

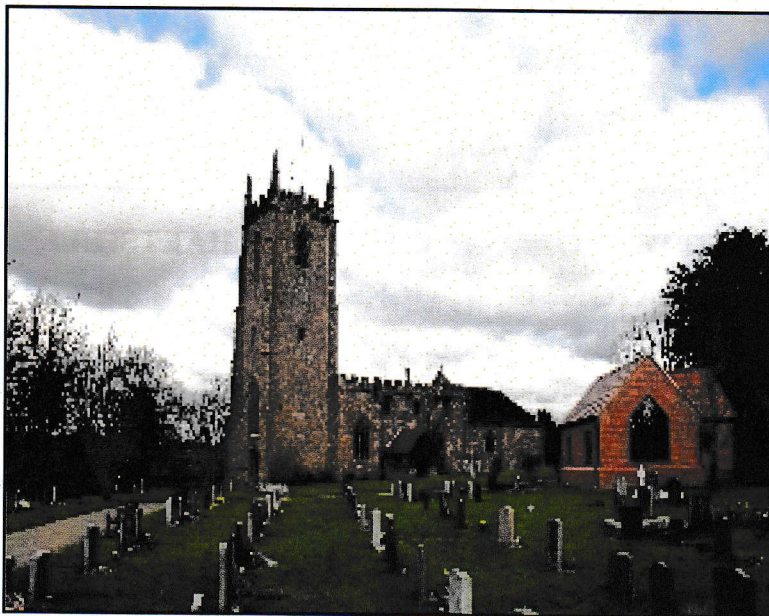
Church of St. Laurence Magazine

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Advent

From darkness to Light.....

We begin Advent in complete darkness and count down the days until the light of the world comes on Christmas Day.

Our first Advent service was on 27th November. I hope you will all join in the preparations for our Lord's coming.

I remember a book I have called 'On the way to Bethlehem' by Hilary McDowell .[The Bible Reading Fellowship] It is an Advent study book with daily readings and reflections. Stage by stage we make our way to Bethlehem, reflecting on all sorts of things – You will find a list of them later in this magazine.

In the study is an Advent meditation called 'The Spotlight', which is included here.

A spotlight shone on the earth
Illuminating the darkness,
Revealing crevices and corners no one had ever seen before,
Combing the world in search of cobwebs,
Zooming in on specks of dust
So that all could see them for what they were –
Mountains of dirt.
But the people were angry,
Angry and frightened,
'Give us back our darkness,' they said.
'In the darkness we didn't see the dust – we want no light.'
So they destroyed that spotlight,
Snuffed it out as one would a candle.
Darkness once more!
But it was a darkness with a difference.
For everywhere along the edge of the world
Appeared lights, tiny lights,
Miniature copies of the spotlight, not nearly as strong,
But each shedding tiny beams of light on to the dust.
They began to multiply – slowly,
Then faster and faster.
They were the spotlight's hope
And the spotlight was their reason for existence.
And they waited for the light.

And the light looked down upon the globe
And saw the tiny sparks of light.
Some were flickering,
Some were dim,
Some were bright as the North Star,
And in between there was darkness.
And the Light prepared to shatter that darkness – forever.

I hope you have a special Advent this year and that you draw closer to God as we progress towards the coming of Christ on Christmas Day.

Peace, love and joy from Gwyneth.

December St. Laurence's Church Services

Sunday	4 th	Advent 2	10.30 a.m.	Advent [Screen]
			6.30 p.m.	Holy Communion
Sunday	11 th	Advent 3	10.30 a.m.	Christingle
			6.30 p.m.	Evensong
Sunday	18 th	Advent 4	10.30 a.m.	Holy Communion
			6.30 p.m.	Carol Service
Saturday	24 th	Christmas Eve	11.30 p.m.	Holy Communion
Sunday	25 th	Christmas Day	10.30 a.m.	Holy Communion
			6.30 p.m.	NO SERVICE

St John's Church Hall Ansley Common Services

Sunday	11 th	Advent 3	10.30 a.m.	Holy Communion
Sunday	4 th	Advent 2	10.30 a.m.	Family Service
Sunday	18 th	Advent 4	10.30 a.m.	Family Service
Saturday	24 th	Christmas Eve	9.30 p.m.	Holy Communion
Sunday	25 th	Christmas Day	10.30 a.m.	Holy Communion

Please Note

During the interregnum it may be necessary to change the pattern of services from time to time at fairly short notice. This would be to enable visiting clergy to hold a communion service.

