



## Alde Sandlings Benefice

Aldeburgh, St Peter & St Paul's Parish Church,  
Aldringham, St Andrew's Parish Church,  
Friston, St Mary's Parish Church  
Knodishall, St Lawrence's Parish Church

Priest in charge: The Revd Sarah du Boulay

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## Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> December Third Sunday of Advent

### Services in The Alde Sandlings Benefice this Sunday

Aldeburgh	8.00am	Holy Communion
	10.30am	Said Morning Prayer
	6.00pm	Carol Service
Aldringham	11.00am	Carol Service
Friston	10.00am	Holy Communion
Knodishall	9.30am	Morning Prayer
Thorpeness	4.00pm	Pilgrims Carols round the tree by the Meare

### A message from Revd Sarah du Boulay

Dear Friends,

As we reel into the last week of Advent, before Christmas next Sunday, frantically preparing to celebrate the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, I wanted to share with you all one of my favourite Advent poems, by the wonderful Mary Oliver:

*Dear Lord, I have swept and I have washed but still nothing is as shining as it should be for you. Under the sink, for example, is an uproar of mice – it is the season of their many children. What shall I do? And under the eaves and through the walls the squirrels have gnawed their ragged entrances – but it the season when they need shelter, so what shall I do? And the raccoon limps into the kitchen and opens the cupboard while the dog snores, the cat holds the pillow; what shall I do? Beautiful is the new snow falling in the yard and the fox who is staring boldly up the path, to the door. And I still believe you will come, Lord; you will, when I speak to the fox, the sparrow, the lost dog, the shivering sea-goose, know that I am really speaking to you whenever I say, as I do all morning and afternoon: Come in, Come in.*

I'm really looking forward to worshipping and celebrating with as many of you as possible over the next few days.

With prayers,

Sarah

### **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 by turning the hearts of the disobedient 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.

### **First Reading**

#### **Isaiah 61.1-4, 8-end**

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour, and the day of

vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those who mourn in Zion to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory. They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations. For I the Lord love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed. I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

## **Second Reading**

### **I Thessalonians 5.16-24**

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil. May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

## **Gospel Reading**

### **John 1.6-8, 19-28**

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, 'I am not the Messiah.' And they asked him, 'What then? Are you Elijah?' He said, 'I am not.' 'Are you the prophet?' He answered, 'No.' Then they said to him, 'Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?' He said, 'I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the

Lord” ‘, as the prophet Isaiah said. Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, ‘Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?’ John answered them, ‘I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.’ This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

## **Sermon by The Very Revd Christopher Lewis Second of Advent 10<sup>th</sup> December at Aldringham**

In the old days, the Advent preacher was expected to preach on death, judgement, heaven and hell. That was because Advent has been a time of solemn preparation, where the judgement of God is relevant; Jesus’ coming as a baby in Bethlehem only taking over right at the end. Nowadays, Christmas gets to be dominant, maybe for marketing purposes. So ‘Away in a manger’ rather takes over from ‘Lo he comes with clouds descending’. One must not be too nostalgic, but I am told that there was a time when most presents were bought on Christmas eve, just before a few cards were taken round to neighbours. What we might call the ‘culture’ of Advent has changed. Advent might have been more restrained this year because of the state of the economy, but somehow that didn’t happen: Black Friday and all that (NOT a religious festival). I think we were meant to borrow and then spend to keep the economy afloat.

I don’t expect it worked, but I have no wish to have a go at materialism. The material world rates high in Christianity and Christmas is worthy of real celebration. No doubt there are excesses, but having a rant about them does more harm than good, certainly harm to the person doing the rant. The Bishop of Reading once suggested that we give each other home-made pickled onions. Now....there’s an idea.

But something more profound is going on, namely that Christians and others have changed their view about death, judgement, heaven and hell, or at least some Christians have. There was a time at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when 11,000 clergy signed a declaration concerning the eternity of punishment for the damned, but that time has passed. My text is from today’s epistle (the 2<sup>nd</sup> letter of Peter) ‘...the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed.’ There are churches in which that poetic piece

about the end would be taken literally. These days not so great an emphasis on the geography or length of stay in hell, but instead more stress on the salvation of a few of the righteous. Books on what is called 'the Rapture' (the godly getting an immediate journey to eternal life) – those books are best sellers in the USA. Not so over here. I once looked for one in a religious bookshop and the only one I could find was remaindered.

Many churches here have a more relaxed attitude to the end of things. Are they right?

I was at a railway station a little time ago and just outside was a van belonging to an organisation called Securitas; it was parked. It desperately broadcasted a message in a theatrical female voice: 'Help! Security vehicle under attack. Please call the police'. She had staying power; it sure went on. And what did we all do? We reacted much in the way we do when any alarm goes off. All alarms are probably false alarms, so we went about our business, with the occasional wry smile. Rapture! The end is nigh! Security vehicle under attack! Repent! Fire! All meet with a shrug; there are things to do and trains to catch.

