

UPCOMING SERVICES

SUNDAY 21ST DECEMBER

ADVENT 4

WARBOROUGH – 8.00 AM HOLY COMMUNION BCP

STADHAMPTON – 9.30 AM FAMILY EUCHARIST

WARBOROUGH – 6.00 PM CAROL SERVICE

WEDNESDAY 24TH DECEMBER

CHRISTMAS EVE

STADHAMPTON – 4:00 PM CRIB SERVICE

WARBOROUGH – 4:00 PM CRIB SERVICE

STADHAMPTON – 11:30 PM MIDNIGHT MASS

THURSDAY 25TH DECEMBER

CHRISTMAS DAY

STADHAMPTON – 9:30 AM CHRISTMAS HOLY COMMUNION

WARBOROUGH – 9:30 AM CHRISTMAS HOLY COMMUNION

SUNDAY 28TH DECEMBER

WARBOROUGH – 10:30AM TEAM SERVICE

NEXT WEEK'S BIBLE READINGS

Isaiah 63.7–9

Hebrews 2.10–end

Matthew 2.13–end

WARBOROUGH NEWS:

We remember in our prayers George Hooley of the Parachute Regiment and of Warborough who died recently in Ukraine. We pray for his family, for Adam and Emma, Beattie, and Charlie.

We remember in our prayers Dominic Carter. We pray for his family, for Joanna, Izzy and Huw.

NOTICES



A poster for 'Merry Christmas from Alpha'. It features a cartoon illustration of a person carrying a large wrapped gift. The text 'Merry Christmas' is written in a large, stylized, red font. Below it, 'from Alpha' is written in a smaller, red font. At the bottom, there is a large red question mark.

Wondering if there's more to Christmas?

At Alpha you can meet new people and explore the Christian faith together. It's for anyone who's curious. No judgement, no pressure.

Each session unpacks a big question of life, faith and purpose, and is designed to spark conversation.

Come along, bring a friend, see what you think!

Introductory supper Wednesday 14th January.

Email revelairewen@gmail.com to register your interest

N DORCHESTER TEAM



S CLUSTER PARISHES

Newington, Stadhampton with Chiselhampton,
Warborough and Shillingford

PEWS NEWS

ST LAURENCE CHURCH, WARBOROUGH

SUNDAY 21ST DECEMBER: ADVENT 4

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.

Amen

Eternal God, as Mary waited for the birth of your Son, so we wait for his coming in glory; bring us through the birth pangs of this present age to see, with her, our great salvation in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

BIBLE READINGS

Isaiah 7.10–16

Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, saying, ¹¹Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. ¹²But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test. ¹³Then Isaiah said: 'Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also?

¹⁴Therefore 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.¹⁵He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. ¹⁶For 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.

Romans 1.1–7

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ²which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, ³the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name, ⁶including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, ⁷To 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.

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. ¹⁹Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. ²⁰But 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. ²¹She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' ²²All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ²³'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel', which means, 'God is with us.' ²⁴When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, ²⁵but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

THE POST COMMUNION PRAYER

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.

Amen.

Let us pray to God, who comes to dwell among us, and who calls us to love and care for one another. Faithful God, In the story of Joseph, we see a man who listened, trusted, and chose compassion when the way ahead was unclear. Strengthen your Church to be a community that listens for your voice, acts with mercy, and offers welcome rather than judgement. Help us to be places of safety and belonging, where people find grace in abundance. God of all peoples, You entrusted your Son to an ordinary family, in a small community, far from power or certainty. We pray for our own communities: for our villages, towns, schools, and workplaces.

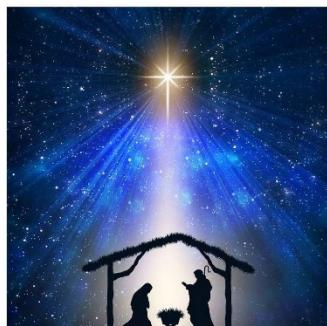
God of courage and hope, we pray for all who face difficult decisions, uncertain paths, or unexpected changes in their lives. Give wisdom to those who lead, and reassurance to those who feel overwhelmed or afraid. Help us to walk alongside one another in love.

