the chancel, hanging from the Rood.

A spider scuttling through a crack in a tomb.

The rumoured spectre in the churchyard.

Later.

The sober - or otherwise - life of an academic:

staring at antiquities and

skeletons in Abbey ruins,

immersion in ancient manuscripts and

lingering with languages long dead.

All harbour potential.

Planting seeds of the malevolent.

As does the land.

Gets beneath the skin.

Open and inviting

or endless and bleak.

Stumble onto Suffolk shores:

sand and shingle and crumbling cliffs.

Figures ghost into the mist

lurk on the edges of woods

slip down riverbanks.

History and folklore merge

and the veil is lifted.

In the furrows of his intellect

mysteries wait to be excavated and incarnated.

Each story a dark sacrament

an inverted grace.

Every Christmas, he gives the gift of nightmares.

The birth of something *other*.

A scream into nothingness.

Ordinary items harbour the sinister.

A tract here, a whistle there,

a crumpled bedsheet, a mezzotint.

Scares his friends witless.

Monty chuckles.

And writes another.

M R James and the Genesis of Terror

Ali Miller

Wonder Club

Story
Wondering
Christingle
Craft
Prayer
Cake



*St Lawrence
Lackford*

**14th December
3pm**



All are warmly invited to our



COMMUNITY CANDLELIT CHRISTMAS CAROLS AND READINGS

on

SUNDAY 14th DECEMBER

at 3pm

**at ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH
ANSELM AVENUE IP32 6JY**



followed by refreshments

Come and join us

Caption Competition Result

Middle-earth Special



Judging the captions suggested for this photograph of Lucy Miller battling one of Sauron's hordes (aka the Team Rector) was dominated by discussion of the groan-inducing puns entered by Matt Roecer. Agreement could not be reached and so in the end it had to be acknowledged that they were indeed, er, Marmite.

Meanwhile, this week's prize has gone to a fictitious character.

Well - we all have our axe to grind!

Matt Roecer

The Team Rector really was quite upset he'd been type-cast yet again.

Henry Allen

Clearly the Team Rector had been Goblin his food.

Matt Roecer

'It's a dangerous business, Frodo, going out your door.'

Bilbo Baggins

The Team Rector presented his new way to stop PCC Meetings dragon on.

Matt Roecer

'We come to it at last, the great battle of our time.'

Gandalf

*And the winner is **Éomer** with*

'You have no authority here! Your orders mean nothing!'

STAGECOACH AND THE MEAD SINGERS

present

A Christmas Celebration

MONDAY December 15th



Culford Village

Hall 7.15pm

**Donations to the Motor
Neurone society**

Refreshments after the performance

Winter Wear

If you have any men's clothing which you don't need, please consider taking it to the Salvation Army Shop in Bury. (It's almost opposite Iceland). Bury Drop In send their guests there to get warm clothing for the winter.

Bury Drop In also needs bath towels. Please take clean towels to Trinity Methodist Church in Looms Lane. The Drop-In is open every Tuesday and Friday from 11am – 1.30pm.

Christmas Concert

**Thursday December 18th
at 7.30pm**

**Concert by the Bury Community Choir
Directed by Mike Berridge and
accompanied by Jeremy Harding**

**St Edmunds RC Church,
21 Westgate Street,
Bury St Edmunds, IP331QG**

**No tickets required
but a retiring collection will be held for
the Samaritans of
Bury St Edmunds & West Suffolk**

**To add to your enjoyment festive
refreshments will be available**

Scan here to donate:



SAMARITANS

**Bury St Edmunds
& West Suffolk**



Lark Valley and North Bury Team Ministry

Carols round the Tree

St Mary's, West Stow
Friday 19th December
at 6pm

Please bring a mug and a torch

FREE CHRISTMAS DINNER

For those spending
Christmas Day alone

This Christmas, Bury St Edmunds Town Council is again supporting local residents who are living alone. A free heat at home Christmas dinner will be delivered to anyone spending Christmas Day on their own within the Bury St Edmunds area (IP32/IP33).

With the financial support from the Town Council and generous donations from local businesses we will be providing a heat at home Christmas Dinner and gift hamper. We are provide a delivery service and to help beat loneliness our volunteers will be available for a chat. The heat at home Christmas Dinners and hampers will be delivered on Tuesday 23rd December. Recipients must live in Bury St Edmunds Town (IP32 & IP33 postcodes)

www.abbeycroft.org.uk



West Suffolk
working together



WEST
SUFFOLK
COLLEGE



Lark Valley and North Bury Team Ministry

Nine Lessons and Carols

Sunday 21st December

St Andrew's

Timworth

at 3pm

All Saints'

Bury St Edmunds

at 5pm

Caption Competition: *Christmas Tree Special*



A choice of fairtrade wine or chocolate awaits the person who can contribute the winning caption for this photograph of a man inside a Christmas Tree. Why is he there? What is he doing? What will he say to us?

Please send your entries by Tuesday 16th December to the Viral Bulletin at adrian.mann@btinternet.com

Contacts

Revd Dr Andy Miller	01284 728714	teamrectorlvnb@btinternet.com
Revd Ali Miller	01284 728714	teamvicarlvnb@btinternet.com
Team Office	01284 700400	NBTLVB@outlook.com

We also have assistance from priests within the benefice who have 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, especially those suitable for the Caption Competition, which can have a high value on the art market.
