

Cross Talk



December 2025

Cross Talk is published monthly by email. To receive a copy please contact kitnorris@live.co.uk

Cross Talk contains the weekly Collect and Readings together with details of Church services in the Benefice and news and items of interest supplied by our readers. The magazine will also be available on the web sites: www.achurchnearyou.com/church/3447 and baldersbychurch.com.

CHURCH SERVICES

St. James' Church, Baldersby St. James with Dishforth, Rainton and Skipton on Swale

Sunday 7th December, 10.45am Holy Communion *with refreshments.*

Sunday 14th December, 9.30am Breakfast Service
5.00pm Carols *(in cafe area) Mulled wine & nibbles*

Sunday 21st December, 10.45am Holy Communion *with refreshments*

Wednesday 24th December 6.30pm Carols by Candlelight
with seasonal refreshments

Thursday 25th December, 9.30am Christmas Service in Mission Room, Baldersby

Sunday 28th December, 9.30am Morning Service *with refreshments*



St John the Evangelist Church, Dalton

Sunday 7th December, 11am Holy Communion
followed by refreshments

Friday 12th December, 6.30pm Carols by Candlelight

Sunday 21st December, 11am Morning Prayer and Baptism
followed by refreshments

Wednesday 24th December, 4pm Angels and Shepherds Service
family service for children and families



St. Columba's Church, Topcliffe

Corporate Member of the Prayer Book Society

Wednesday 3rd December, 7pm Compline for Advent

Thursday 4th December, 11am Midweek Morning Prayer

Sunday 7th December, 8.30am Holy Communion (BCP)
6.30pm Advent Choral Evensong



Wednesday 10th December, 7pm Compline for Advent

Thursday 11th December, 11am Midweek Morning Prayer

Sunday 14th December, 10.45am Holy Communion

Wednesday 17th December, 7pm Compline for Advent

Thursday 18th December, 11am Midweek Morning Prayer

Sunday 21st December, 10.45am Said Matins

6.30pm Service of Nine Lessons and Carols

Tuesday 23rd December, 2pm Crib Service

Wednesday 24th December, 11.30pm Midnight Mass

Thursday 25th December, 10am Christmas Morning Service

Sunday 28th December, 10.45am Holy Communion

December Reflection – *Revd Dawn Ward p.5*

Origins of the Christmas Tree - *Richard Byas p.6*

Village News – *p.9*



Readings for the 2nd Sunday in Advent to 1st Sunday of Christmas

(Page numbers refer to the Common Worship Lectionary.)

Sunday 7th December, The Second Sunday in Advent

Collect

O Lord, raise up, we pray, your power
and come among us,
and with great might succour us;
that whereas, through our sins and wickedness
we are grievously hindered
in running the race that is set before us,
your bountiful grace and mercy
may speedily help and deliver us;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
to whom with you and the Holy Spirit,
be honour and glory, now and for ever.

Readings (p6) Year A

Isaiah 11.1-10

Psalms 72.1-7, [18-19]

Romans 15.4-13

Gospel: Matthew 3.1-12



Sunday 14th December, The Third Sunday in Advent

Collect

O Lord Jesus Christ,
who at your first coming sent your messenger
to prepare your way before you:
grant that the ministers and stewards of your mysteries
may likewise so prepare and make ready your way
to the wisdom of the just,
that at your second coming to judge the world
we may be found an acceptable people in your sight;
for you are alive and reign with the Father,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Readings (p9)

Isaiah 35.1-10

Psalms 146.4-9 or Magnificat Luke 1.46-55

James 5.7-10

Gospel: Matthew 11.2-11



Sunday 21st December, The Fourth Sunday in Advent

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.

Readings (p13)

Isaiah 7.10-16

Psalms 80.1-7 [16-18]

Romans 1.1-7

Gospel: Matthew 1.1-7



Wednesday 24th December, Christmas Eve

Collect [Christmas Night]

Eternal God,
who made this most holy night
to shine with the brightness of your one true light:
bring us, who have known the revelation
of that light on earth,
to see the radiance of your heavenly glory;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit
one God, now and for ever.

