



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

Email: revd.sarah@btinternet.com

Tel: 01728 582213

The Revd Nichola Winter

Email: njwinter@whd.co.uk

Curate: The Revd Mary Brown

Email: revd@mary-brown.co.uk

Tel: 01728 467454

The Revd Johanna Mabey

Email: rev.johannamabey@gmail.com

Sunday 21st January Third Sunday of Epiphany

Services in The Alde Sandlings Benefice this Sunday

Aldeburgh	8.00am	Holy Communion
	10.30am	Morning Prayer
Café Church	4.00pm	at The Fairfield Centre
Aldringham	11.00am	Holy Communion
Friston	10.00am	Holy Communion
Knodishall	9.30am	Morning Prayer

A message from Revd Sarah du Boulay

Dear Friends,

2024 is shaping up to be a joyful and exciting year for our benefice, as we together step further outwards in faith. It has occurred to me that in the midst of all the action, we simply must ground everything we are doing in prayer, and prayer must be the basis of everything. It is oxygen. It is the lifeblood. It is integral. That prayer is the responsibility of all of us, and can happen in many different ways. I was reminded of these few lines in the poem 'I Happen to Be Standing' by Mary Oliver:

I don't know where prayers go,
or what they do.
Do cats pray, while they sleep
half-asleep in the sun? . . .

While I was thinking this I happened to be standing
just outside my door, with my notebook open,
which is the way I begin every morning.
Then a wren in the privet began to sing.
He was positively drenched in enthusiasm,
I don't know why. . .
But I thought, of the wren's singing, what could this be
if it isn't a prayer?
So I just listened, my pen in the air.

Praying to God, and listening to God are so incredibly important. And
don't these sunny days seem to make it all much easier?

With prayers (of course),

Sarah

Collect

Almighty God, whose Son revealed in signs and miracles
the wonder of your saving presence:
renew your people with your heavenly grace,
and in all our weakness sustain us by your mighty power;
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.

First Reading

Genesis 14.17-20

After his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were
with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh
(that is, the King's Valley). And King Melchizedek of Salem brought out
bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High. He blessed him and
said, 'Blessed be Abram by God Most High, maker of heaven and earth;
and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your
hand!' And Abram gave him one-tenth of everything.

Second Reading

Revelation 19.6-10

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunder-peals, crying out, 'Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready; to her it has been granted to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure'-for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, 'Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.' And he said to me, 'These are true words of God.' Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, 'You must not do that! I am a fellow-servant with you and your comrades who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.'

Gospel Reading

John 2.1-11

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' Now standing there were six stone water-jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, 'Fill the jars with water.' And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, 'Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.' So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom. and said to him, 'Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.' Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Sermon by Revd Nichola Winter

Second Sunday of Epiphany at Aldeburgh 14th January

The eight verses that comprise today's gospel are perhaps at first reading unremarkable. But read them again and the layers of meaning and symbolism create a rich seam of narrative that repays generously closer thought.

The passage occurs as part of the recruitment narrative between Jesus' baptism and the first miracle at the wedding in Cana. Jesus is beginning his ministry and gathering around him followers and disciples. In an almost off-hand way we hear how Jesus finds Philip and simply says, 'Follow me.' Philip follows. But then Philip comes across Nathaniel - and he can't keep his excitement or wonder to himself - he wants to share it with Nathanael. Maybe Nathanael got out of bed the wrong side that morning - his response is almost curmudgeonly; he's not willing to believe that anything good can come out of a small insignificant town in Galilee. Reluctantly he goes to have a look at Jesus and he is astonished when Jesus tells him that he already knows about him - he has seen him beneath the fig tree.

At once we encounter a picture so dramatic and so telling. The mention of the fig tree conjures up a setting rich in meaning and laden with historic significance. The fig tree was one of the most important domesticated plants in the biblical era - widely cultivated throughout Palestine. It grows best in moderately dry areas that have little rain during the period when the fruit matures. The tree was grown for its fruit and was also much valued for its dark green, deeply lobed leaves that offered welcome shade.

These features of fruit and shade made the fig tree an obvious symbol for God in his covenantal relationship with the people. There are many OT references to the fig tree - the prophet Hosea speaks of God seeing Israel's potential for a meaningful relationship when he describes 'seeing the early fruit on the fig tree' - the fruit which appears in late spring but doesn't ripen until much later in the season. As a beneficiary of the covenant relationship Israel enjoys the God-given prosperity and security hinted at by the ideal of Solomon when he speaks of 'each man under his own vine and fig.'

But there was always the danger that failure to keep covenantal standards could mean the loss of safety and the threat of God's judgement. Jesus will use the fig often in his ministry to warn of the perils of spiritual

fruitlessness. Luke's gospel describes how after three years without fruit a fig tree is threatened with the axe; Matthew tells how Jesus curses the fig tree that doesn't yield fruit when he is hungry. And Mark has Jesus using a barren but leafy fig tree to illustrate how Israel was typified by leaders who liked a showy religion but didn't actually bear anything that resembled a dynamic, fruitful relationship with God.

