



3rd Sunday of Advent

Peace and preparation for the coming of Christ.



South Cotswold Team Ministry
Sunday 14th December 2025

Clergy

Vicar: Rev'd Caroline Symcox– 01285 712467	carolinesymcox@googlemail.com
Curate: Rev'd Vicky Falvey – 07356 234248	revvickyfalvey@gmail.com

SERVICES

Sunday 14th December – 3rd Sunday of Advent

8.00 am BCP Holy Communion

10.00 am Common Worship Holy Communion

Sidespeople: Michelle Harris and Kim Sutton

Readings: Stewart Benzie Intercessions: Alison Godsall

Offertory: Heather Gorton Prayer Rota: Rev. Denise Hyde and Mary Mawle

Coffee: Doug and Jean Crowley

6.00pm Advent Carol Service

Monday 15th December - 5.00 pm Community Prayers

Thursday 18th December - 10.30 am Holy Communion

Sunday 21st December – 4th Sunday of Advent

8.00 am BCP Holy Communion

10.00 am Common Worship Holy Communion

Sidespeople: Eleanor Toby and Jenny Hewes

Readings: Val Trafford Intercessions: Meg Ralph

Offertory: Wendy Close/Alison Cahoon Prayer Rota: Ruth Blackwell & Val Trafford

Coffee: Amanda and Mervyn Cully

6.00pm Nine Lessons and Carols

Wednesday 24th December- Christmas Eve

3.00pm Quiet Crib service

5.00pm Boisterous Crib service

11.30pm Midnight Mass

Advent 3 Reflection on Matthew 11:2–11: John the Baptist and the Hope That Waits

The Gospel for the Third Sunday of Advent offers a striking and tender scene. John the Baptist—bold prophet, fearless preacher, forerunner of the Messiah—sits in prison and sends Jesus a question that is almost painful in its vulnerability: **“Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?”** (Matthew 11:3).

This is not the John we expect. We are used to the confident wilderness preacher, the man who baptized Jesus, who saw the heavens open, and who declared without hesitation, “Behold, the Lamb of God.” Yet in today’s reading, the firebrand prophet becomes a prisoner, and the certainty of proclamation becomes the uncertainty of waiting. In this moment, John becomes surprisingly relatable. His question echoes the questions of every believer who has ever waited for God’s promises to unfold.

Advent is, at its heart, a season shaped by this kind of waiting. It is a time when the Church acknowledges that we do not yet see the fullness of God’s kingdom. We live with longing, with unfulfilled hopes, with prayers that are still forming in the dark. Like John, we can find ourselves asking: *Lord, are You truly at work in this world? Are You present in my life? Are You the One?*

Jesus responds to John’s question, but not with a simple yes or no. Instead, He points to the signs of the kingdom breaking in: *“the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them.”* Jesus invites John—and us—to see God’s presence not in abstract assurances but in concrete acts of mercy. God’s work may not look like what we expected, yet it is unmistakably happening. Healing is taking root. Lives are being restored. Grace is spreading quietly but powerfully through the world.

What is equally striking is that Jesus affirms John even in his uncertainty. He tells the crowds that John is the greatest among those born of women. Jesus does not criticize John for questioning; He honours him. Faith, it seems, is not the absence of questions but the persistence of trust even when questions arise. John remains faithful to his calling even as he seeks reassurance, and in this Jesus sees greatness.

As we stand at the threshold of *Gaudete* Sunday—Rejoice Sunday—John’s honesty offers a gift. Our joy in Advent is not a forced cheerfulness or a denial of hardship. It is a deep and resilient joy rooted in the nearness of Christ. We rejoice not because we have full clarity, but because God is drawing near in ways seen and unseen. We rejoice because the One who healed the blind and raised the dead is still at work restoring the world. We rejoice because even in our uncertainties, Christ meets us with compassion. This Advent, may John’s courage inspire our honesty. May Jesus’ response open our eyes to signs of hope around us. And may the promise of Christ’s coming fill us with a joy that carries us through every season of waiting.

Vicky Falvey

Join us for Morning Prayer via Zoom on Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday at 9am every week. Click below for the week starting 1st December.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89129208277?pwd=dgARPNFJ8Amab2LFsrz9SkRdhjPFiY.1>

From Heather - fairfordpcc@gmail.com or heathergorton31@gmail.com

Office: 01285 712611 or home 01285 712428

My office hours are 10.00 to 1.00 on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. I am also continuing to work from home so you can contact me at either the office or home. The office is closed on Mondays and Michelle will be in on Fridays from 10.00 to 12.00.

If you are sending in your articles, photos etc. for the bumper copy at the end of the month I will need them by 12 noon on the last Wednesday of the month. For the weekly newsletter I would still like articles in by Wednesday midday.

The office will be closed from 1.00 pm on Tuesday 23d December and re-open on Tuesday 6th January. If there is anything that is urgent between these dates I will be at home so do contact me there. Details above,

Next week's edition of the Newsletter will include Christmas and the New Year. Please let me have any article by Wednesday 12 noon at the very latest. Thank you. The following edition will be on Thursday 8th January.

oOo

Please remember the following in your prayers:

Those who are ill: Grace Slack, Hannah, David and Glynnis Langley

PRAYER AND WORSHIP

Community Prayers

All are welcome to come and pray together for the world, the nation and our community along with any prayer requests that are placed in our prayer box in the Lady Chapel. We meet every Monday at 5pm for 30 minutes in the Chancel. Please use the north door.