Readings (p15)

2 Samuel 7.1-5, 8-11, 16

Psalm 89.2, 21-27

Acts 13.16-26

Gospel: Luke 1.67-79

Thursday 25th December, Christmas Day [SET I]**Collect**

Almighty God,
you have given us your only-begotten Son
to take our nature upon him
and as at this time to be born of a pure virgin
grant that we, who have been born again
and made your children by adoption and grace,
may be daily renewed by your Holy Spirit;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit
one God, now and for ever.

**Readings (p19)**

Isaiah 9.2-7

Psalm 96

Titus 2.11-14

Gospel: Luke 2.1-14, [15-20]

Sunday 28th December, The First Sunday of Christmas**Collect**

Almighty God,
who wonderfully created us in your own image
and yet more wonderfully restored us
through your Son Jesus Christ:
grant that, as he came to share in our humanity,
so we may share the life of his divinity;
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit
one God, now and for ever.

Readings (p30)

Isaiah 63.7-9

Psalm 148.[1-6,] 7-14

Hebrews 2.10-18

Gospel: Matthew 2.13-23



December Reflection



Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Sunday the 30th of November marks the 1st Sunday in Advent and the beginning of the Church's year. The Church of England describes Advent as a season of expectation and preparation, as the Church prepares to celebrate the coming (adventus) of Christ in his incarnation and looks ahead to his final advent as judge at the end of time. The readings and liturgies not only direct us towards Christ's birth, but they also challenge the modern

reluctance to confront the theme of divine judgement:

Every eye shall now behold Him
robed in dreadful majesty.
(Charles Wesley)

The Four Last Things – Death, Judgement, Heaven, and Hell – have been traditional themes for Advent meditation. The characteristic note of Advent is therefore expectation, rather than penitence, although the character of the season is easily coloured by an analogy with Lent. The anticipation of Christmas under commercial pressure has also made it harder to sustain the appropriate sense of alert watchfulness, but the fundamental Advent prayer remains 'Maranatha' – 'Our Lord, come' (1 Corinthians 16.22).

Church decorations are simple and spare, and purple is the traditional liturgical colour. In the northern hemisphere, the Advent season falls at the darkest time of the year, and the natural symbols of darkness and light are powerfully at work throughout Advent and Christmas. The lighting of candles on an Advent wreath was imported into Britain from northern Europe in the nineteenth century and is now a common practice. The Moravian custom of the Christingle has similarly enjoyed great success in Britain since the latter part of the twentieth century, with the encouragement of the Children's Society. The Third Sunday of Advent was observed in medieval times as a splash of colour in the restrained atmosphere of Advent (Gaudete or 'Rose Sunday'), and the last days of Advent were marked by the sequence of Great 'O' Antiphons, which continue to inspire modern Advent hymns and meditations.

Advent is a time of waiting. As we wait the few short weeks for 25th December to arrive, and the children ask, 'How many more sleeps till Christmas?' we continue to remember the long-awaited first coming of the Messiah and we anticipate his long-awaited second coming.

For what or whom are you waiting in this Advent season? Are you waiting for the grandchildren to arrive? Are you counting down the days till the end of the school term? Are you simply looking forward to the food, the time off work, the presents? Are you seeking to have your emotions grasped afresh by the narrative of the suffering, yet triumphant, Servant?

Advent can be a time of great pressure for some families, and we experience brokenness in the world around us, but we continue to pray, 'Come Lord Jesus'. Whichever camp we find ourselves in this Advent, let us pray that we would lift our eyes and ears to the Messiah whose arrival and passion will change the world forever.

If you want to read an Advent book that urges us to look beyond the brightly lit shops and glitter of lights this Christmas, may I suggest a book by David Rhodes, *The Advent Adventure* (SPCK 1998). The book is described as sometimes humorous, often moving and makes for adventurous reading. In this engaging series of Advent meditations, David Rhodes uses stories and experiences from the streets of the inner city to help us rediscover the startling message of the gospel.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a peaceful and joyous Christmas.

Blessings,

Reverend Dawn.

Origins of the Christmas Tree.

