

## REFLECTIONS

“Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight”

My late Father worked at the College of Arms so whenever I hear the term “Herald” I think of men dressed in richly embroidered tabards wearing black patent leather shoes with silver buckles. John the Baptist is often described as a herald but he dressed in camel’s hair with a leather belt around his waist. He is not the kind of man most of us would like to meet. Apart from his wild appearance you get the impression that he would read your soul and that he might not hesitate to shout out your sins for all your friends to hear. His language is extreme and you can only excuse him because he was utterly committed to God and was transparently spiritual.

But John is a herald. He is preparing the way for Jesus and the kingdom. Preparing the people for the kingdom involved, first of all, the call to repentance. John, therefore, baptises with a baptism of repentance. He is fully in the tradition of the Old Testament prophets as he demands a change of heart and mind in all who would hope to be worthy of receiving the Lord’s kingdom. John quotes Isaiah “Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight his path”

Let us allow these words challenge us. We are as Christians, at one and the same time, preparing for the coming of Jesus at Christmas and for the coming of Christ in glory at the end of time. Let us therefore, level the mountains and hills that are our sins. Let us fill in the valleys that are our failures and omissions. Let us smooth out the roughness of our incivility towards others. May we seek forgiveness for our false idols, our excessive consumerism, our hollow sophistication and our wrong priorities. In this way, we will “prepare the straight way of the Lord” in our hearts this Christmas and at life’s end.

Michael Lovegrove

## THIS WEEK’S SERVICES

## SUNDAY

## St Mary’s Saffron Walden

8am Holy Communion (BCP) President: Alex Jeewan  
in church plus Zoom/YouTube

12 noon Baptism Officiant: Andy Colebrooke

4.00pm **CHRISTINGLE SERVICE** YouTube only

6.30pm **ADVENT CAROL SERVICE** YouTube only

## Other services in Church

Wimbish 9.15am Holy Communion President: John Saxon

Hadstock 9.30am Family Service Leader: Paula Griffiths

Ashdon 9.30am Holy Communion President: Caroline Curren  
Preacher: Alan Curren

## TUESDAY

5.00pm Evening Prayer (Zoom) Leader: Paula Griffiths

## WEDNESDAY

9.30am Holy Communion (Zoom) President: Paula Griffiths

SUNDAY 13<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER

## St Mary’s Saffron Walden

10am Holy Communion President: John Sibson  
in church plus Zoom/YouTube

## Other services in Church

Sewards End 9.30am Holy Communion President: Chris Bishop

Little Walden 11.15am Family Service Leader: Tracey Nicholls

Hadstock 9.30am Holy Communion<sup>1662</sup> President: Paula Griffiths

Ashdon 9.30am Holy Communion President: Caroline Curren

Debden 9.15am Holy Communion President: John Saxon

# The Grapevine

COVERING THE PARISHES OF SAFFRON WALDEN,  
WIMBISH, DEBDEN, ASHDON AND HADSTOCK.

Welcome to our services today

Second Sunday of Advent

6<sup>th</sup> December 2020

## Collect

O Lord, raise up, we pray, your power and come among us, and with great might succour us; that whereas, through our sins and wickedness we are grievously hindered in running the race that is set before us, your bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit, be honour and glory, now and for ever.

## First Reading: Isaiah 40.1-11

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the LORD’s hand double for all her sins. A voice cries out: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.’ A voice says, ‘Cry out!’ And I said, ‘What shall I cry?’ All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand for ever. Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, ‘Here is your God!’ See, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

## Gospel: Mark 1.1-8

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, ‘See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight”’, John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, ‘The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.’

## Post Communion

Father in heaven, who sent your Son to redeem the world and will send him again to be our judge: give us grace so to imitate him in the humility and purity of his first coming that, when he comes again, we may be ready to greet him with joyful love and firm faith; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

See St Mary’s Church, SW, website at  
[www.stmaryssaffronwalden.org](http://www.stmaryssaffronwalden.org) to find out more.

Please ‘Like’ our Facebook page so we reach more people! Click on the link on our website, or go to:  
[www.facebook.com/saintmaryschurchsaffronwalden](https://www.facebook.com/saintmaryschurchsaffronwalden)



## PLEASE PRAY FOR:

Churches Together Prayer Cycle: In December please pray for: **New Life Church, Great Chesterford Primary School**  
The family and friends of those who have died recently:  
**Val Clark, Beatrice Piper**  
Those who are being baptised today at St Mary's SW:  
**Ava Elise Gambling**

## MINISTER'S LETTER

Dear Friends

A news item on BBC Look East on 23 November featured a couple who covered the front of their house and the whole of their front gardens with Christmas lights which were switched on with great ceremony. The next item of news showed desperate shop keepers preparing to make the most of the opportunity to sell as much as possible between the end of "lock down" and Christmas. "Whatever happened to Advent?" I thought that the season with its traditional themes for meditation on the Four Last Things- Death, Judgement, Heaven and Hell was a time for quiet reflection and prayer.