Fig trees took several years of careful nurture but once established they were viewed as a wonderful part of settled and prosperous life. To live under one's fig tree was a metaphor for a comfortable life of joy and peace. But in John's gospel we see Nathanael being torn away from his familiar life of ease by a friend who seems to be under some delusion about an old prophecy. What's worse is that Jesus, this new friend of Philip, actually seems already to know all about him. There's no hiding. Nathanael has been found sitting beneath the fig tree - a pillar of the establishment, especially since in rabbinic literature the fig tree was the place where the Torah was studied and discussed. But Nathanael cannot stay here, hiding behind the cloak of respectability provided by his link with the learned teachers of the law. If he chooses to explore a new relationship with Jesus he's not going to be able to remain in the tried and trusted, the comfortable ways.

Many years earlier, Eli, too, had found himself in a place where, as a respected and honoured priest and teacher he probably enjoyed a relatively comfortable existence. But the rot had set in; the corruption that he had done little to prevent was about to be punished. The warning doesn't come directly to Eli, but to the ears of an inexperienced child. And the words spoken shake the hearers to their core. The long awaited word of the Lord, spoken to a novice prophet, strips away the comfort and security of Eli's existence. Samuel will become a respected prophet - his words will not fall to the ground - he will be recognised as a trustworthy servant of the Lord.

So what does all this mean for us? Jesus searches each one of us out 'where we are.' He invites us into an untried relationship with him. Jesus has already invited his new followers to 'Come and see'. As and when we encounter Jesus we cannot remain neutral. We can turn aside and ignore the contact, pretend it didn't happen - after all, like Nathanael's initial response, we may feel that nothing good can come of this. Nathanael does not know for sure how things will turn out. If we want to look ahead we can turn to the 21st chapter of John, where Nathanael witnesses the risen Christ for himself on the beach by the sea of Galilee. In his original

encounter with Jesus, Jesus has promised Nathanael that he will see that glorious vision - heaven opened, angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man - a reference to the story of Jacob and the ladder to heaven. But here, Jesus himself becomes the link between heaven and earth and Nathanael is invited to partake in witnessing to the unravelling of this mystery. The man Jesus - God become human - is available to people from all walks of life. He has already been made known to shepherds, wise men of wealth and great learning, aged priests and teachers in the temple. None of them came away with their life unchanged.

We too, have that opportunity. We can dismiss our encounter with Jesus as just one more impossible thing to take on board. Or we can engage with the Son of Man - we can 'come and see' for ourselves, make a lifetime pilgrimage and join the many who have travelled on a journey of faith. In the words of the collect, may the poverty of our nature be transformed by the riches of God's grace so that we can make known his glory. May we, like Nathanael, respond, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God. You are the King.' Amen.

Post Communion

Almighty Father, whose Son our Saviour Jesus Christ is the light of the world: may your people, illumined by your word and sacraments, shine with the radiance of his glory, that he may be known, worshipped, and obeyed to the ends of the earth; for he is alive and reigns, now and for ever.

Ukraine with Love Concert – CANCELLED

21st January at 2.30pm at Aldeburgh Parish Church

Unfortunately, due to personal reasons of the concert organisers, this concert has now been cancelled for the time being.

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>

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

Alde Sandlings Benefice

Your donations REALLY mean so much to us. If you would like to donate this Christmas, please click on the link below.

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/>

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>

† 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

† 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

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 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 to receive a copy, be added to our mailing list or for the Zoom links.

Pilgrim Dates for your Diaries

Saturday 27th January - Pilgrim Local History Story Telling Ceilidh

Saturday 3rd February – Community Breakfast and local ramble starting at the Parrot at 9.30am

Saturday 10th February - Pilgrim Quiz

Saturday 24th February - Pilgrim Local History Story Telling Ceilidh

More details to follow!

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 13th January to 30th 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 13th January until 30th 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

Next Sunday, 28th January - Fourth Sunday of Epiphany/Candlemas

Issues Receiving the Benefice Weekly Newsletter

Some of you have informed us that you haven't been receiving the weekly newsletter. This is only applying to BT and Gmail email users so far.

This is frustrating, we know, but unfortunately there isn't a great deal we can do to rectify this issue from our end, as it is how your email providers spam filters class the email, ie spam or not spam. We have made some adjustments this week to see if this helps the situation. So let's see how that works out!

Please do check you spam/junk folders. You can also view the newsletter every week on the benefice website too if the actual email doesn't find its way into your mailbox.

<https://www.aldeburghparishchurch.org.uk/news/>