You may be familiar with the story that an engraving published in the 1840s of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert created a craze for Christmas trees in Britain. However, the tradition of decorating churches and homes with evergreens at Christmas was long established although the custom of decorating an entire small tree was unknown in Britain until the 19th century. The German-born Queen Charlotte introduced a Christmas tree at a party she gave for children in 1800, but the custom did not at first spread much beyond the royal family. A boost to the trend was given in 1848 when *The Illustrated London News*, in a report picked up by other papers, described the trees in Windsor Castle in detail and showed the main tree, surrounded by the royal family, on its cover. In fewer than ten years, the adoption of the tradition in middle and upper-class homes was widespread.



However, the origin of this evergreen symbol has its roots in ancient pagan customs. Celebrations of the winter solstice, which occurs in late December, involved bringing greenery into homes as a sign of life persevering through the winter's chill.

In various pagan cultures, the evergreen was more than just a plant; it was a powerful symbol. Our ancestors celebrated the winter solstice by bringing evergreen plants into their homes. The greenery symbolized to them everlasting life and the promise of the sun's return. This was a common thread across northern Europe, where the darkest days of winter needed the promise of better times ahead.

The Romans had a festival called Saturnalia, celebrating Saturn, the god of agriculture. It started in the week leading up to the winter solstice and involved a lot of merriment. Homes were decorated with boughs of evergreen plants. These customs paved the way for some Christmas traditions we are familiar with today.

In Northern Europe, Yule was a pagan tradition. It involved getting a Yule tree, decorating it, and lighting it up. Yule was about rebirth and the return of the sun, a sentiment shared by Saturnalia and Christmas itself.



Our pagan ancestors liked to decorate their feasting halls with greenery during the bleak winter period, well before they became part of Christmas traditions. Tree worship was common among the pagan Europeans and survived their conversion to Christianity in the Scandinavian customs of decorating the house and barn with evergreens at the New Year to scare away the devil and of setting up a tree for the birds during Christmas time.

When Christianity spread through Europe, instead of banning the beloved custom, the church transformed it into a symbol of everlasting life with Christ. It's the same tree, but now it was given a new meaning. Now it stands in our rooms decorated with ornaments and tells a tale of faith and eternity. This whole changing from pagan to Christian wasn't about erasing the past; it was about renewing it with a fresh layer of religious significance.

The idea of the modern Christmas tree originated in Central Europe and the Baltic states, particularly Estonia, Germany and Latvia. Its 16th-century origins are sometimes associated with Protestant Christian reformer Martin Luther, who is said to have been the first to add lighted candles to an evergreen tree. The Christmas tree was first recorded to be used by German Lutherans in the 16th century, with records indicating that a Christmas tree was placed in the Cathedral of Strasbourg in 1539 under the leadership of the Protestant Reformer Martin Bucer.

Modern Christmas trees have also been related to the "tree of paradise" of medieval mystery plays that were given on 24th December and some researchers believe they were the forerunners of the Christmas tree. In such plays, a tree decorated with

apples (representing fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and thus to the original sin that Christ took away) and round white wafers (to represent the Eucharist and redemption) was used as a setting for the play. Like the Christmas crib, the Paradise tree was later placed in homes. The apples were replaced by round objects such as shiny red baubles.

In the Western Christian tradition, Christmas trees are variously erected on days such as the first day of Advent, or even as late as Christmas Eve, depending on the country; customs of the same faith hold that it is unlucky to remove Christmas decorations, such as the Christmas tree, before Twelfth Night and, if they are not taken down on that day, it is appropriate to do so on Candlemas, the latter of which ends the Christmas-Epiphany season in some denominations.

Their use at public entertainments, charity bazaars and in hospitals made them increasingly familiar and in 1906 a charity was set up specifically to ensure even poor children in London slums "who had never seen a Christmas tree" would enjoy one that year. Anti-German sentiment after World War I briefly reduced their popularity but the effect was short-lived, and by the mid-1920s the use of Christmas trees had spread to all classes. In 1933, a restriction on the importation of foreign trees led to the "rapid growth of a new industry" as the growing of Christmas trees within Britain became commercially viable due to the size of demand. The number of trees grown in Britain for the Christmas market is approximately eight million annually.



