

## **St Andrew's Church, Donington on Bain**



### **Service with Holy Communion 4th Sunday of Advent**

**Scripture & Notices, Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> December 2025**

**PLEASE TAKE THIS NOTICE SHEET WITH YOU  
AFTER THE SERVICE**

Prayer for the week: O God of Elizabeth and Mary, you visited your servants with news of the world's redemption in the coming of the Saviour. Make our hearts leap with joy, and fill our mouths with songs of praise, that we may announce glad tidings of peace, and welcome the Christ in our midst. Amen.

*"God never gives someone a gift they are not capable of receiving. If he gives us the gift of Christmas it is because we all have the ability to understand and receive it."*

Pope Francis

## **The Word**

Each week, we share Scripture from the Lectionary. The service leader may choose not to use all of this Scripture in the service itself, so be guided by them. But, please take this notice sheet with you and (re)read the Scripture during the week, and the chapters around it for context.

### **Psalm 80.1-8,18-20**

- <sup>1</sup> Hear, O Shepherd of Israel,  
you that led Joseph like a flock;
- <sup>2</sup> Shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim,  
before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh.
- <sup>3</sup> Stir up your mighty strength  
and come to our salvation.
- <sup>4</sup> Turn us again, O God;  
show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.
- <sup>5</sup> O Lord God of hosts,  
how long will you be angry at your people's prayer?
- <sup>6</sup> You feed them with the bread of tears;  
you give them abundance of tears to drink.
- <sup>7</sup> You have made us the derision of our neighbours,  
and our enemies laugh us to scorn.
- <sup>8</sup> Turn us again, O God of hosts;  
show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.
- <sup>18</sup> Let your hand be upon the man at your right hand,  
the son of man you made so strong for yourself.
- <sup>19</sup> And so will we not go back from you;  
give us life, and we shall call upon your name.
- <sup>20</sup> Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts;  
show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.

### **Reading - Old Testament - Isaiah 7.10–16**

<sup>10</sup> Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, saying, <sup>11</sup>‘Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven’. <sup>12</sup>But Ahaz said, ‘I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test’. <sup>13</sup>Then Isaiah said: ‘Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? <sup>14</sup>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. <sup>15</sup>He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. <sup>16</sup>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’.

### **Reading - New Testament – Romans 1.1-7**

<sup>1</sup> Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, <sup>2</sup>which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, <sup>3</sup>the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh <sup>4</sup>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, <sup>5</sup>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, <sup>6</sup>including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

<sup>7</sup> 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.

## The Gospel

### Matthew 1.18–25

<sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' <sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

<sup>23</sup> 'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel', which means, 'God is with us.' <sup>24</sup> When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, <sup>25</sup> but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.



### **'Between Sundays'**

After Easter, we will be running an 8-week course produced by the Bible Society, called **The Bible Course**. The course is accessible for people new to Christianity, ideal as a follow-on from courses like Alpha or for mature Christians wanting to increase their understanding of the Bible or help others to read the Bible more productively. More details of the course can be found here: [www.biblesociety.org.uk/explore-the-bible/the-bible-course](http://www.biblesociety.org.uk/explore-the-bible/the-bible-course).

Please let Neil Walker know on 07771 861202 if you are interested.

This course was originally scheduled for the New Year, but the Ministry Team have decided to allow space for Lent, and the course will be run after Easter.

## **A Short History of Christmas**

The Bible does not give a date for the birth of Jesus. In the third century it was suggested that Jesus was conceived at the Spring equinox, 25th March, popularising the belief that He was born nine months later on 25th December. John Chrysostom, the Archbishop of Constantinople, encouraged Christians worldwide to make Christmas a holy day in about 400.

In the early Middle Ages, Christians celebrated a series of midwinter holy days. Epiphany (which recalls the visit to the infant Jesus of the wise men bearing gifts) was the climax of 12 days of Christmas, beginning on 25th December. The Emperor Charlemagne chose 25th December for his coronation in 800, and the prominence of Christmas Day rose. In England, William the Conqueror also chose 25th December for his coronation in 1066, and the date became a fixture both for religious observance and feasting.

Cooking a boar was a common feature of mediaeval Christmas feasts, and singing carols accompanied it. Writers of the time lament the fact that the true significance of Christmas was being lost because of partying. They condemn the rise of 'misrule' – drunken dancing and promiscuity. The day was a public holiday, and traditions of bringing evergreen foliage into the house and the exchange of gifts (usually on Epiphany) date from this time.

In the 17th century the rise of new Protestant denominations led to a rejection of many celebrations that were associated with Catholic Christianity. Christmas was one of them. After the execution of Charles I, England's Puritan rulers made the celebration of Christmas illegal for 14 years. The restoration of Charles II ended the ban, but religious leaders continued to discourage excess, especially in Scotland. In Western Europe

(but not worldwide) the day for exchanging gifts changed from Epiphany (6th January) to Christmas Day.

By the 1820s, there was a sense that the significance of Christmas was declining. Charles Dickens was one of several writers who sought to restore it. His novel *A Christmas Carol* was significant in reviving merriment during the festival. He emphasised charity and family reunions, alongside religious observance. Christmas trees, paper chains, cards and many well-known carols date from this time. So did the tradition of Boxing Day, on 26th December, when tradesmen who had given reliable service during the year would collect 'boxes' of money or gifts from their customers.

In Europe Santa Claus is the figure associated with the bringing of gifts. Santa Claus is a shortening of the name of Saint Nicholas, who was a Christian bishop in the fourth century in present-day Turkey. He was particularly noted for his care for children and for his generosity to the poor. By the Middle Ages his appearance, in red bishop's robes and a mitre, was adored in the Netherlands and familiar across Europe.

Father Christmas dates from 17th century England, where he was a secular figure of good cheer (more associated with drunkenness than gifts). The transformation of Santa Claus into today's Father Christmas started in New York in the 1880s, where his red robes and white beard became potent advertising symbols. In some countries (such as Latin America and Eastern Europe) the tradition attempts to combine the secular and religious elements by holding that Santa Claus makes children's presents and then gives them to the baby Jesus to distribute.

## Notices

Please join us for refreshments after the service.

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Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> December – Carol service – 3pm  
St Nicolas's Church, Stenigot

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Christmas Eve – Crib service – 3pm  
St Martin's Church, Scamblesby

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Christmas Eve – Carols around the tree – 6pm  
St Andrew's Church, Donington on Bain

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Christmas Eve – Bethlehem service – 9pm  
St Helen's Church, Burgh on Bain

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Christmas Day – Holy Communion – 11am  
St Andrew's Church, Donington on Bain

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Weekly **Compline** service by Zoom, led by our Rural Dean, Revd Mark, most Wednesdays, 6:30pm to 7pm latest. Link on the Group web site.

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The Parish **Prayer Circle** exists to meet some of the prayer needs of the community. You can join the Prayer Circle or you can make a request for prayer (confidential within the Prayer Circle) by contacting Neil Walker on 07771 861202)

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Service leader: Revd. Pam Fraser  
Churchwardens: Lynne Parkinson, Graham Parkinson  
Organist: Kathy Brayshaw8

 Asterby Group website: [www.asterbygroup.org](http://www.asterbygroup.org)

 [www.facebook.com/groups/asterbygroup](https://www.facebook.com/groups/asterbygroup)