And I have to say that I believe that reaction is fairly healthy. But there is another side as well – another point to make. When John the Baptist came, dressed in camel hair and eating locusts and wild honey, how many people yawned, then got on with harvesting their olives and rounding up their goats? A few will have paid attention, but not many. And on that occasion, the sceptics were wrong.... although many of us might have been among the sceptics ourselves.

You see, security vans do get attacked, fires break out and there must be occasions when a shop alarm has gone off because a shop has actually been broken into. And, now and again in ancient Israel, in among all the false and time-serving prophets, there was a real one, who brought the truth, though they were rarely recognised by the majority.

So I do not think this can be a one-point sermon. This is a two point sermon.

Point one is that Christian faith should not be confused with gullibility. To believe silly things as some strange groups do...is not a virtue. Faith and reason mix very well; tell that to the new militant atheists with their loads of AI. So the Christian faith should be a protection against the more outlandish beliefs of the moment: all those gullible people who half-believe in horoscopes, or in the predictions of Nostradamus, or in the capacity of scientific advance to solve all the problems facing humankind, or indeed a belief in the unstoppable nature of the free market – well, that does lose believers.

Crucial to Christianity is the belief that God has given us minds which we are to use to the best of our ability and given us himself to follow in the person of Jesus. Warnings that the world will end or that we should prepare for rapture, should be treated with the same kind of shrug as piped declarations that a security van is under attack when, especially when, there is no evidence that this is the case.

That was point one. Yet the rub comes in point number two. The attitude adopted to those announcements can easily become our attitude to everything, so that a tired 'seen-it-all-before' scepticism rules our lives, making us impervious to the strong message of Advent, or indeed to any profound message at all. Advent comes out of the longing for a new world where things would be otherwise, and where God would be king. There may be a danger that Christmas is becoming dominated by complacency and nostalgia. But the best cure for that is to attend to Advent, with its strange message of foreboding but also of hope.

And the message is: Be alert. Repent. Do not suppress our longing for a world made new. For the need is desperate as we can see and hear. Human beings go on being lonely, being broken, misused, bereaved. Climates change for the worse. We go on seeing the world in turmoil, with unspeakable horrors this minute in what is called the 'holy' land. Someone came up to me once and apologised for crying in church. I said: 'If you can't cry in church where can you cry?' Where indeed? Longing for love and knowing that we can find it in Jesus Christ. So the watchword of all the longing is 'Come, Lord Jesus', longed for yet also present amongst us. We need, desperately need, a world made new, and us made new as well, in Christ our Lord.

### **Post Communion**

We give you thanks, O Lord, for these heavenly gifts;  
kindle in us the fire of your Spirit  
that when your Christ comes again  
we may shine as lights before his face;  
who is alive and reigns now and for ever.

**Next Sunday, 24<sup>th</sup> December  
Christmas Eve**

## **Weekly Benefice Newsletter**

If you would like something added to the weekly newsletter that is relevant to the Benefice, please do let Claire know and we will do our best to include it the following week.

**All requests by 4pm on Thursday please**

## **† Church of England and Diocese Online Worship †**

There are many online services you can view from the Church of England and our cathedral. Here are some links below.

Church of England website

<https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/church-online/weekly-online-services>

Church of England Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/thechurchofengland/>

Church of England YouTube channel

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLecK8GovYoaYzIgyOEIKZg>

St Edmundsbury Cathedral Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/stedscathedral>

## **£££ Ways to donate to our churches within the £££**

### **Alde Sandlings Benefice**

Your donations REALLY mean so much to us at this challenging time. No matter how small your donation is, it helps us keep our doors open, support our ministry and mission, and to help preserve our church buildings. THANK YOU SO MUCH

Just click on the link to support any of our churches -

<https://www.aldeburghparishchurch.org.uk/ways-to-donate-to-the-churches-within-the-alde-sandlings-benefice/>

## **† Fairfield Centre Prayers - Café Church †**

Every third Sunday of the month at **4pm**.

Relaxed and informal with tea, toast, activities, chat and worship.

**All ages very welcome THIS WEEK AT ALDEBURGH PARISH CHURCH AT 6PM FOR THE CAROL SERVICE**

## † Morning Prayer across the Benefice †

Revd Sarah is bringing the benefice together in prayer each morning from 9-9.30am. People are very welcome to join, no regular commitment required, just pop along when you wish.