From the Registers

Baptisms

Lenny James Wilkes celebrated his baptism on 30th October, supported by his parents, Ashley and Helen, his Godparents, family and friends.

This baptism was conducted by the Reverend Heather Barnes.

Ella – Mae Mercer celebrated her baptism on 6th November, supported by her parents, Jamie and Abigail, her Godparents, family and friends.

This baptism was conducted by the Reverend Rick White.

We ask for God's blessing on each of these children as they step out on the path of faith and on their parents and Godparents who will encourage and support them.

Christmas Services at St Laurence's and St John's

A Christingle service will be held on Sunday 11th December at 10.30 a.m. at St Laurence's. Adults and children should enjoy this service and its Christmas message. Donations from this service will be sent to The Children's Society.

The Christingles will be prepared on Thursday 8th December from 2.00 p.m. Do come along and help- previous experience not required!

The Christmas Tree Festival closes with a traditional carol service at 6.30 p.m. on Sunday 18th December.

The following services will be held to celebrate the birth of our Saviour;

Christmas Eve - Communion 9.30 p.m. at St John's.

Midnight Communion 11.30 p.m. at St Laurence's.

Christmas Day- No service 10.30 a.m. at St John's.

Family Communion 10.30 a.m. at St Laurence's

No service 6.30 p.m. at St Laurence's

St Laurence's Christmas Festive Fun

You are invited to come along to a relaxed evening in Ansley Village Church Hall from 7.30 p. m. on Friday 9th December. There will be free entry, with a door prize, bran tub, bric a brac stall, a prize bingo game and activity sheets. Light refreshments will be available, there will be carol singing and the prizes for the Christmas Raffle will be drawn.

St Laurence's 11th Christmas Tree Festival

December 2016 will bring our 11th Christmas Tree Festival. We appreciate the creativity of the decorators and look forward to this year's display. At the time of writing we do not know many tree titles, but if last year is anything to go by they are sure to be very imaginative. Last year there were titles such as "Monastree", "Heart of Gold" and "Nativitree". All are decorated by individuals or groups.

As in previous years there will be-

- A crib on the altar to remind all of us that the gift to mankind of the baby Jesus is the true meaning of Christmas.
- A Remembrance Tree where there is the opportunity for the names of loved ones to be written on stars and put on the tree for £1. This money will go towards the cost of cutting the churchyard grass, which is at present £260 per cut.
- In the vestry the Prayer Tree, where prayers can be pegged to the tree. These will be brought to the Lord after the Carol service or at other appropriate times during the festive period. Also the opportunity to light a candle.
- Throughout the weekends tea, coffee, hot chocolate and mince pies available in the annexe, and also a raffle for a fruit Christmas cake.

If an organisation or group would like to arrange a visit on a week day this may be possible, please contact 01827 874520.

Admission will continue to be £2.00 per person, and accompanied children under 12 will be free. The proceeds will be in aid of Church funds, with a donation of 15% being given to the Mary Ann Evans Hospice.

Jess and Richard Arrowsmith with Jo Ma will, as in past years, be giving a concert of Traditional English Music on Saturday 17th December at 7.00 p.m. Tickets will cost £10, payable at the door.

With 60 beautifully decorated trees, we feel this will be a wonderful way to add to your Christmas celebrations. So why not come along and enjoy the wonder of our Festival, which we hope will be another lovely experience. Two comments from our Visitor's Book last year are given below: -

"Really made us all feel festive, excellent Christmas trees."