For Christians Advent is a season of preparation leading up to the glorious celebration of our Lord's coming into the world. In spite of the many restrictions placed upon us there is still around us a magic in the air which casts a supernatural spell which never seems to fail - even for the Scroogiest of Scrooges. For most it doesn't last much past Boxing Day.

But the Son of Man did not become man so that life could be transformed for one day out of 365. Jesus came so that all life, every day and in every way might be different. And it can be, for Jesus promised nothing less than the power of Almighty God to bring about change. The son of God visited and redeemed his people.

So alongside our material preparations let us make some spiritual preparations- perhaps putting aside some time each day for prayer, reflection, and meditation or reading the bible. Mother Teresa wrote "The season of advent is like springtime in nature when everything is renewed and is fresh. Advent is also meant to do this to us, refresh us and make us spiritually healthy, so we can receive Christ in whatever form he may come to us personally".

May God bless you abundantly as you prepare to welcome Jesus.

With love and prayers

Michael Lovegrove

## PRAYER FOR THIS WEEK

Keep us O Lord While we tarry on this earth, In a serious seeking after you, And in an affectionate walking with you Every day of our lives; That when you come, We may be found not hiding our talent, Nor serving the flesh. Nor yet asleep with our lamp unfurnished But waiting and longing for our Lord, our glorious God forever, AMEN

(Richard Baxter 1691)

## BIBLE READINGS FOR THIS WEEK

<b>Mon 7<sup>th</sup></b>	Morning Psalm 44 & 1 Thessalonians 1 Evening Psalm 144
<b>Tue 8<sup>th</sup></b>	Morning Psalm 56 & 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12 Evening Psalm 11 & Matthew 14:13-end
<b>Wed 9<sup>th</sup></b>	Morning Psalm 62 & 1 Thessalonians 2:13-end Evening Psalm 10
<b>Thurs 10<sup>th</sup></b>	Morning Psalm 54 & 1 Thessalonians 3 Evening Psalm 73
<b>Fri 11<sup>th</sup></b>	Morning Psalm 86 & 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 Evening Psalm 90
<b>Sat 12<sup>th</sup></b>	Morning Psalm 145 & 1 Thessalonians 4:13-end Evening Psalm 94

## NEWS

**SPECIAL SERVICES THIS SUNDAY** on YouTube from St Mary's Saffron Walden  
**4pm CHRISTINGLE** Join Tracey, Matt and the Junior Choir for a lively interactive service for all ages.  
Be ready to light your own Christingle!  
**6.30pm ADVENT CAROL SERVICE** - with St Mary's Adult Choir and readers from Churches Together in SW.  
Full details, resources and order of service available on the website. These services will be available to watch until Christmas.

**SERVICES IN CHURCH** resume this Sunday - full details on the back page. Congregations will be limited due to social distancing requirements. We strongly recommend pre-booking for St Mary's SW services either on Eventbrite or by contacting the Parish Office before noon on Friday. Please wear a mask unless you are unable to do so for medical reasons.

**ONLINE SERVICES** are listed on the back page. Full joining details are available on the weekly email bulletin and on the website. Please email Dawn if you would like to be added to the bulletin distribution list.

**LIVE WORSHIP** by phone - you don't need a computer or tablet to join our services from home. If you would like to know more please contact Judith Hasler on 525041 or John Saxon on 541619.

**PRIVATE PRAYER** St Mary's Church, Saffron Walden, is open on Wednesdays and Sundays between 2pm and 4pm. All Saints, Ashdon, is open every day. St Botolph's, Hadstock is open on Wednesdays between 1pm and 3pm.

**REVD. JEREMY TREW** has been appointed Team Rector and will take up his post in early March. You can find a letter from Jeremy and some photos on our website. Please pray for him and his family as they prepare to leave their current parishes.

**LYNN TRENEARY'S LATEST NEWSLETTER** Lynn is now back in Maridi having written her Newsletter, which is now on the website, just before she set off. I also have some hard copies so do get in contact with me if you would like one and I can deliver it to your door; my email is [suewalker619@btinternet.com](mailto:suewalker619@btinternet.com)

**STREET PASTORS** are prayer walking in pairs in the town during lockdown – contact the Parish Office for more information on how to take part.

December's **PARISH NEWS** is available on the website at <http://www.stmaryssaffronwalden.org/parishnews>

**AMENDED PARISH OFFICE HOURS** The Parish Administrator is available by phone or email on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays 9.30am - 12noon, but no longer on a Tuesday. The office is not currently open to personal callers.

**NEW SMARTPHONE APP** We now have an App that can be downloaded to your smartphone. This will mean that at a touch of a button you can access the whole website and also visit the main areas with ease. To download our App for your smartphone, click on this link [www.stmaryssaffronwalden.org/hubb](http://www.stmaryssaffronwalden.org/hubb) and then click on the green 'install the app' bar at the top and follow the instructions. Any problems then do contact me. *Martin*

## MINISTRY TEAM

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