Trunch Group of Parishes

Advent - Christmas 2026

CONNECT

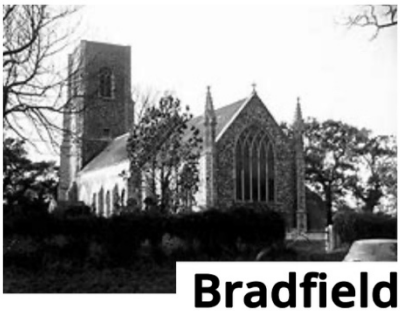
The Magazine of the Trunch Group of Parishes





OUR ADVENT–CHRISTMAS ISSUE CONTAINS:

- A poem for Advent by Christina Rossetti
- Features on Advent Saints, Lucy and Nicholas
- The story of the O Antiphons
- Christmas Day on the Western Front
- Book review: 12 meditations for Christmas
- Advent and Christmas services – Carols for everyone!



Bradfield



Gimingham



Knapton



Mundesley



Paston



Swafield



Trunch



Café Church

SALLY'S LETTER

Hello Everyone,

Unlike conventional calendars that begin on the 1st January, our church calendar begins on Advent Sunday (29th November this year). So this coming Sunday marks the beginning of the church year as well as our preparations for Christmas. As such, it offers the opportunity for 'new year resolutions' as we anticipate the fullness of the good news of new beginnings in Jesus.

Advent, meaning arrival, comes from the same root as 'adventure' and if we want to, we can make this period a bit of a spiritual adventure. In the same way we might prepare for visitors at Christmas by having a good clean and preparing lots of lovely food. So too might we engage in an internal clean up; examining where we have let dust fall on our good intentions, decluttering ideas we would be better letting go of, or perhaps even identifying where something is festering and needs throwing out! Similarly, we might stock up on things that will nourish our souls; reading or listening, walking on the beach or scheduling some quiet time with God amongst the busyness. Only you know what you need!

All so that we might be ready for the 'big day' and prepared to welcome the source of light, love and life into our world anew.

Have a truly blessed Advent,
Sally

EDITORIAL

I cannot imagine what it is like to experience the seasons of Advent and Christmas in the southern hemisphere, in days of sunshine and light, perhaps with Christmas Day on the beach. Our usual traditions – carols by candlelight, warming hospitality, snug family gatherings and, above all, the message of divine love penetrating the dark days of December – all these remind us that Christianity had its origins in the northern hemisphere. The season when we in the north celebrate the appearance of Jesus Christ's entry into our world is midwinter, not high summer.

There is, of course, much more to Advent and Christmas than an annual feast designed to ward off the depression of dark winter days and challenging weather. These are days of anticipation, and abiding, expectant hope. The sentimentality and enduring beauty of the Bethlehem narrative is, however, more than the story of a family battling against hard, challenging circumstances, and overcoming adversity. It is also a time when we can reflect on God's wider purpose for humanity, a time when we can balance our hopes and expectations with a recognition that all is not right with our world. This is the paradox of Advent. For, behind the glitter and the excitement, there is a message which the Christian churches have not quite forgotten: this is also a penitential season in which we may meditate on the last things – death, judgement, hell and heaven. The Bible readings we hear throughout Advent are therefore not particularly comfortable; they usually come from stern prophets, or represent apocalyptic visions of the end times. Advent requires us to

balance the joyful sense of a coming celebration with thoughtfulness about the way of a broken world – and our responsibility to help to mend it.

Nonetheless, the terrific and abiding image of Advent days is one of great hope – the light of Christ coming into a dark world. The lighting of the candles of the Advent wreath is not a hollow ritual – it is a deep symbol of Christ's imminent arrival, the mystery of his incarnation. And, speaking personally, I think it is much easier to recognise this symbolism in the dark days of winter than in the southern hemisphere's summertime.

The editorial team of Connect magazine wish all our readers a blessed Advent and a joyful Christmas.



COUNTDOWN TO CHRISTMAS – THE O ANTIPHONS

Advent falls into two complementary parts. In the days from Advent Sunday to 16 December, the season is a period of preparation for the Second Coming – looking back to the feast of Christ the King on the Sunday before Advent, and looking forward to the return of Christ as the Judge of the world. From 17 December, the mood changes; it is the day called 'O Sapienta' (O Wisdom) the first day on which the 'Advent Antiphons' were sung at Evensong. We may be familiar with these antiphons from their use in the famous Advent hymn, *O come, O come, Emmanuel*. The antiphons each use a title of the Messiah from the prophecy of Isaiah: Sapienta (Wisdom), Adonai (Lord), Radix Jesse (Root of Jesse), Clavis David (Key of David), Oriens (Morning Star or Day-spring), Rex Gentium (King of the Nations) and Emmanuel (God with us). They work as a countdown to Christmas, and the emphasis on the Second Coming gives way to the celebration of the first coming at Bethlehem.



