

St Anne's Brondesbury Christmas services

Saturday 9th December

10am—Make Christmas Wreath Day

Saturday 16th December

9am—Quiet Morning

Friday 15th December

10am My Move Christmas Party

2.30pm Tea and Chat Christmas Party

Sunday 17th December

4.30pm Nine Lessons and Carols -
with Queens Park Singers , candles, and all your favourite Carols
Followed by mulled wine and mince pies.

Christmas Eve - Sunday 24th

5 pm Children's Crib service
11.30pm Midnight Mass

Christmas Day— Monday 25th

10am Christmas Sung Mass with
Carols



**You are invited to join
us for any or all of these
celebrations of this
happy time.**



ADVENT

St Anne's Brondesbury, 2017

Introduction

Advent like Lent is a time for personal and corporate reflection on how we live our faith. In the case of Advent we are in a season of waiting. Advent waiting is not however simply about the birth of Jesus. Our Advent season waiting is also thinking ahead to God's future coming for judgement. So the season is sombre, in purple and with fasting and repentance—a reminder that as God came to us once, so just as surely will come again.

There are four elements (or spiritual disciplines) that make a Holy Advent. They are Prayer, Confession, Fasting and Charitable Giving. This booklet aims to provide you with the tools to make the most of Advent this year.

As we enter this time of Advent we are invited to embrace our Christian journey. **We seek to do this, by observing the spiritual disciplines of the seasons—those of prayer, fasting, confession and charitable giving.**

Prayer

Since the earliest days of the Christian faith, prayer has been offered to God, through Jesus, in both formal and informal ways. Christians are called to be people of prayer, an experience of our relationship with God that underpins all that we do.

In Church over the years Christians have traditionally punctuated the day with short services sometimes called the Daily Office, which has its roots in the Latin word *officium* which means a dutiful or respectful action. The basic elements of an Office are psalms, readings from scripture, canticles and prayers. Sometimes there is a hymn or a responsive form of prayer. Through joining in with the Church's continual offering of prayer we find ourselves caught up in a much greater work of the Spirit. When it is difficult to find the right words to pray, the Office offers us an opportunity to listen to the Word of God, to reflect upon it, and sometimes to be taken beyond words to a place of silent contemplation and adoration, through the action of the Holy Spirit within us.

The Daily Office is offered in our parish with Morning Prayer is said at 8.30am every morning during Advent in Trinity Chapel. We also have two weekday Masses—at 8.30am on Tuesday and 7.30pm on Wednesday.

You are invited to come along to these services and perhaps particularly during this coming Advent. We have also drawn up a simple form of the Daily Office in this booklet. (please ask for a copy). There is also several versions available online including www.churchofengland.org/prayer-worship/join-us-in-daily-prayer.aspx

If you can't make the services in Church, there is also online prayer groups or resources. The Church of England provide an online form of daily prayer which you can download free / www.churchofengland.org/prayer-worship/join-us-in-daily-prayer.aspx

During Advent our focus is on watching and waiting for the coming of Christ, in the Christmas message but also in our lives and world today. Take time during this season to notice your encounters with our living God, wherever you are. Even take time to share these experiences with others as we consider what it means to be a people of faith today!



Two ways to give under the tree this Christmas at St Anne's

1. Gift Box for St Mungo's

Fill a shoe box with items that would be useful for a homeless man. Warm socks, hats, gloves, toiletries, tea bags, cup of soups. Wrap the box and place under the tree.

2. Gift to St Anne's for its ministry

This Christmas you are invited to give a gift to St Anne's. Last year we specified items you might like give to the church, candles, music, milk etc. This seemed a little complicated. This year instead we invite you to simply place your gift to St Anne's in the envelope provided, and place it in the basket under our Christmas tree.

During Advent we will also be hosting some additional services and activities to support our spiritual development, as well as celebrate the mystery of Christ birth..

- ‡ **Advent Procession at St Paul's Cathedral**
Saturday 2nd December at 6pm. We will need to enter the Cathedral by 5.20pm.
- ‡ **My Move Christmas Party**—Friday 15th December from 10am—12noon in the Rotunda.
- ‡ **Tea and Chat Christmas Party** – Friday 15th December from 2.30-4.30pm in the Rotunda.
- ‡ **Vicar's Christmas Drinks** – 15th December from 7.30pm.
- ‡ **Saturday 9th December from 10am until 1pm Christmas Decoration event**
Come at 10am to make you own Christmas wreath or table centre piece. All materials will be provided but participants will be asked to buy their wreath. There will also be other assorted Christmas crafts to make for all ages.
- ‡ **Carols by Candlelight**—Sunday 17th December at 4.30pm followed by mulled wine and mince pies!