(Please also note we do not always meet on Bank Holidays, please check notices above for clarification)

For further details contact Rev'd Canon Denise Hyde denisehyde15@gmail.com

Prayer/Thought for the Week

God doesn't just strengthen you once, he'll strengthen you again and again as and when the need arises.

Dear Lord, help us to take advantage of opportunities to encourage others. Help us to remember the gift of encouragement we have received. Help us to seek ways to serve others and respond to others needs. Thank you Lord for the message of Advent, May we receive a fresh vision of hope as we progress through the Advent season. We pray in the name and for the glory of Jesus, our Lord and savior.
AMEN

NOTICES

Christmas Dates for your Diary

- 7.00 pm Saturday 13th December - Coln Choir and Friends Concert (see poster)
- 6pm Sunday 14th December – Advent Carol Service
- 6pm Sunday 21st December – Nine Lessons and Carols ('The Carol Service')
- 3pm Christmas Eve – Quiet Crib Service
- 5pm Christmas Eve – Boisterous Crib Service
- 11.30pm Christmas Eve – Midnight Mass
- 8am Christmas Day - BCP Christmas Holy Communion
- 10am Christmas Day – Family Christmas Holy Communion

Help Madina

Thank you to everyone who contributed to make the afternoon such a success. We raised £160.00. Thanks again. Helen.

Used Cards

Please no more cards in St Mary's Church.

Thank you all for your support.

Carol Thompson

Brass Cleaning – Help Needed!

For many years Wendy Graham has been cleaning the brass with other volunteers. In the last year or so she has found that she is the only cleaner left and understandably finds it too much on her own. Are there any willing 'cleaners' who would be happy to take over from Wendy. If you would like to help, please contact the office (712611).

Items for Ukraine

The people taking a van to Ukraine no longer have room for bedding, clothing or shoes. They are VERY grateful for all the items on the blue poster here. We will continue to take them to the Ukrainian Church in Gloucester who are transporting them to Ukraine. If you have a question about any other items, please phone us on 0779 555 4102

Thank you.

Geoff & Hope

Bellringing at St Mary's- You may have noticed that the bells have been ringing after the 11 o'clock service on the last 2 Sunday's. On the 30th of November we rang a quarter peal to celebrate St Andrew's day (hence the flag flying too) and this last Sunday we rang a quarter peal for the Thanksgiving and blessing of our new glass doors. This occasion also gave several youth ringers in the Gloucester Diocese an opportunity to ring in Fairford. Peter Harris

The Fairford Christmas Day Lunch, to be held as usual in the Community Centre on 25th December, **is open for bookings now.**

The various celebrations and remembrance events at the end of October and early November are over, so you will see the posters for the Christmas Day Lunch springing up around the town and nearby.

Give us a call to book your place - whether as a guest or a helper, or if you just want to know more.

Now's the time.

We'll be delighted to hear from you (with your tel. no please so we can call you back).

Call 01285 712700

or Amanda 07960 485946 or Mervyn 07773 557846





High Five Project 2026 ***Raising Funds for Children's Charities***

Four of us ladies at St Mary's are embarking on a fundraising project to raise a minimum of £500 for each of 5 children's charities during and by the end of 2026. We thank Caroline and St Mary's for their blessing and support. The charities are:

The Magic Breakfast: Provides breakfast for children in poverty in the UK.

Glos Young Carers: Creates a wide range of essential services for young carers in Gloucestershire, to provide opportunities for rest, fun, skill, development, and support.

The Rainbow Trust: Provides emotional and practical support for families at home, in hospital, and in the community, for children facing life-threatening conditions.

Smile Train: Helps children in third world countries by providing medical care and educational opportunity for a better life, to those with a cleft palate.

Home Start Cotswolds: Supports families with children under the age of 5 throughout the Cotswolds, working alongside parents in their own homes to improve parenting, help family management, and establish social networks.

We're arranging all kinds of activities throughout the year and hope you will come along and enjoy yourselves. We would be grateful for any help you can offer us in the arrangements to make things happen.

At the end of 2026, we will produce an account of all events and monies raised and contributed to the charities. These contributions will be handled by St Mary's accounts.

Many thanks,

Hope, Jos, Linda, and Meg.

Hope Price, Jos Price, Linda Howlett, Meg Ralph.

Contact us at: linda.danceandsing@gmail.com 01285 672512



Christmas at St Mary's Church, Fairford

Wednesday
3rd December

Christingle Service

4.45pm

Sunday
14th December

Advent Carol Service

6pm

Sunday
21st December

Nine Lessons and Carols

6pm

Christmas Eve
24th December

Quiet Crib Service

3pm

24th December

Boisterous Crib Service!

5pm

24th December

Midnight Mass

11:30pm

Christmas Day
25th December

Family Communion

10am



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND