



Alde Sandlings Benefice

Aldeburgh, St Peter & St Paul's Parish Church,
Aldringham, St Andrew's Parish Church,
Friston, St Mary's Parish Church
Knodishall, St Lawrence's Parish Church

Priest in charge: The Revd Sarah du Boulay

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Sunday 18th December Fourth Sunday of Advent

Services in The Alde Sandlings Benefice this Sunday

Aldeburgh	8.00am	Holy Communion
	10.30am	Morning Prayer
	6.00pm	Carol Service
Aldringham	11.00am	Carol Service
Knodishall	9.00am	Holy Communion

A message from our priest in charge, Rev'd Sarah du Boulay

Dear Friends,

I wrote last week that God is doing wonderful things in the benefice of Alde Sandlings. This week, it has been brought home to me more than ever just what wonderful things he is doing.

From fun and Christmas services and assemblies with local primary schools, to the privilege of walking alongside families who are grieving at this time. From helping Santa turn on the Christmas lights, to welcoming visitors every day into our church buildings. From worshipping together every Sunday, to prayer walking with our friends from Pilgrims Together around the villages. From meeting people on dog walks, to the hospitality we show people through our beautifully decorated churches, and refreshments. From planning weddings for 2023, to planning the commissioning of our Elders... God is working through us, alongside us (and sometimes, despite us!).

I am so proud to be your vicar, and so excited about what is happening here. I'd love to hear some 'Good News' stories which we can share around the benefice – please do let Claire or I know of anything (however small or big) that we can celebrate together.

God is good!

With every blessing,

Sarah

**It's Christmas
The Week Ahead at The Alde Sandlings Benefice**

18th December 11am	Aldringham	Carol Service
18th December 6pm	Aldeburgh	Carol Service
24th December 3.30pm	Aldeburgh	Crib Service
24th December 11.30pm	Aldeburgh	Midnight Communion
24th December 11.30pm	Friston	Midnight Communion

YOU ARE ALL MOST WELCOME

Collect

God our redeemer,
who prepared the Blessed Virgin Mary
to be the mother of your Son:
grant that, as she looked for his coming as our saviour,
so we may be ready to greet him
when he comes again as our judge;
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

First Reading

Isaiah 7.10-16

Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, saying, Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test. Then Isaiah said: 'Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.

Second Reading

Romans 1.1-7

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name, including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Gospel Reading

Matthew 1.18-end

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel', which means, 'God is with us.' When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

Sermon preached by Rev'd Nichola Winter at Aldeburgh, on the Third Sunday of Advent

Some years ago I had the privilege of talking with a gentleman who had served in the western desert in the army. He spoke of the blistering heat, the sandstorms and the wild bleakness of the surroundings. But he also spoke of the transformation when the flash floods came, the sudden and exhilarating blossoming of the desert so that it looked like a 'field of corn and flowers', to use his description.

Deserts *can* bloom; a wilderness can become a place of habitation; fertility can spring from barrenness. And this is the image that Isaiah uses in his poetic description of an almost chaotic and riotous abundance in a land otherwise dry and empty. In this third week of Advent we think about preparing the way. With the threats of strike action, power shortages and limited financial budgets, preparations as such might be proving more problematic than ever. The media would always be telling us how to have the 'perfect Christmas' but perhaps a more modest Christmas might be more in keeping with the original mood of the season. In some ways we live parallel lives – the life where we try to be just that step ahead with Christmas preparations, and the life where we try to hang on to the season of Advent so that the full effect of the arrival of Christmas will be all the greater.

John had a similar problem. He knew that the Messiah would be coming soon but he didn't know the exact time or place. From the depths and despair of prison he received news about Jesus and what he was doing. But imagine how difficult it must have been for him to decide exactly what to believe about Jesus. One commentator has written: 'it may seem odd that John wondered about Jesus – but John was in prison. Pressure, tiredness and fear do hard things to the human spirit. If we are severely pressed by life, our faith too may get knocked out of shape. We may need to be reassured about things we once knew well. This... does not criticize John. It invites him to grasp afresh what God is doing and, although he cannot share in it, to rejoice and give praise.'

Advent is a time for grasping afresh. The familiar story of the Nativity is about to come round again. We may think we know it all too well. But each one of us is at a different stage in our life to where we were last time we heard the story. Each of us has new things to deal with – different family situations, perhaps a different job, a new house, a new state of health. Life never stays the same – something will have changed. We too may be asking, 'are you really the one who is to come?' Life events can

cloud our judgement, can disable us from seeing clearly, from seeing the truth. One of the Advent responsories, sung since medieval times, puts it beautifully:

I look from afar: and lo, I see the pow'r of God coming, and a cloud covering the whole earth.

Go ye out to meet him and say:

Tell us, art thou he that should come to reign o'er thy people Israel?

Like John our Advent cry goes up – is it you, Lord?

And an answer comes back...

Tell them – tell them what is happening. Tell them what you see. The blind are seeing, the lame are walking. Let what you see and hear give the answer. And for us today, we may look for miracles, for proof, for evidence that the kingdom of God is on the way...