O Day-spring, brightness of Light everlasting, and Sun of Righteousness,
Come and enlighten those that sit in darkness and the shadow of death.

To listen live to the singing of the Antiphons between 17-23 December, tune to a Cathedral Youtube channel for Evensong. Evensong services are livestreamed every day at Canterbury Cathedral and every Tuesday at Norwich Cathedral.

TWO SAINTS FOR ADVENT – NICHOLAS AND LUCY

*During December we remember the anniversaries of several saints including Nicholas and Lucy. This year both their feast days fall on a Sunday, and there are opportunities to remember them in our services. In particular, please come to the patronal festival of St Nicholas at Swafield (**3.00 pm on 6 December**); and on St Lucy's Day (**13 December**), there is our Carol Service, also at **3.00 pm**, at All Saints', Mundesley.*

ST NICHOLAS, BISHOP OF MYRA (6 DECEMBER)

I sometimes imagine that, somewhere in heaven, Saint Nicholas looks down on the earth and shakes his head in amiable disbelief at the modern image we have created of him – a portly, white-bearded old man with a red hat who consumes a lot of sherry and mince pies, especially on Christmas Eve.

The real St Nicholas was a Turkish Bishop, renowned for his generosity, for helping the destitute and rescuing sailors in danger at sea. He is thought to have been present at the famous Christian Council held at Nicaea in 325 AD, at which the leaders of the Christian Church – after much long and hard debate – agreed a wording for what we now call the Nicene Creed – the statement of belief we still use nearly every Sunday after 1700 years. There is a story – possibly apocryphal – that, during the Nicene debates, Bishop Nicholas got so cross with the radical Egyptian bishop, Arius, that he started a fight. Although this got Nicholas into a lot of trouble – he was temporarily imprisoned – he was later fully vindicated. Arius lost the debate and his views were quickly regarded as a heresy.



Although various myths about Nicholas have since been created, it is clear he was an orthodox believer and thoroughly deserved his commemoration as a Christian saint. He died on 6 December, probably in the year 345. This December we look forward to celebrating his patronal festival at Swafield – the first time for several years.

ST LUCY OF SYRACUSE (13 DECEMBER)

St Lucy was born in 283 AD in Syracuse, Sicily – a land of heat and bright Mediterranean light. Little is known about her life, and some of what we do know is probably legendary; but it appears that she was betrothed, possibly against her will, to the son of a wealthy pagan family. However Lucy, a devout Christian and keen philanthropist, donated much of her dowry to the poor. Outraged by this, the man to whom she was engaged reported her to the local governor, and since Christianity was illegal, Lucy was executed as a martyr in 303 AD, aged only 20.

In future centuries, as the Christian faith spread across Europe, Lucy became a popular and much venerated saint. As her feast day fell on 13 December – the shortest day of the year under the old Julian calendar – she was associated with light within the darkness, especially as her name means 'light'. Lucy is particularly popular in Sweden – a very dark country at this time of year – where her festival is celebrated by processions of young girls some of whom wear crowns of lighted candles. **Please do not try this at home!!**



ADVENT CAROLS

Sunday 29 November 2026 | All Saints' Mundesley, 3.00 pm

A service of readings and stirring Advent hymns

with time for prayer and reflection



Come and celebrate the start of the thrilling and mystical season of Advent

ALL WELCOME

CHRISTMAS DAY ON THE WESTERN FRONT

In a previous Christmas issue of Connect we told the heartening story of the brief Christmas Day truce between British and German troops in 1914, culminating in a friendly football match played in 'no-man's land'. Exactly twelve months later, things were very different, as recorded in the diary of Reverend Geoffrey Suoddert Kennedy, the famous World War I chaplain. He was better known as 'Woodbine Willie', from his habit of giving cigarettes to the troops.

Woodbine Willie joined the British troops in France only 2-3 days before Christmas 1915, and one of his first jobs was to take a Christmas Day service in a farmyard, about half a mile behind the front line. The weather conditions were appalling. He wrote an account of his experience.