Monday – Aldeburgh & Friston

Tuesday - Knodishall

Wednesday – Aldeburgh

Thursday – Aldringham

Friday - Aldeburgh

## † Worship at The Alde Sandlings †

We are asking for volunteers to deliver prayers of intercession during the services at any of the churches you worship in. The prayers can be written by the person delivering them, they can be taken from a book, or they can be written by someone else, i.e. a member of the clergy. Training can be given. Any member of the congregations can take part in the service in this way. If you would like to deliver the prayers, please either speak to a member of clergy, church warden or email

[admin@aldeburghparishchurch.org.uk](mailto:admin@aldeburghparishchurch.org.uk)

## Would you like to come forward for Confirmation?

Confirmation is a special church service in which a person confirms the promises that were made when they were baptised. If you were baptised at a christening when you were a child, your parents and godparents made these promises on your behalf. As a young person or adult, you may be ready to affirm these promises for yourself and commit your life to following Jesus Christ. At a confirmation service, you make these promises for yourself. Your friends and family as well as the local Christian community will be there to promise to support and pray for you. There will be some confirmation meetings giving you the opportunity to discuss your lifetime journey of faith coming up in the benefice. If you think this would be something that you wish to explore further, please speak to a member of clergy or contact

[admin@aldeburghparishchurch.org.uk](mailto:admin@aldeburghparishchurch.org.uk)



## **Aldeburgh Choir**

Do you like to sing? Come and join our church choir. Our services are every Sunday at 10.30am. We also hold special extra services at Christmas and other events in the church calendar. The choir plays an essential role to our worship. So, the more the merrier, even if you are just visiting us. Want to give it a go? Contact: [admin@aldeburghparishchurch.org.uk](mailto:admin@aldeburghparishchurch.org.uk) For more information.

## **† Pilgrims Together on Wednesdays on Zoom †**

The worship starts at 6.30pm (Zoom call opens from 6.10pm) and the call is then left open after the worship time for people to catch up. People are welcome to email [pilgrimstogether473@gmail.com](mailto:pilgrimstogether473@gmail.com) to receive a copy, be added to our mailing list, or for the Zoom link.

**This Sunday - 17th December 4pm Carols round the Christmas Tree at the Meare by the Boat House**

**Pop up carols Saturday 23rd December around 2pm by the Meare Cafe / Boat House**

## **Food Banks at the East of England Co-op**

Foodbanks provide a valuable service to those in need in our communities. The Aldeburgh Co-op and Solar in Leiston are doing a grand job in collecting food donations, which are collected regularly and distributed. So please look out for the various collection baskets. <https://www.eastofengland.coop/community/foodpoverty/foodbank-support>

## **Welcome Committee at Aldeburgh Church**

As we all know the winter months can be very difficult with moral and general wellbeing. Sometimes you just need to get out of the house, but where can I go? We are offering a hot drink and a warm welcome every Saturday between 10-12 noon, from 13<sup>th</sup> January to 30<sup>th</sup> March. Whether you live on your own or are just missing better weather catch ups and a good natter with old friends and meeting new ones, do come along. People with young children are also more than welcome to come and enjoy time playing, reading, and drawing in the children's corner. Your church doors are open and welcome you to spend some time with company and a cuppa.

**Can you help?** We are asking for volunteers to meet and greet every Saturday from 13<sup>th</sup> January until 30<sup>th</sup> March from 10am – 12 Noon for 2hr slots. Please do sign the rota on the notice board in the church if you would like to be part of this, or contact Claire [admin@aldeburghparishchurch.org.uk](mailto:admin@aldeburghparishchurch.org.uk)

**We also need mugs, teaspoons, side plates, and any storage boxes for biscuits and cakes. So if it's time to sort out those kitchen cupboards, please think of this project.**



## CHRISTMAS DATES AT THE CHURCHES OF THE ALDE SANDLINGS BENEFICE

### ALDEBURGH PARISH CHURCH

Tuesday 5 <sup>th</sup> December	6.30pm	Benefice Christingle Service
Sunday 17 <sup>th</sup> December	6.00pm	Christmas Carol Service
Christmas Eve	10.30am	Holy Communion Service
Sunday 24 <sup>th</sup> December	3.30pm	Crib Service
	11.30pm	First Communion of Christmas
Christmas Day	10.30am	Christmas Day Holy Communion Service
Monday 25 <sup>th</sup> December		

### ALDRINGHAM PARISH CHURCH

Sunday 3 <sup>rd</sup> December	11.00am	Service of the Word
	6.00pm	Advent Carol Service by Candlelight
Thursday 14 <sup>th</sup> December	6.00pm	Carols on the Green
Sunday 17 <sup>th</sup> December	11.00am	Christmas Carol Service
Christmas Eve	11.00am	Morning Prayer
Sunday 24 <sup>th</sup> December		
Christmas Day	9.30am	Christmas Day Holy Communion Service
Monday 25 <sup>th</sup> December		

### FRISTON PARISH CHURCH

Sunday 10 <sup>th</sup> December	6.00pm	Christmas Carol Service
Christmas Eve	10.00am	Service of the Word
Sunday 24 <sup>th</sup> December		
Christmas Day	10.00am	Christmas Day Holy Communion Service
Monday 25 <sup>th</sup> December		

### KNODISHALL PARISH CHURCH

Tuesday 19 <sup>th</sup> December	7.00pm	Village Carol Service at Knodishall Village Hall
Christmas Eve	1 1.30pm	First Communion of Christmas
Sunday 24 <sup>th</sup> December		

WE WISH YOU ALL A VERY HAPPY AND BLESSED CHRISTMAS

Alde Sandlings Website - [www.aldeburghparishchurch.org.uk](http://www.aldeburghparishchurch.org.uk)