A more recent Christmas tree tradition is Norway's gifting of a vast tree to the UK every year. The annual tradition of transporting a tree from Norwegian forests to Trafalgar Square in London dates back to 1947 and is Norway's way of saying thank you for the support Britain provided during World War Two.

London isn't the only beneficiary of an annual Norwegian tree. Since 1949, Newcastle has received a tree, from the twinned city of Bergen. Again, as a token of gratitude for the allyship shown during the dark days of war.

And although many people use artificial Christmas trees,(most of which are manufactured in China), many will argue that nothing beats a real Christmas tree; it is the scent of Christmas, the Carbon Trust state that a real Christmas tree has a significantly lower carbon footprint than an artificial tree and buying a tree locally supports a local business, many of which are independent family-run enterprises which in turn supports local employment and the wider economy.

Richard Byas



Is the new vicar any good?

No, I don't rate him. It takes him forty minutes to put us to sleep – last vicar managed it in fifteen.



Richard Byas

Baldersby St. James Church

Carols - Sunday 14th December at 5pm. Our Carol Service is as last year – a sing along – which was great fun with mulled wine and nibbles. If you would like to choose a favourite Carol please either fill in the sheet in church or e-mail to: c.b.brown398@hotmail.co.uk

Carols by Candlelight is once again at 6.30pm in church on Christmas Eve, 24th December, and we welcome everyone to meet up for a happy start to Christmas.

Christmas Morning Service is held in Baldersby Mission Room and is a short Communion Service with mulled wine to meet up and start our Christmas Day.

Plough Sunday is on **Sunday 18th January** and is an important service in the farming calendar. Once again we will have a bring and share lunch and welcome everyone.

Fund raising We would like to thank everyone who has helped fund raise, especially at our Book Sale which was a huge project but very successful and helps keep our beautiful building in excellent repair.

We wish everyone a Happy Christmas and New Year and look forward to seeing you all in 2026. Stay well and happy.

Susan Brown, Baldersby St James PCC

Dalton Church and Village Events

Christmas Fair, Saturday 6th December, 10am-noon. Entrance £2 adults, £1 children, which includes a mince pie or biscuit and a drink. Bacon butties will also be on sale, and there will be a tombola and various stalls. Father Christmas will be calling in with a present for all the children. Come along and get the Christmas festivities started. Please call Hannah on 07739 382831 if you have donations for the tombola. The children's gifts from Santa have been generously donated this year, for which we are very grateful.

Carols by Candlelight, Friday 12th December at 6.30 pm. Everyone is most welcome to join us.

Angels and Shepherds Service, 24th December at 4pm. This is a family service when the children will be encouraged to dress up either as an angel or a shepherd.

Red Riding Hood Pantomime, Tuesday 23rd December, 6pm for 6.30pm start.

Tickets are available from Eleanor on 07841 036340.

Christmas Tree and Lights. The village Christmas tree will be in Spence's orchard this year.

Shine a Light. If you would like a message on the tree, please contact Sylvia Binks on 07752 260571 or 01845 577020, or fill in the form at the Christmas Fair. The cost is £2, with a maximum of 15 words. The messages will be tied to the village tree and will also be recorded in a book, which is kept in St John's church.

Sylvia Binks

St Columba's Church, Topcliffe

Traditional Service of Nine Lessons and Carols

The Carol Service will be at 6.30pm on Sunday 21st December with congregational singing of well known traditional carols and Christmas hymns supported by the church choir and organ. There will also be some unusual unaccompanied choir carols directed by Linda Hewlett. The nine lessons will be read by members of the congregation and clergy. The choir performs to a high standard. Everyone is most welcome.

Midnight Mass. The Christmas Eve Service at 11.30pm on Wednesday 24th December will be Midnight Mass to welcome Christmas Day.

Christmas Day will be celebrated at 10am by a Christmas Morning Service.

BENEFICE DIRECTORY

The Parishes of Topcliffe, Baldersby with Dishforth & Skipton on Swale, and Dalton.

Reverend Dawn Ward, Associate Priest for the Benefice

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