> *'...it was desolate that Christmas morning, the road a quagmire, cut into ruts and hollows... I found about four hundred men drawn up in drenching rain waiting...When 'Come all ye faithful' began they sang with all their might.' Then I went to a shed in the farmyard and the soldiers came to me. There were not many; but they meant it...in the rain and to the far-off roll of the guns, Christ was born in a cattle-shed on Christmas Day.'*

The symbolism of celebrating the birth at Bethlehem in a cow shed was very obvious to all the troops. Stories like these help us to recognise the loving presence of God, even in the strangest and most difficult of circumstances.



POET'S CORNER

Advent by Christina Rossetti (1830-1894)

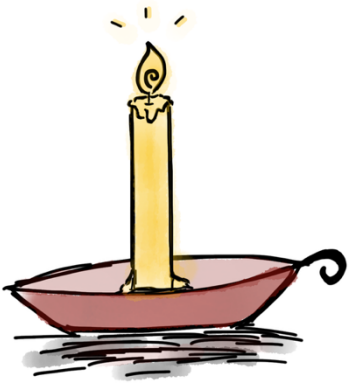
Christina Rossetti is arguably the greatest Victorian Christian poet. This poem certainly reflects Victorian days in its slightly melancholy but profound rhythms. Rossetti evokes all the important messages of Advent: a time of anticipation and vigilance, of watching and waiting. The symbols of lamps burning through the years signal our wait for the coming light of Christ.



This Advent moon shines cold and clear,
These Advent nights are long;
Our lamps have burned year after year
And still their flame is strong.
'Watchman, what of the night?' we cry,
Heart-sick with hope deferred:
'No speaking signs are in the sky,'
Is still the watchman's word.

The Porter watches at the gate,
The servants watch within;
The watch is long betimes and late,
The prize is slow to win.
'Watchman, what of the night?' But still
His answer sounds the same:
'No daybreak tops the utmost hill,
Nor pale our lamps of flame.'

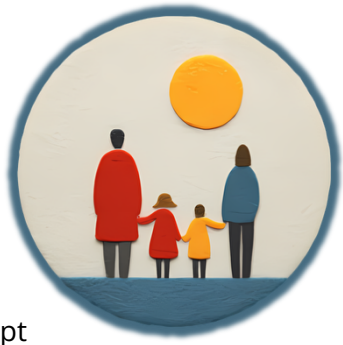
One to another hear them speak
The patient virgins wise:
'Surely He is not far to seek'—
'All night we watch and rise.'
'The days are evil looking back,
The coming days are dim;
Yet count we not His promise slack,
But watch and wait for Him.'





One with another, soul with soul,
They kindle fire from fire:
'Friends watch us who have touched the goal.'
'They urge us, come up higher.'
'With them shall rest our waysore feet,
With them is built our home,
With Christ.'—'They sweet, but He most sweet,
Sweeter than honeycomb.'

There no more parting, no more pain,
The distant ones brought near,
The lost so long are found again,
Long lost but longer dear:
Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard,
Nor heart conceived that rest,
With them our good things long deferred,
With Jesus Christ our Best



We weep because the night is long,
We laugh for day shall rise,
We sing a slow contented song
And knock at Paradise.
Weeping we hold Him fast, Who wept
For us, we hold Him fast;
And will not let Him go except
He bless us first or last.



Weeping we hold Him fast to-night;
We will not let Him go
Till daybreak smite our wearied sight
And summer smite the snow:
Then figs shall bud, and dove with dove
Shall coo the livelong day;
Then He shall say, 'Arise, My love,
My fair one, come away.'

BOOK REVIEW

The Gift of Christmas: Meditations for the Twelve Days of Christmas

Introduced by Archbishop Sarah Mullally
Church House Publishing £1.50 paperback

***'To you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour who is Christ the Lord'* (Luke 2:11)**

Our Archbishop, Sarah Mullally, helpfully points out, in her meditation for Christmas Day, that we can easily miss the significant and important first words of this well-known verse from Luke's Gospel – the words of the angel to the shepherds of Bethlehem. The baby Jesus is a gift from God – not only to the shepherds, but to us, today. The birth of Jesus becomes relevant for every single person – a staggering thought for Christmastide.