We need to start from where we are, to look and to engage with our community, our culture and our surroundings to see the fresh green shoots of a riotous blossoming of the desert. When we are tired, when the pressures of life seem to become a bit much, our personal prayer life can suffer and we might feel we're simply not getting through to God - or He's not getting through to us. But if we can persevere, if we can hang on in there, God can take the paltry offering we bring and make it shine. God takes our impoverished words and thoughts and breathes life into them. The desert that is sometimes our prayer life can bloom. When all seems dark and hopeless, light can shine. At this dark time of year, when the sun rises the sky can be even more beautiful than at the height of summer (and there have been some incredibly beautiful sunrises - and sunsets - just lately.)

It was Oscar Niemeyer, the architect who designed some of the striking buildings that seemed to make Brazil's new capital spring out of the desert in the 1960s, who said:

'Life is very fleeting. It's important to be gentle and optimistic. We look behind and think what we've done in this life has been good. It was simple; it was modest. Everyone creates their own story and moves on.'

We may not all have the experience and gifts of Oscar Niemeyer but his words are true for all of us. Whatever we do, life is fleeting. It is important to be gentle and optimistic. If we, too, can share his vision of life

springing from the desert, if we can look from afar and see the power of God coming, then like John in prison we will be invited to grasp afresh what God is doing - even if the shoots are only tiny just now - in our lives, in our communities and our culture. If we can grasp these afresh, then we can also rejoice and give praise.

Post Communion

Heavenly Father,
who chose the Blessed Virgin Mary
to be the mother of the promised saviour:
fill us your servants with your grace,
that in all things we may embrace your holy will
and with her rejoice in your salvation;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

NOTICES

† In Memory of Canon John Tipping †

It has been agreed by all the treasurers of the Alde Sandlings Benefice that all Christmas Day collections will be given to the Children's Society, a charity that John and Elizabeth hugely supported

Sunday 18th December Services Aldeburgh

There will be coffee and croissants served after the 8am Holy Communion. You are most welcome to join us for a catch up and breakfast. **The 6pm Carol service** – There will be refreshments after the carol service. If any of you could bring some mince pies along to either this service or the 10.30am service on the 18th that would be wonderful. Thank you so much.

† An Update from Rev'd Sheila Murray †

A huge thank you for the lovely bunch of flowers and for all your prayers and good wishes over the last month. Having been in hospital three times, twice for "stents", has taken its toll, on both me and Andy. We are slowly coming to terms with what's happened, and I hope to be back taking services in February or March, though I may come to a service occasionally just as a member of the church family and look forward to seeing you at that time.
I wish you all a blessed Christmas. Sheila

**£££ Ways to donate to our churches within the £££
Alde Sandlings Benefice**

Your donations REALLY mean so much to us at this challenging time. No matter how small your donation is, it helps us keep our doors open, support our ministry and mission, and to help preserve our church buildings.

THANK YOU SO MUCH

Just click on the link to support any of our churches –

<https://www.aldeburghparishchurch.org.uk/ways-to-donate-to-the-churches-within-the-alde-sandlings-benefice/>

Lunchtime Classical Concert Series returns in 2023

Monday 9th January at 12 noon.

Nadia Lasserson and musical friends return to Aldeburgh Parish Church.

The programme will consist of rarely heard repertoire for two violins and piano by Handel, Moszkowski, Martinu and Shostakovich.

Retiring Collection for Save the Children

† Morning Prayer across the Benefice †

Revd Sarah is bringing the benefice together in prayer each morning from 9-9.30am. People are very welcome to join, no regular commitment required, just pop along when you wish.

Monday – Friston

Tuesday - Knodishall

Wednesday - Aldringham

Daily at Aldeburgh, Monday to Saturday

† Church of England and Diocese Online Worship †

There are many online services you can view from the Church of England and our cathedral. Here are some links below.

Church of England website

<https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/church-online/weekly-online-services>

Church of England Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/thechurchofengland/>

Church of England YouTube channel

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLecK8GovYoaYzIgyOEIKZg>

St Edmundsbury Cathedral Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/stedscathedral>

Food Banks at the East of England Co-op

Foodbanks provide a valuable service to those in need in our communities. The Aldeburgh Co-op and Solar in Leiston are doing a grand job in collecting food donations, which are collected regularly and distributed. So please look out for the various collection baskets.

People need your donations more than ever this Christmas!

<https://www.eastofengland.coop/community/foodpoverty/foodbank-support>

Youth Club – We need your help!

The Youth Club is back! 7pm to 9pm on Monday evenings during term time for 10–14-year-olds. We are thankful that the Youth Club is as popular as ever. We **really need** some more volunteers to help on these evenings. There is a rota in the west porch that you can add your name to, if you can help (after the summer holidays) or you can contact

Fran Smith at admin@aldeburghparishchurch.org.uk

Weekly Benefice Newsletter

If you would like something added to the weekly newsletter that is relevant to the Benefice, please do let Claire know and we will do our best to include it the following week.

All requests by 4pm on Thursday please

† Pilgrims Together on Wednesdays on Zoom †

The worship starts at 6.30pm (Zoom call opens from 6.10pm) and the call is then left open after the worship time for people to catch up. People are welcome to email pilgrimstogether473@gmail.com to receive a copy, be added to our mailing list or for the Zoom links.

Sunday 18th December, by the Meare, Thorpeness,

Carols round the Tree 4pm onwards