We are also invited to join local carol singers

Thursday 14th December, East side: meet at corner of Kingswood Ave and Summerfield Ave at 7.30 pm
Tuesday 19th December, West side: meet in front of 7, Kempe Road at 7.30 pm. We sing from Carols for Choirs (Wilcox, OUP). Spare copies are available but bring yours if you have one.

Please take time to look at the Advent resource book to support your spiritual journey during Advent. You may also find it helpful to make an appointment with one of the clergy for Spiritual Direction or Confession during this period.

It may be that you can make time to pray on the journey to or from work, or perhaps when you wake, or just before you go to sleep. Whenever you choose to pray you will be joining in with the endless song of the angels in heaven as well as the countless number of Christians throughout the world.

Confession

Confession - the opening up of our lives to God with honesty and the hope of a new beginning - is a powerful spiritual aid for personal holiness and the spiritual life.

The New Testament encourages us to '*Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed*' (James 5:16) and the famous Protestant theologian Bonhoeffer called Confession the '*renewal of the joy of baptism*'. As we try to grow as Christians it is inevitable that there will be times when we do things that we are ashamed of, and that come to lie heavily in our minds. We may become aware that there are particular failings that we are prone to, and that we struggle with overcoming. There are also those things in our lives which we allow to limit our full potential being realised. God wants for each of us to live a full life using all the gifts we have.

Individual Confession to a priest, with its very personal assurance of God's continuing love, can be a powerful way of addressing these spiritual questions. In individual Confession we come before God with the help of a priest very much as we are, without the ability to hide behind others or to slide over the things we know we should confess. Individual Confession encourages us to think more deeply about the ways we have failed to honour God, to honour others and, importantly, to honour ourselves. As Christians we come before God knowing our failings and seeking God's healing touch:- being able to acknowledge our sins before God, with the gentle guidance of a priest, can be a powerfully healing process. In the Church of England individual Confession has long been seen as an act of personal devotion that can greatly enrich the spiritual life of the believer. The rule has always been 'All may, none must and some should'. All of us may make our individual confession, though none of us has to, but equally there are some of us who should.

If individual confession does not appeal, it is wise to take some time during Advent either with a spiritual director, or in your personal devotion to confess those things which inhibit your life of faith and separate you from a full relationship with God and others. The health of our spiritual lives rests on this honesty.

Lent and Advent have always been times when Confession is offered, and Mo Christine and Fr Laurence will happily make a time to meet with you, to speak about Confession. There are also resources available on the website to guide you in this area.

Fasting

In recent years fasting has almost faded away, but abstaining from food as a religious exercise is an ancient tradition in Christianity. It is seen as an expression of sorrow for sin; as an offering of humility for a particular prayer intention for oneself or for another. It can be a very helpful way of focusing the mind for prayer. In recent years the idea of fasting as a healthy way of cleansing the body has begun to gain popularity, recognising the clear state of mental alertness that it can bring about.

The point of fasting is not to lose weight or to save money; it is about offering to God the devotion that motivated it and we are encouraged to offer to charity the money saved. The time not spent in preparing and eating can be used for prayer or spiritual reading and you will be surprised at how much time we do spend over food in a day.

A fast can simply be not eating meat (as on Friday's) or a fuller fast of leaving out a meal or two. It can also mean abstaining from a particular food or activity for the season, for example giving up coffee or not watching Strictly Come Dancing.

It is a good discipline if you can to set aside some money as an act of charity—which will go to our parish Advent Mission Project—which in 2017 is St Mungo's Hostel or St Anne's Giving Tree. There is also our regular charity—Laurence's Larder.

NB Those over 60 or under 12 have always been excused the need to fast. Older people and diabetics should think carefully before fasting, and speak to Mo Christine if they are unsure about what to do.

Charitable Giving

Almsgiving is a central part of the Christian Tradition. Based on the Jewish practice of giving money as a sign of piety and to relieve the suffering of the poor - Christians have followed Jesus' command in the Sermon on the Mount to 'Give to those who ask from you' (Matthew 6:42).

Our charitable giving takes two forms—firstly we have a responsibility for the communal life of our parish. As Christians we are asked to tithe part of that which we earn to the life of the community and charity. This is traditionally 10% of our income; though of course for some 10% is great deal and for others it is not. For this reason we are asked to consider our giving as part of our spiritual practice. As regular members of St Anne's we should regularly review the amount that we give to the church, this is part of our charitable giving.

This Advent, alongside all the other aspects of the spiritual life, you are invited to give some careful thought to how you use your money. Do you give to charity? Do you make regular contributions to our Church? If not, you may need to consider why not?

This year our Advent Mission Project is the **St Mungo's Shelter** we are asked to provide things which a homeless man might need. Toiletries, hats, socks, gloves or stationary. You can also make a monetary donation which will be given to the charity; or you can also give to our Giving Tree.

If you need more information about giving please do ask—we have lots of information which may help you in your considerations.