This little volume of reflections for the twelve days of Christmas has become an annual offering from the Church of England. It is a booklet which can remind us, amid the merry chaos of Christmas, what life is really all about. If we can find time – perhaps only a few moments each day – to stop and contemplate the true meaning of the Christmas season, it will surely make a difference to our lives and attitudes. Receive the Gift of Christmas – it is for everyone!

CHURCH SERVICES & EVENTS IN ADVENT & CHRISTMAS 2026

Sunday 29th November 2026 – Advent Sunday
09:30 Holy Communion, All Saints, Gimingham, NR11 8HF

11:00 Sunday @ The Hub, Mundesley Community Hub, NR11 8BE

15:00 Advent Carol Service, All Saints' Church, Mundesley, NR11 8BE

Tuesday 1st December 2026 – New Years Day
12:00 Silent Prayer, St Giles' Church, Bradfield, NR28 0NX

Wednesday 2nd December 2026
10:00 Holy Communion, Mundesley Community Hub, NR11 8BE

Thursday 3rd December 2026
19:00 National Theatre Live! *Presents:* Golden Boy by Clifford Odets, St Nicholas's Church, Swafield, NR28 0PE (*For further details and tickets: **www.st-nicks.co.uk** or 01692 402624)*

Saturday 5th December 2026
19:00 Candlelit Carol Concert with the Samphires, St Botolph's Church, Trunch, NR28 0PZ (*For further details and tickets: **www.st-nicks.co.uk** or 01692 402624)*

Sunday 6th December 2026 – Second Sunday of Advent
09:30 Holy Communion, All Saints' Church, Mundesley, NR11 8BE

11:00 Sunday @ The Hub, Mundesley Community Hub, NR11 8BE

15:00 Patronal Festival, St Nicholas's Church, Swafield, NR28 0PE

16:00 Taverham Brass Band, All Saints' Church, Mundesley, NR11 8BE

Wednesday 9th December 2026
10:00 Holy Communion, Mundesley Community Hub, NR11 8BE

Friday 11th December 2026
17:00 Christmas Tree Festival Launch, All Saints, Gimingham, NR11 8HF

Saturday 12th December 2026
10:00 Ecumenical Prayers and Planning for 2027, St Botolph's Church, Trunch, NR28 0PZ

11:00 Carols with the Methodists, St Botolph's Church, Trunch, NR28 0PZ

Sunday 13th December 2026 – Third Sunday of Advent
10:00 Holy Communion, St Botolph's Church, Trunch, NR28 0PZ

11:00 Sunday @ The Hub, Mundesley Community Hub, NR11 8BE

14:00 Spirituality & Silence, Mundesley Community Hub, NR11 8BE

Wednesday 16th December 2026
10:00 Holy Communion, Mundesley Community Hub, NR11 8BE

14:00 Carol Service, St Giles' Church, Bradfield, NR28 0NX

Saturday 19th December 2026
15:00 Pageant, All Saints' Church, Mundesley, NR11 8BE

Sunday 20th December 2026 – Fourth Sunday of Advent
09:30 Holy Communion, St Peter and St Paul, Knapton, NR28 0AD

11:00 Carols @ The Hub, Mundesley Community Hub, NR11 8BE

15:00 Carol Service, St Margaret's Church, Paston, NR28 9TA

18:30 Carol Service, St Peter and St Paul, Knapton, NR28 0AD

Wednesday 23rd December 2026
10:00 Holy Communion, Mundesley Community Hub, NR11 8BE

Thursday 24th December 2026 – CHRISTMAS EVE!

16:30 Christmas Eve Service, All Saints' Church, Gimingham

16:30 Crib Service, St Botolph's Church, Trunch, NR28 0PZ

23:30 'Midnight Mass', All Saints' Church, Mundesley, NR11 8BE

Friday 25th December 2026 – CHRISTMAS DAY!

10:00 Holy Communion, St Botolph's Church, Trunch, NR28 0PZ

12:00 Community Christmas Dinner, Mundesley Community Hub, NR11 8BE

Sunday 27th December 2026 – First Sunday of Christmas

09.30 Holy Communion, St Margaret's Church, Paston, NR28 9TA

11:00 Sunday @ The Hub, Mundesley Community Hub, NR11 8BE

Wednesday 30th December 2026

10:00 Holy Communion, Mundesley Community Hub, NR11 8BE

Friday 1st January 2027 – New Years Day

12:00 Silent Prayer, St Giles' Church, Bradfield, NR28 0NX

Sunday 3rd January 2027 – Feast of Epiphany

09:30 Holy Communion, All Saints' Church, Mundesley, NR11 8BE

11:00 Sunday @ The Hub, Mundesley Community Hub, NR11 8BE



EVERYONE is welcome at ALL of our services

We hope to see you there!