God with us, we pray for all families, those filled with joy, and those carrying sorrow; for parents and children, for single people, for those who long for connection. Bless those who care quietly and faithfully and may our community reflect your compassion and faithfulness in the way we support one another.

Amen

St John the Baptist Church Stadhampton

Join us on Christmas Eve for the
First Communion of Christmas



Midnight Mass of the Nativity
24th December at 11:30pm

1970 - DORCHESTER TEAM - 2010

Team Service

St Laurence Church, Warborough
28th December 2025 at 10:30am



Image by Anastasia538 from Pixabay

A Service of Holy Communion
The Twelve Days of Christmas
Day 4: The Feast of the Holy Innocents

There is something distinctive about the final Sunday of Advent. By now, the lights are up, the lists are long, school has broken up, and many of us are running on a curious mix of excitement and exhaustion. Christmas feels close enough to touch and yet not quite here. Advent 4 sits right on that edge: between waiting and arrival, promise and fulfilment, breath held before the cry of a newborn child.

The Gospel readings for this Sunday draw us into the quiet heart of the Christmas story. Before angels sing and shepherds arrive, before anything looks resolved or joyful, there is Mary and Joseph: two ordinary people asked to trust God at a moment when their lives are suddenly turned upside down. Again and again, the words come: *“Do not be afraid.”* Not because there is nothing to fear, but because God is already at work in the middle of uncertainty.

God chooses to come among us not through force or certainty, but through vulnerability and trust. The Incarnation begins not with noise or spectacle, but with the slow, hidden work of new life. God’s salvation enters our story not in control or completion, but in flesh and fragility, in dependence and deep humanity. This child is given the name Emmanuel, God with us — not God who stands at a distance, nor God who rushes to fix and tidy our lives, but God who chooses to dwell among us, to share our breath and our limits. As John’s Gospel tells us, “The Word became flesh and lived among us.”

That feels particularly important at this point in Advent. By the fourth week, many of us are tired – emotionally, spiritually, practically. We know the joy of Christmas is coming, but we are not there yet. Advent does not hurry us past that waiting. Even God’s greatest work takes time. And here, in the middle of the bustle, there is an invitation to notice the everyday wonder around us: the glow of lights in the evening, the laughter of children rushing to school concerts, the quiet satisfaction of a card written or a gift wrapped. As one of my favourite films reminds us, *“What if every moment in life was the most important?”* Advent encourages us to notice God already at work in all these small moments, and to let ourselves be fully present to them.

Mary’s *“Let it be”* and Joseph’s steady obedience remind us that faith is not about having everything explained. It is about saying yes, even when the road ahead is unclear. St Augustine put it beautifully: *“Faith is to believe what you do not see; the reward of this faith is to see what you believe.”* And in those

moments of saying yes, we find joy – real joy – in the waiting, not just the arrival.

Advent 4 also gently shifts our attention away from preparation as perfection. We are brilliant at preparing homes, tables, and diaries, but Advent invites us to prepare space instead. Space for stillness. Space for openness. Space to notice God already with us in the unresolved, messy parts of life. Henri Nouwen reminds us, *“We cannot prepare the way of the Lord by filling our lives with noise and clutter.”*

Perhaps that is the quiet, sparkling invitation of Advent 4: not to rush ahead to Christmas Day, but to pause and trust. To recognise that before we are ready, before we feel joyful enough, before everything is in place – God is already coming. And yet, there is joy and light even in the waiting: the smell of evergreens, the twinkle of lights in windows, the soft hum of carols drifting from the church or the shops. All of it is part of this great Advent story, the story of God with us.

So as we stand on the threshold of Christmas, may we allow ourselves to stop for a moment. To breathe. To notice. To make room not just in our homes, but in our hearts. The world may be holding its breath, but hope is already drawing near. Because love does not keep its distance. Love chooses to stay. And in the midst of tiredness, excitement, and the glorious chaos of the season, we can rejoice: a thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices, for yonder breaks a new and glorious dawn.

I wish you all a wonderful weekend and Christmas week ahead!

Jen

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