"1st time visitors – amazing trees. Thank you."

As well as Christmas Trees and to give added interest there will be big stars, angels, baubles and a giant bell suspended from the arches or ceilings. A display of "Memories of Past Times" and other items will be placed around the church.

The opening hours will continue to be the same as in previous years for the three weekends prior to Christmas i.e. Saturdays 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sundays 11.30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

A report of last year's festival with a few photographs can be found at <http://ansleychurch.org/articles>, but, as with many photographs, they do not give the full atmosphere and beauty of the event.
So why not make a visit part of your Christmas Celebrations?

Help needed!

Please offer an hour or two to help with stewarding in church, supplying mince pies or serving refreshments in the Annexe during the festival if you are able to do so. The trees will be dismantled on Wednesday 28th December – again do come and help if you can. They should be clear of decorations by 10.30 a.m., so the trees themselves can be removed. Do let someone know if you cannot dismantle your own tree. The decorations will be placed in a bag for you to collect later.

Christmas Wreaths

If you would like to order wreaths at £7.00, please call 01827874520.

Bingo Evening

Join the fun of a prize bingo evening at St John's Hall on Monday 5th December at 7.00 p.m. Good luck!

St John's Christmas Social

Come along to an enjoyable social evening on Friday 16th December at 7.00 p.m. in St John's Hall.

Reports next month.

St John's Christmas Fayre, Spurgeon's Coffee Evening and Shoebox Appeal

Opportunities for reflection from 'On the way to Bethlehem' - Gwyneth.

1. Advent is a journey – going on a journey with Christ.
2. The book begins with the story of Joseph, who ended up on a journey he hadn't planned – but God had plans for Joseph.
3. More of God's packing for a journey in Exodus 16.
4. Focus on God in Matthew 6 and Psalm 22 verses 14 to 21.
5. Focus the heart – Ezekiel 11 verses 17 to 20.
6. Focus the mind – 1 Corinthians 4 verses 9 to 11.
7. Focus on the birth narrative in Matthew and Luke.

WE WISH ALL OUR READERS A JOYFUL CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR

Prayer Requests

If you would like someone or a particular situation remembered in prayer at our Sunday Services, both at St. Laurence's and at St. John's, please hand the slip below to a member of the church congregation or contact a warden. Phone numbers are on the front page of this magazine. Please remember that a visit can be arranged to anyone who is sick, but the wardens do need to know, so again please ring.

Please pray for who is

As I put 'December' on the top of this article, I can hardly believe we are on the countdown to Christmas, although I should believe it, as grandchildren and friends keep telling me how many days to go to the big day. Of course the shops have been full of Christmas cheer for weeks, but when I was young (many years ago) Christmas was very different and didn't really start until the week before Christmas. The Christmas dinner was hard work for our mother as she had to pluck the chicken (no turkeys then) and she made her own mince pies, which were scrumptious. Shopping seems top of the list today but then it was the last, except for essential food items.

The young people of today could not imagine a life without television but it is only eighty years since the first TV programme went on air and it was probably another fifteen years before people had television in their homes. In fact, at the Coronation in 1953 lots of people did own one but it was such a novelty that many people crowded in to watch the Coronation.

There was a singer who died recently, who was called the 'Ghostess' as she was the voice of many stars. It was her voice that was heard in 'The King and I', 'West Side Story' and 'My Fair Lady', not Deborah Kerr, Natalie Wood or Audrey Hepburn. Her name was Marni Nixon and she had a good career of her own in television, opera, concerts and musicals.

"Yogi" Berra, a legendary baseball coach and player, was described as one of those Christmas Eve guys – every day in their lives is like Christmas Eve. So it seems every day can be like Christmas after all. If you have room enough in your heart, you can carry Christmas with you from one season to the next.

Have a lovely Christmas and peace and joy for the New Year.

Marie Cove.