WHAT'S ON AT MUNDESLEY COMMUNITY HUB

All events at Mundesley Community Hub are open to all, free of charge (apart from Lunch Club which is £5pp) with contributions greatly appreciated.

MONDAY

Mundesley Together 9:30 – 11:30 NEW!

an inclusive support group for everyone; parents/caregivers, babies, toddlers, home educating, elderly, lonely, struggling, unwell, recovering... we are here for you

TUESDAY

The Warm Hub 15:00 – 17:30

You are warmly invited to join us at the Mundesley Community Hub to share a two-course meal, enjoy the heating and use the space for whatever you would like. Be that card games, a catch up with friends (or meet new ones!), reading a book, pop along and see what Mundesley Warm Hub can do for you.

QUESTions of faith 18:00 – 19:30

an informal discussion group for any questions about religion, faith or spirituality led by Dr Rev Sally Myers - "*There's no such thing as a silly question!*"

WEDNESDAY

Holy Communion 10:00 – 11:00

A seated Holy Communion service (without hymns) held in Mundesley Community Hub (opposite the Parish Church). Every Wednesday morning at 10am. Everyone is very welcome, and the service is followed by coffee & other refreshments

WEDNESDAY

Memory Lane Café 13:30 – 16:00

Memory Lane Café is a friendly, safe environment for people with dementia, their carers and anyone who would like to come along for a chat over tea, coffee and refreshments. We have music, activities and entertainment for all to enjoy. Memory Lane dementia Café is free for all to attend. For further information or if you would like to volunteer with us, please contact: MemoryLaneCafeMundesley@gmail.com

THURSDAY

Lunch Club 12:00 – 14:00

Come and join us at our Lunch club, all are welcome to partake in a 2-course meal, every third Thursday of the month. We open at 12 and lunch will be served at 12:30. We ask for a suggested donation of £5 a head.

FRIDAY

Community Cafe and Larder 9:00 – 12:00

The community larder is open to all, helping to reduce food waste in our local community. Anyone can add to the larder from their allotment/vegetable patch and anyone can take away food regardless of their circumstances. We offer wholesome food as well as good company. All welcome – pop in and be part of the community!

SUNDAY

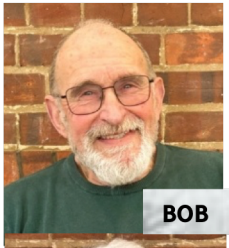
Sunday @ the Hub 11:00 – 12:00

an informal way to explore church and worship in a creative style. Please come along with the whole family (all ages welcome) at 11am for a service. There will be refreshments before, during and after. See you there!

Mundesley Community Hub, NR11 8BE

ALL WELCOME!

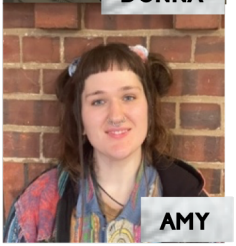
OUR PASTORAL TEAM OF AUTHORISED PASTORAL ASSISTANTS











HOW ARE YOU, TODAY?

If you, or someone you know, may benefit from a listening ear, please do let us know and we would be happy to spend some time with you.

IF YOU'D LIKE TO TALK, WE ARE HERE TO LISTEN

Authorised Pastoral Assistants (APAs) are trained and authorised to engage in pastoral ministry on behalf of the local church, working as part of a team of clergy and laity. All Authorised Pastoral Assistants focus on pastoral care, but an individual's ministry varies according to their gifts and skills, and the local situation. In all cases, the ministry calls for a loving and compassionate heart, and a willingness to listen and support those in need.

Please contact our pastoral team at:
pastoralteam@trunchgroup.org

SOME PARISH CONTACTS

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rectortrunchgroup@gmail.com

Canon John Carr 01263 720788
carr.ide@btinternet.com

Revd Jenny Lodge 01263 649020

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Editors of Connect: Dr Peter Clough
clough868@btinternet.com & Amy Shepherd
amy@trunchgroup.org

Trunch Group of Parishes

There will be no issue of Connect in early January, but we will produce another magazine at the end of that month in time for Candlemas (celebrated on Sunday 31 January 2027). Lent begins early next year, with Ash Wednesday on 10 February.